Study on the Status and Development of Suzhou Folding Fans under the Background of Intangible Cultural Heritage

2020, Vol.1 No.2
© Art & Design Research 2020
DOI: 10.37420/j.adr.2020.009
https://masonpublish.org

Yuanji Zhu*
School of Fine Arts, Suzhou Vocational University, Suzhou, China
*Corresponding author, e-mail: 906138481@qq.com

Abstract

Starting from the background of the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, this thesis discusses the development status and trends of Suzhou folding fans, taking the inheritors as clues, and studying the traditional craftsmanship of Suzhou folding fans from the perspectives of social culture and inheritance technology sustainable development, and its future It is of great practical significance to discuss the problems of development.

Keywords

Suzhou Folding Fans; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Status and Development Management

Introduction

There are many types of fans in our country, and almost all available things are used to make fans. Needless to say, bamboo fans and feather fans, such as rushes and wheat stalks, can be made into fans of different styles. The earliest real fans that can be seen in our country are the bamboo fan from the Warring States Period unearthed in Mashan, Jiangling, Hubei, and the bamboo fan from the Western Han Dynasty in Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan. The swing handles of the two fans are on one side, and their shape is like a shrunken door. The swing handle is the extension of the door shaft. Folding fan is the abbreviation of folding fan. It uses bamboo, wood or ivory as the bone, tough paper or silk as the surface, and can be folded, so it is also called bat fan, spreading fan, bone-gathering fan, gathering head fan, etc. . In the mid-Ming Dynasty, Suzhou became one of the important producing areas of folding fans. Xie Zhaozhe's "Five Miscellaneous Cu" Volume 12 says: "Shangzi is forbidden from the palace, down to the scholars, but the Wu and Shu fans are

the most popular. The Shu fan enters the imperial court every year, and the donation is not less than one million (Li, 2015). Used, one or two straight gold for each handle, only a few baht for the price. Wuzhong clay gold is the most suitable for painting and calligraphy. For those who give to the palace, all are Wu fans." Then he said: "Shu fans are like wine, but non-rich Zizhong is in the hands of women. It is expensive for Wu Shanchu to decorate his face with heavy gold makeup, and the near is the bones. The system is extremely refined. There are Liuyutai, white bamboo as the bone, the thickness and weight are weighed, there is no difference in the thickness, the smoothness can be learned, each handle is worth half of platinum, and the one who is also sleek and useless." The reason why Suzhou became a folding fan it is an important place of origin, and is unique in its elegance and fashion, with its social, economic and cultural factors (Ying & Yao, 2019).

Research on the Development Status of Suzhou Folding Fans

Suzhou has been a gathering place for literati since ancient times. Among the many cultural traditions handed down, playing with folding fans has become an elegant place for literati and celebrities. The most difficult part in the process of making a folding fan is the fan bone. As the representative inheritor of the "fan-making skills" of Suzhou intangible heritage, Xu Yilin is known as the "fan-making master" and "the king of Jiangnan fan" in Suzhou. The material for the fan bones is selected winter bamboo from Anhui and Zhejiang provinces, and a small number of suitable bamboos are selected from thousands of roots.

The craftsmanship pays attention to knives, filing skