



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Semiotic Interpretation of the Cultural Connotations of Chaoshou Traditional Handicrafts

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the unique value of Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture and its key role in contemporary society, using semiotics to interpret its cultural connotations. The paper elaborates on the basic concepts of semiotics and its application in cultural studies, particularly in the study of Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture. By applying semiotic theory, this paper comprehensively analyzes various symbols in Chaoshan traditional handicrafts, discussing how these symbols carry and convey specific cultural information and values, as well as their dissemination mechanisms in society. The research presented in this paper highlights the effectiveness of semiotics in interpreting the cultural connotations of Chaoshan traditional handicrafts, proposes future research directions, and discusses the potential positive impact of this study on the protection and inheritance of Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture.

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INTRODUCTION

The traditional handicraft culture of Chaoshan, as an integral part of Lingnan culture, embodies a profound historical legacy and unique artistic charm. Its unique value is not only reflected in the exquisite craftsmanship but also in the cultural connotations and national spirit it carries. The handicrafts of the Chaoshan region, such as Chao embroidery, wood carving, paper-cutting, and ceramics, all demonstrate the Chaoshan people's pursuit of beauty and love for life. These traditional handicrafts have become important symbols of Chaoshan culture and have taken on new vitality in contemporary society.

As shown in Figure 1, Chaoshan traditional handicrafts contain a wealth of symbolic elements. These symbols not only have aesthetic value but are also important carriers of Chaoshan culture. From the perspective of semiotics, this paper can deeply analyze the cultural connotations and social functions behind these symbols

Distribution of Chaozhou Traditional Handicraft Symbolic Elements

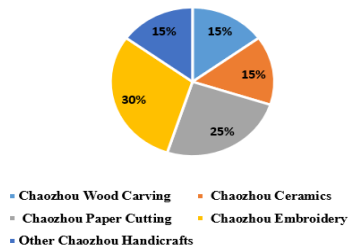
**Figure 1: Distribution of Traditional Handicraft Symbolic Elements in Chaoshan**

Image Source: Drawn by the Researcher

Lu (2023) research emphasizes the importance of urban language landscapes in cross-cultural communication and takes Chaozhou, Guangdong as an example to propose ways to enhance urban language landscapes. She believes that by constructing a harmonious language ecology and enriching symbolic system resources, the cultural identity and image dissemination of the city can be strengthened. Wu (2018) research, from a sociological perspective, explores the attitudes of residents towards the development of Chaoshan's You Shen Sai Hui folk tourism. Her research shows that Chaozhou residents have a high degree of recognition for the You Shen Sai Hui folk customs and tend to support its tourism development, indicating that traditional cultural activities still have important cultural value and tourism potential in modern society. Wu (2016) discussed the folk culture of Chaozhou's Guangji Bridge, emphasizing the importance of this iconic building in carrying the historical and aesthetic values of Chaozhou culture. He proposed that the folk cultural foundation of Guangji Bridge is the crystallization of the wisdom and sweat of generations of Chaozhou people and is gradually moving towards the world.

Semiotics, as a discipline that studies the relationship between symbols and meanings, provides a new perspective for interpreting the cultural connotations of Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture. Semiotics not only focuses on the surface form of symbols but also delves into the cultural connotations and symbolic meanings behind them. Through semiotic methods, this paper can more deeply understand the composition, use, and cultural information conveyed by various symbols in Chaoshan traditional handicrafts. For example, the patterns and colors in Chao embroidery often imply auspiciousness, happiness, and a good life vision; wood carving works showcase the Chaoshan people's reverence for nature and love for life through delicate carving skills and vivid images. The cultural connotations of Chaoshan traditional handicrafts can be interpreted from the perspective of semiotics. Semiotics, as an interdisciplinary field of study, involves various theories and methods related to language and symbols, including cognitive science, aesthetics, linguistics, and psychology (Zhang, 2017). Chaoshan handicrafts often contain rich cultural symbols and historical information. For example, common patterns and decorations in Chaoshan wood carvings, ceramics, and embroideries not only serve decorative functions but also carry specific cultural symbolic meanings (Nguyen & Dang, 2024). These symbols may represent the natural landscapes, mythological legends, religious beliefs, and social customs of the Chaoshan area. Through semiotic analysis, the cultural connotations and historical evolution behind these symbols can be revealed.

2. Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this paper include the following three:

1. What are the types and characteristics of symbols in Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture?
2. How do these symbols convey the connotations and values of Chaoshan culture?

3. In the context of modern society, how are the symbols of Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture inherited and innovated?

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Semiotics and the Analysis of Chaoshan Traditional Handicraft Cultural Symbols

Semiotics, as a discipline that explores the generation, transmission, and interpretation of symbols and their meanings, provides a powerful analytical tool for cultural studies. It is not limited to the field of linguistics but is widely applied to various levels including visual arts, social culture, and media studies. Semiotics posits that any cultural phenomenon can be regarded as a system of symbols, containing rich meanings and values. Through semiotic analysis, one can explore how these symbols evolve over time and with social changes (Khachmanyam, 2023). For instance, influenced by globalization and market economies, the production methods and usage contexts of some traditional handicrafts may have changed, reflecting shifts in social structures and cultural values.

Semiotic theory suggests that culture is a system of symbols, each element of which carries specific meanings. In Chaoshan traditional handicrafts, these symbols can be visual, linguistic, or technological. They convey not only the artisans' skills but also reflect the lifestyle, values, and aesthetic tastes of the Chaoshan people. The theoretical foundation of semiotics lies in understanding the dual nature of symbols: on one hand, symbols exist as material entities; on the other hand, as carriers of meaning, the culture and symbolic significance they contain are key to interpretation. In the study of Chaoshan traditional handicrafts, the theoretical framework of semiotics allows us to delve into how symbols in handicrafts convey and reflect the cultural identity and social values of the Chaoshan people.

In the Chaoshan region, handicrafts are not merely material products; they also carry the history and cultural memory of families. Through the lens of semiotics, these symbols are analyzed for the meanings they are given within social structures. When interpreting cultural phenomena, semiotics emphasizes the dissection of a symbol's signifier (form) and signified (meaning) to reveal deeper cultural connotations. Symbols in Chaoshan handicraft works can also reflect the local social hierarchy and family concepts. For example, patterns and texts on Chaoshan embroidery handicrafts may be associated with specific families or clans, reflecting the family's history and glory (Muço, 2017).

The process of making Chaoshan handicrafts is itself a cultural symbol. For instance, the transmission methods of Chaoshan wood carving craftsmanship, the materials and tools used, may all contain specific cultural meanings and social values. We can explore how these symbols are understood and accepted within a broader social and cultural context. For example, the role of Chaoshan handicrafts in local festivals or celebrations, and how they are used to display family status and wealth. Through the perspective of semiotics, issues of cultural inheritance and innovation in these production processes can be explored (Lastaria et al., 2018). These activities not only strengthen the cohesion within the family but also reinforce the outside world's perception of the family's status (홍정민 & 김영신, 2001).

3.2 Chaoshan Traditional Handicraft Culture

Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture, as a brilliant pearl in southern China, is renowned for its unique artistic style and exquisite craftsmanship. The history of handicrafts in the Chaoshan region is extensive, covering various fields such as wood carving, paper-cutting, embroidery, and ceramics. These handicraft works are not only highly skilled but also contain rich cultural information, including the life wisdom, religious beliefs, and aesthetic pursuits of the Chaoshan people.

Zhang (2024) pointed out that the rich cultural foundation, solid industrial base, excellent talent team, and complete ecosystem of Chaozhou have jointly shaped this honor, making it an important symbol of Chaozhou's city image. Chen (2023) explored the innovative application of Chaozhou wood carving in souvenir design, emphasizing the importance of local cultural elements. Through design practices, he proposed how to spread regional culture through new carriers such as assembly models to promote rural economic and cultural revitalization. Chaoshan paper-cutting, with its unique composition and color, conveys auspicious and happy meanings. Chaoshan wood carving, with its delicate lines and vivid images, shows the Chaoshan people's love for nature and life. Lu (2023) research emphasized the importance of urban language landscapes in cross-cultural communication and took Chaozhou, Guangdong, as an example to propose ways to enhance urban language landscapes. She believes that by constructing a harmonious language ecology and enriching symbolic system resources, the cultural identity and image dissemination of the city can be strengthened. Su (2023) delved into the folk art of the Chaozhou Qinglong Temple Fair, revealing its symbolic and practical significance in Chaozhou's folk culture. By analyzing the decorative art and rituals of the temple fair, he explored the intrinsic motivation of Chaozhou people at home and abroad to revive the Qinglong Temple Fair. Xu (2023) discussed the history and artistic charm of Chaoshan inlaid porcelain as a building decoration art, and how it reflects people's pursuit of justice, wealth, and auspiciousness. She pointed out that Chaoshan inlaid porcelain faces challenges in inheritance and needs innovative application forms to further promote this culture. Yao (2019) discussed the integration of traditional cultural symbols from the Chaozhou region with animation character design to create characters that inherit traditional ethnic aesthetic emotions and encapsulate modern aesthetic cultural qualities. Zhang (2018) explored the expressive techniques of the innovative creation of Chaozhou hand-pulled pots "Xin Xiang Yin," breaking through the cultural limitations of traditional Chaozhou hand-pulled pots and integrating a modern style that dares to express love, achieving a fusion of tradition and modernity. Chen (2023) analyzed the current situation of Chaozhou culture dissemination and the revitalization path of folk art under the background of globalization and cultural diversification.



Figure 2: Chaoshan Embroidery Work "Nine Dragon Wall"

Source: Photographed by the Researcher at Bijia Mountain Calligraphy and Painting Academy, Chaozhou City

In the traditional handicraft culture of Chaoshan, visual and linguistic symbols are interwoven to form a rich system of cultural symbols. Visual symbols, such as the patterns, colors, and shapes of handicrafts, often express specific cultural meanings through metaphors and symbols. Linguistic symbols, such as the naming of handicrafts and associated legends, further strengthen the transmission and understanding of these cultural meanings. For example, common Chaoshan

embroidery patterns (Figure 2) often integrate natural elements like dragons, phoenixes, flowers, and landscapes. These patterns are not only decorative but also carry profound cultural implications such as auspiciousness and blessings.

Through the perspective of semiotics, this paper can more deeply understand the unique charm and deep connotations of Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture. This not only helps us better protect and inherit this valuable cultural heritage but also provides us with a new way of cultural interpretation, promoting cultural exchange and dissemination.

4. Research Methods

This paper comprehensively employs various research methods including literature review, historical data analysis, field investigation, in-depth interviews, case analysis, comparative studies, and a semiotic theoretical framework to thoroughly organize and analyze the symbolic system in Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture. Through these methods, the study reveals the evolution patterns of Chaoshan handicrafts such as embroidery, wood carving, and paper-cutting in different historical periods and cultural contexts. It discusses how these symbols convey the connotations and values of Chaoshan culture and analyzes their paths of inheritance and innovation in modern society. Additionally, the study uses art element deconstruction and reconstruction, as well as folk semiotics analysis, to promote the application of traditional symbols in modern design and cultural dissemination, providing theoretical support and practical guidance for the protection and inheritance of Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture.

5. Research Theory and Framework

The analytical framework adopted in this study combines semiotic theory to interpret motifs, drawing on the semiotic methods from the analysis framework in the article "Dragonheads and needlework: textile work and cultural heritage in a Guizhou county" to analyze the hierarchical system and family concepts in Chaoshan handicrafts. The article explores two value systems of the embroidery handicrafts by Miao women in Taijiang County, Guizhou: one is the commodity value in the marketization process, and the other is the symbolic value in cultural heritage (Oakes, 2002).

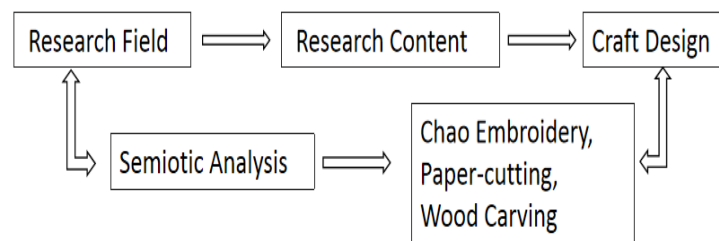


Figure 3. Research Framework of This Paper

Source: Created by the Researcher

The research framework of this paper (Figure 3) is based on semiotic analysis theory, treating the symbols in Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture as a complex symbolic system. Through literature review and historical data analysis, the historical evolution and cultural background of these symbols are systematically organized. Field investigations and in-depth interviews are used to explore the deep cultural connotations and social values behind the symbols. Case analysis and comparative research methods reveal the paths of inheritance and innovation of these symbols in contemporary society. The study not only focuses on the form and function of symbols but also deeply analyzes the cultural identity and social values they carry, providing a theoretical basis and practical guidance for the protection, inheritance, and innovative development of Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture.

6. RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

6.1 Symbolic Symbols in Chaoshan Traditional Handicrafts - Chaoyang Paper-cutting

In Chaoshan traditional handicrafts, the use of symbolic symbols is particularly prominent. Chaoyang folk paper-cutting, as a rich system of symbolic symbols, has a wide range of themes covering flowers, birds, insects, fish, animals, and social and cultural elements such as opera characters and common people. Once these elements are incorporated into the vision of paper-cutting artists, they are transformed into vivid works of art through exquisite skills. These works not only present a variety of categories in form, such as ceremonial and gift flowers, folk legends, mythological stories, and traditional opera characters, but also carry deeper cultural and social values in terms of semiotics.

From a semiotic perspective, these paper-cutting works are not only products of material culture but also reflect the life philosophy and aesthetic tastes of the Chaoshan people. They convey community cohesion and a sense of identity through the encoding and decoding process of visual symbols, while also providing a window for the outside world to understand Chaoshan culture. The dissemination and acceptance of these paper-cutting artworks not only strengthen the connections within families and communities but also reinforce the outside world's perception of the status and value of Chaoshan culture. Therefore, Chaoyang folk paper-cutting is not only a form of artistic expression but also an important symbol of cultural inheritance and social communication in Chaoshan.

Wu (2013) research focuses on the relationship between Chaozhou paper-cutting and folk symbols. Starting from the perspective of folk semiotics, he analyzes how paper-cutting conveys the spirit of folklore, revealing the important role of paper-cutting art in passing on the roots of folk culture. For example, the themes of Chaoyang folk paper-cutting art come from life, and the rich folk activities provide a stage for paper-cutting artists to showcase their talents. Wu and Xie (2012), in their study of the decorative symbols of Chaozhou paper-cutting, pointed out that the decorative symbols of Chaozhou paper-cutting are composed of three elements: "form," "color," and "meaning." Behind these elements are traditional philosophical thoughts and cultural concepts. Their research further emphasizes the importance of the visual symbols constructed by Chaozhou paper-cutting under the visual context of regional culture.



Figure 4. Lian Yingjun's "Prosperous Era's Might" from Shantou

Source: Chen (2020)

From the perspective of symbolic meaning, every cut and pattern in paper-cutting art is not merely a display of visual art but also a conveyance of deep cultural significance and social values. The purpose of these works is not only to beautify and decorate but also to serve as an important medium for teaching etiquette, promoting virtues, and celebrating life. The subject matter often focuses on symbolic themes such as "auspiciousness and celebration," "blessings and longevity," "fivefold auspiciousness," "prosperous offspring," "abundant harvests," and "thriving livestock" (Figure 4).

These themes play a role in decorating and enhancing the auspicious atmosphere during various festivals and celebrations, such as the eight traditional festivals, New Year's deity processions, Lantern Festival competitions, Mid-Autumn moon worship, wedding customs, and ancestral worship.



Figure 5. Chen Xiaoyan's "Red-Headed Boat"

Source: Chen Xiaoyan. (2020)

In Chaoyang paper-cutting, the characters for longevity (Shou) and infinity (Wan) are not only visual symbols but also expressions of wishes for a long life and everything going as desired. These symbols have a deep historical and cultural foundation in Chaoshan culture, and their existence is not merely for decoration but also for conveying ideals and aspirations for life. The incorporation of natural elements such as wind, rain, and clouds are not only a depiction of the natural world but also a sign of reverence and supplication towards natural forces (Figure 5). This worship and respect for nature hold an important place in Chaoshan culture, reflecting people's dependence on and respect for the natural environment. The use of homophonic symbols, such as fish (representing abundance or "yu") and bats (representing fortune or "fu"), reflects the Chaoshan people's pursuit of auspicious meanings. The use of these homophones not only demonstrates the playfulness of language but also expresses people's hopes and blessings for a good life. Mythological symbols, such as dragons and phoenixes, and tales like the Eight Immortals crossing the sea, represent the Chaoshan people's yearning for a good life and their pursuit of transcendence from the mundane world. The use of these mythological symbols in handicrafts not only enriches the expressiveness of the art but also deepens the cultural depth and symbolic meaning of the works.

6.2 Auspicious Symbols in Chaoshan Traditional Handicrafts - Chaoshan Wood Carving

The inheritance and development of Chaozhou wood carving are reflected not only in the transmission of skills but also in the continuation of cultural connotations. From a semiotic perspective, Chaozhou wood carvers, through long-term practical exploration, have gradually developed a unique set of artistic treatment techniques. Their carving skills include relief carving, intaglio carving, saw-through carving, pierced carving, and round carving. The inheritance and development of these skills are key to the continuity of Chaozhou wood carving culture. The visual symbols in Chaozhou wood carving works, such as form, composition, and color, are carriers of cultural meanings and aesthetic pursuits. Additionally, the linguistic symbols in Chaozhou wood carving works, such as naming and legendary stories, are important reflections of cultural connotations and value concepts. The dissemination and acceptance of these symbols in Chaoshan society, as well as their impact on the lifestyle and values of the Chaoshan people, are important contents of semiotic analysis. Chen (2020) explored the relationship between Chaozhou wood carving craftsmanship and the life history of craftsmen through field investigations and oral materials. She found that the selection and use of memory in the craftsmen's oral narratives reflect the social status of manual craftsmen in the context of the times, and how the local knowledge of "excellence through precision" becomes a cultural symbol.

Zhang (2024) conducted an in-depth analysis of the artistic form of Chaozhou wood carving "shrimp and crab basket" and discussed how to innovate this traditional art form in modern cultural and creative design. She emphasized that to inherit and develop intangible cultural heritage, it is necessary to innovate and breakthrough in form to adapt to modern aesthetics. Cai and Song (2024) analyzed the aesthetic expression of Chaozhou wood carving "lobster and crab basket" in their article and discussed its potential as a vehicle for aesthetic education. They believe that the superb skills and unique artistic perspective of Chaozhou wood carving make it an important symbol of Chaozhou culture. Chen (2023) explored the innovative application of Chaozhou wood carving in souvenir design, emphasizing the importance of local cultural elements. Through design practice, he proposed how to spread regional culture through new carriers such as assembly models to promote rural economic and cultural revitalization. When exploring the cultural symbols and artistic expressions of the Chaoshan area, the research of many scholars provides us with profound insights. Du (2016) provided a cultural interpretation of the thematic elements of Chaozhou wood carving, pointing out that these wood carvings are not only ambassadors of Chaozhou's image but also carriers of folk culture.



Figure 6. Gilded Wood Carving "Lotus Fun"

Source: Baishi Garden. (n.d.)

In Chaozhou wood carving, common characters such as "Fu" (blessing) and "Shou" (longevity) are not only visual symbols but also expressions of wishes for a long and happy life. These symbols, including auspicious patterns, religious beliefs, and mythological legends, represent the unique understanding and expression of life, nature, and the universe by the Chaoshan people. The symbols in Chaozhou wood carving are rich and varied, showcasing local life as well as the reenactment of traditional Central Plains cultural patterns. For example, the lotus in wood carvings symbolizes purity and elegance (Figure 6), while dragon and phoenix patterns represent auspiciousness and power. The use of homophonic symbols such as fish (surplus) and bats (blessing), as well as mythological symbols like dragons and phoenixes, and the Eight Immortals crossing the sea, reflect the Chaoshan people's aspiration for a good life and their pursuit of transcendence from the mundane world. These symbols not only reflect the artistic characteristics of Chaozhou wood carving but also the cultural traditions and social values of the Chaoshan region. The "gilded wood carving" technique in Chaozhou wood carving, adorned with gold paint, makes the wood carvings more magnificent, reflecting the Chaoshan people's pursuit of wealth and status. Zhang and Zhou (2018), through their study of the symbolic patterns in Chaozhou's traditional gilded wood carvings, revealed that these carvings serve not only as decorative elements but also as expressions of residents' desires for peace, fortune, and other good wishes, while also reflecting cultural concepts such as Taoism and Buddhism. They emphasized the important position of these carvings in Chaoshan regional architecture and their role in conveying positive values of engagement with the world.

Researchers have summarized common auspicious symbols in Chaoshan wood carving, including dragons, phoenixes, qilins, bats, plum blossoms, peonies, bamboo, the Fu Lu Shou symbol, and three-legged frogs. These symbols each represent the following cultural meanings:

1. Dragon (Lung): In Chinese culture, the dragon is a symbol of auspiciousness and power, often used to denote nobility and majesty. In Chaoshan wood carving, the dragon carries similar significance, symbolizing strength and good fortune (Mulyono & Thamrin, 2010).
2. Phoenix (Feng): The phoenix symbolizes nobility and beauty, often appearing with the dragon to represent the harmony of yin and yang and good fortune. In Chaoshan wood carving, the phoenix is also seen as a symbol of happiness and prosperity (Mulyono & Thamrin, 2010).
3. Qilin (Qilin): The qilin is a mythical creature symbolizing auspiciousness and longevity. It typically appears in important celebrations and ceremonies, representing good luck and a long life (Mulyono & Thamrin, 2010).
4. Bat (Fu): While bats may have negative connotations in other cultures, in Chaoshan wood carving, they often symbolize blessings and good fortune due to the similarity in pronunciation between "bat" and "blessing" in Chinese (Alsaumi Ishtifa, 2024).
5. Plum Blossom (Plum Blossom): The plum blossom symbolizes resilience and purity, often used to express the pursuit and praise of fine qualities (Alsaumi Ishtifa, 2024).
6. Peony (Peony Blossom): The peony is a very important flower in traditional China, symbolizing wealth and prosperity. In Chaoshan wood carving, the peony is often used to express the aspiration for a wealthy life (Alsaumi Ishtifa, 2024).
7. Bamboo (Bamboo Tree): Bamboo symbolizes resilience and purity in Chinese culture, often used to express the pursuit of noble character.
8. Fu Lu Shou (Fu Lu Shou Symbol): This combination of three characters represents blessings, wealth, and longevity, respectively. This symbol is very common in Chaoshan wood carving, symbolizing the wish for a happy life.
9. Three-legged Frog (Three-legged Frog): The three-legged frog is believed to have the power to ward off evil in Chinese folk belief, and thus in Chaoshan wood carving, it is also used to symbolize protection and peace (Alsaumi Ishtifa, 2024).

6.3 Clan Authority Symbols in Chaoshan Traditional Handicrafts - Chao Embroidery

In Chao embroidery art, the history and glory of specific families or clans may be reflected through unique patterns and decorations, such as clan totems and patterns symbolizing special social status (such as double dragons, qilins, etc.), as well as dragon patterns symbolizing power and social status (Peran Ragam et al., 2011). The dragon and phoenix patterns in Chao embroidery, with their magnificent and solemn images, have become another visual highlight in Chaoshan traditional handicrafts. As auspicious totems in traditional Chinese culture, dragons and phoenixes symbolize nobility, auspiciousness, and power. According to Yin (2002), decorative patterns are not only decorative arts but also another form of expression of clan communities in material culture. This indicates that in Chao embroidery art, specific patterns and decorations may also carry similar historical and cultural significance, used to reflect the identity and glory of specific families or clans. Liu (2024) research focuses on the morphological semantics of "auspicious beasts" in Chao embroidery, analyzing the skills and cultural connotations of these "auspicious beasts" in Chao embroidery.

(Kwon & Lee, 2015) provide information about embroidered pillows during the Joseon Dynasty, mentioning different preferences of the royal family and ordinary families in patterns, colors, materials, and decorations. In particular, patterns preferred by the royal family, such as double

dragons, qilins, and five peaks, symbolize special social status. This suggests that in Chao embroidery art, similar patterns and decorations may also be used to symbolize the noble status and historical glory of families or clans. Trihatmojo (2010) discusses the symbolic meaning of Potehi shadow play costumes, where the dragon pattern is interpreted as a symbol of power and social status. This indicates that in Chao embroidery art, similar patterns and decorations may also be used to symbolize the power and glory of families or clans.

In Chaozhou embroidery, these patterns are given new life, becoming symbols of the Chaozhou people's pursuit of authority and auspiciousness. These patterns not only embellish and beautify handicrafts but also serve as a vessel for the spiritual sustenance of the Chaozhou people.

6.4 Regional Symbols in Chaoshan Traditional Handicrafts - Symbols in Chaoshan Ceramics

After delving into the symbolic characteristics of Chaozhou wood carving, Chaoyang paper-cutting, and Chao embroidery, let's shift our focus to another traditional handicraft of the Chaoshan area - Chaoshan ceramics. As an important part of Chaoshan culture, Chaoshan ceramics also contain rich regional symbols and cultural symbols. Deng (2018) studied the significance of ceramic culture in the systematic design of Chaozhou city brand image symbols, pointing out that ceramic culture is of great significance to the regional cultural characteristics and overall economic and cultural development of Chaozhou city brand image. These symbols not only reflect the natural environment, social structure, and historical changes of the Chaoshan area but also reflect the aesthetic tastes and philosophy of life of the Chaoshan people. In Chaoshan ceramics, we can find a series of unique patterns and decorative styles that are closely connected with the local customs and sentiments, becoming an important mark of Chaoshan cultural identity and regional characteristics.

The symbolic system in Chaoshan ceramics includes everything from natural landscapes to social life, from historical legends to religious beliefs. For example, marine patterns on ceramics reflect the coastal geographical characteristics and the influence of marine culture of the Chaoshan area; while floral and plant patterns showcase the natural scenery of the Chaoshan area and the aspiration for a harmonious nature. In addition, mythological and historical figure patterns in Chaoshan ceramics not only tell fascinating stories but also convey the values and moral concepts of the Chaoshan people. Liu (2019) interprets the inheritance of Chaozhou ceramic culture from three aspects: artistic style, decorative theme, and expressive technique, and emphasizes the importance of promoting the spirit of craftsmanship in the development and innovation of Chaozhou ceramics. The use of these symbols makes Chaoshan ceramics not only daily necessities but also artworks carrying the spirit of Chaoshan culture. Deng (2018) also discussed the systematic design strategy of Chaozhou city brand image symbols based on ceramic culture, proposing that the Chaozhou municipal government and the ceramic industry should adopt specific and effective implementation strategies to promote its development.

Researchers summarize the evolution characteristics of regional symbols in Chaoshan ceramic handicrafts in the following aspects:

1. Cultural inheritance and evolution of symbols: As a form of cultural expression, the design and production process of Chaoshan ceramic handicrafts incorporate a large number of traditional cultural elements and symbols. These symbols are not only decorative but also carry rich cultural meanings and historical information. For example, ceramics from the Chaoshan area often use traditional patterns such as dragons and phoenixes for decoration, which are not only beautiful but also symbolize auspiciousness and power (Peng, 2017). Wu and Xie (2011) pointed out that Chaozhou ceramic decoration is not only an art form but also a cultural symbol when exploring the cultural connotations of Chaozhou ceramic decoration. They emphasized the importance of the themes and content of Chaozhou ceramic decorative

art in reflecting the ideology and aesthetic tastes of different periods and different social strata.

2. Social change and adaptation of symbols: Over time, as the social environment and people's lifestyles change, the symbols in Chaoshan ceramic handicrafts have also been adjusted and innovated accordingly. For example, in modern society, Chaoshan ceramics have begun to introduce more modern elements and abstract designs to adapt to the aesthetic needs of the younger generation and market changes (Peng, 2017).
3. Technological progress and expression of symbols: Technological advancements have also provided new possibilities for the expression of symbols in Chaoshan ceramic handicrafts. The development of modern ceramic production technology enables designers to more precisely control the shape and texture of ceramics, thereby better expressing complex symbolic meanings. This technological progress not only enhances the artistic value of the works but also gives traditional symbols new life in the modern context (Peng, 2017).
4. Globalization and dissemination of symbols: With the deepening of globalization, Chaoshan ceramic handicrafts and their symbols have begun to reach the world. This has not only promoted cultural exchange and understanding but also made the symbols of Chaoshan ceramics widely recognized and appreciated globally. This cross-cultural dissemination further enriches the semiotic connotations of Chaoshan ceramics, making them an important bridge connecting different cultures (Peng, 2017).

6.5 Summary of Symbol Types in Chaoshan Traditional Handicrafts

From the discussion of symbolic symbols, auspicious symbols, clan authority symbols, and regional symbols in Chaoshan traditional handicrafts, it is clear that these symbols are not only diverse in form but also distinctive in cultural connotations and social functions.

Table 1: Summary of Symbol Types in Chaoshan Traditional Handicrafts

| Chaoshan Traditional Handicraft Semiotic Analysis Table | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Symbol Type | Symbol Example | Symbol Interpretation | Cultural Connotation | Social Function |
| Symbolic Symbol | Fish pattern in Chaoshan paper-cutting | The fish symbolizes surplus and wealth in Chinese culture | Aspiration for a good life | Social cohesion, cultural heritage |
| Auspicious Symbol | Opera characters in Chaoshan wood carving | Opera characters showcase the opera culture of the Chaoshan region | Preservation and promotion of traditional culture | Art appreciation, historical record |
| Clan Symbol | Dragon and phoenix patterns in Chao embroidery | The dragon and phoenix symbolize auspiciousness, nobility, and power | Pursuit of authority and auspiciousness | Decoration and beautification, spiritual sustenance |
| Regional Symbol | Marine and floral/plant patterns in Chaoshan ceramics | Reflect the coastal geographical characteristics and natural scenery of the Chaoshan region | Aspiration for harmonious nature and reflection of regional cultural characteristics | Daily use items, art pieces |

Source: Created by the Researcher

As summarized in Table 1, the types of symbols in Chaoshan traditional handicrafts, ranging from visual symbols to auspicious patterns and regional symbols, together form a rich cultural map of the

Chaoshan area. These symbols not only carry the Chaoshan people's pursuit of a good life and respect for nature but also reflect their emphasis on family honor and social status. In terms of social function, these handicrafts are not only daily use items but also important media for cultural heritage and social cohesion. They play an indispensable role in festivals, handicraft exhibitions, home decorations, and community activities. Through display and exchange in these occasions, the symbols of Chaoshan traditional handicrafts are disseminated and continued, thus maintaining the community's cultural identity and historical memory.

In summary, the types of symbols in Chaoshan traditional handicrafts are not only the result of artistic creation but also a reflection of the profound cultural heritage of the Chaoshan area. They continue to play a role in conveying cultural values, strengthening social ties, and promoting cultural diversity in contemporary society. The social value of Chaoshan traditional handicrafts is mainly reflected in their contribution to the local economy and their role in cultural heritage. Handicrafts, as a form of cultural expression, can not only increase community income but also promote the development of tourism, thereby driving local economic growth (Fatt & Bakansing, 2016). A deep analysis and understanding of these symbol types can better recognize the important position of Chaoshan traditional handicrafts in cultural protection and heritage, as well as their potential value in maintaining cultural diversity and promoting cross-cultural exchange in the context of globalization.


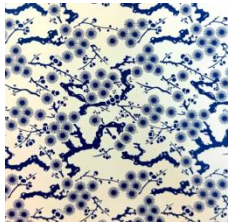


7. DISCUSSIONS

7.1 Redesign of Pattern Symbols from a Semiotic Perspective

After analyzing the types of symbols and their cultural connotations in Chaoshan traditional handicrafts, the researchers also discussed the modern application and innovation of these symbols. Symbol extraction and redesign are key steps in integrating traditional cultural elements into modern design, which not only helps to maintain the continuity of Chaoshan culture but also rejuvenates it in contemporary society. The process of symbol extraction involves in-depth research on visual symbolic symbols, auspicious pattern symbols, and regional symbols in Chaoshan traditional handicrafts. This process requires designers to understand the history and cultural background of each symbol and to identify their potential value and application scenarios in modern society. Redesign is a creative transformation process that requires designers to explore new forms of expression and application while retaining the core characteristics of traditional symbols, allowing these symbols to be reinterpreted and utilized in new cultural and market environments.

Based on consumer research and analysis, and in combination with the contemporary consumers' desire for blessings, the researchers have delved into the implicit semantics of Chaozhou embroidery pattern symbols and extended and transformed the semantics using the extracted visual symbols.

Table 2: Extraction and Redesign of Chao Embroidery Symbols

| Symbol Name | Illustration | Symbol Redesign | Symbol Name | Illustration | Symbol Redesign |
|----------------------|---|---|-----------------|--|---|
| Plum Blossom Pattern |  |  | Peacock Pattern |  |  |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|--|---|
| <p>Peach of Longevity Pattern</p> |  |  | <p>Phoenix Pattern</p> |  |  |
| <p>Dragon Pattern</p> |  |  | <p>Jade Ruyi</p> |  |  |
| <p>Goldfish</p> |  |  | <p>Magpie</p> |  |  |
| <p>Pine and Cypress Pattern</p> |  |  | <p>Swastika Pattern</p> |  |  |
| <p>Ruyi Pattern</p> |  |  | <p>Cloud Pattern</p> |  |  |

Source: Created by the Researcher

As shown in Table 2, the researcher has categorized and organized typical patterns of Chaozhou embroidery, retaining their original shaping characteristics and abstracting them into geometric graphic designs. For example, the contour of a peacock's feather is abstracted into a diamond shape, while maintaining the craftsmanship features of gold thread in Chao embroidery, creating a new form that is both traditional and modern. These traditional Chinese patterns are rich in symbolic meanings, such as the plum blossom, one of the "Four Gentlemen," symbolizing resilience; the peacock representing beauty and nobility; the peach of longevity symbolizing a long life; the phoenix symbolizing power and balance of yin and yang; the dragon symbolizing strength and good fortune; the jade ruyi symbolizing good luck; the goldfish symbolizing wealth; the magpie symbolizing

auspiciousness; the pine and cypress symbolizing longevity; and the cloud pattern symbolizing infinity. These patterns remain an important part of Chinese art and culture.

In the process of symbol extraction and design transformation, designers need not only to deeply understand the culture and history behind each pattern but also innovatively integrate these elements into modern works, so that they can convey the traditional spirit and resonate with contemporary audiences. This transformation is not only a cultural heritage but also an innovation of traditional handicrafts to adapt to the needs of modern society. Through such design practices, the symbols of Chaoshan traditional handicrafts can continue to be inherited and developed under the new era background, and also inject rich cultural connotations and historical depth into modern design.

7.2 Redesign of Color Symbols from a Semiotic Perspective

The researcher extracts the colors used in Chaozhou embroidery for sacrificial items and ornamental embroidery, combining the two while retaining their bright and high-purity characteristics. The colors are optimized, with attention to the contrast of high-purity colors and the addition of similar color combinations, making the image more harmonious and aesthetically pleasing, with richer layers. The use of gradient colors and virtual and real color light sensation adds many details and textures. The consumer group can strengthen the cultural symbol concept of Chaozhou embroidery through color matching.

7.3 Innovative Design of Visual Element Combinations from a Semiotic Perspective

In the design process, graphic combinations are used to convey emotions and meanings. Chaozhou embroidery contains auspicious cultural implications. For example, the phoenix in Chaozhou embroidery symbolizes good fortune and conveys a strong folk flavor in the works. Creative thinking is used for combination and innovative design, creating visual images that are in line with modern aesthetics, mainly based on auspicious themes. Metaphorical expression methods are used for element combinations in creative design. Based on the composition method of Chaozhou embroidery, suitable pattern expression forms are adopted, with balanced pattern arrangement, natural interweaving, clear primary and secondary elements, and highlighted overall artistic effects. This allows the works to more deeply display cultural connotations and have a stronger appeal.

8. CONCLUSION

Through in-depth research on Chaoshan traditional handicraft culture and the systematic analysis and interpretation of its symbols using semiotic theory, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. **Applicability of Semiotics:** Semiotics provides an effective theoretical tool and analytical framework for parsing the cultural symbols in Chaoshan traditional handicrafts. Through the perspective of semiotics, this study reveals the diversity and complexity of symbols in Chaoshan handicrafts and their key role in conveying cultural information and values.
2. **Symbols and Cultural Connotations:** The symbols in Chaoshan traditional handicrafts, such as embroidery, wood carving, paper-cutting, and ceramics, not only have aesthetic value but are also carriers of the deep history and unique values of Chaoshan culture. These symbols convey the Chaoshan people's pursuit of a good life, respect for nature, and aspiration for social harmony through their visual and linguistic characteristics.
3. **Inheritance and Innovation of Symbols:** In the context of modern society, the inheritance and innovation of Chaoshan traditional handicraft symbols are particularly important. By extracting and redesigning traditional symbols, Chaoshan handicrafts adapt to modern aesthetics and market demands, achieving an organic combination of tradition and modernity.

In summary, this study not only deepens the understanding of the cultural connotations of Chaoshan traditional handicrafts but also provides new perspectives and ideas for the protection, inheritance, and innovative development of Chaoshan culture. Through in-depth research and innovative application of these precious cultural heritages, we can ensure that they continue to play an important role in modern society and contribute to the protection and promotion of global cultural diversity.

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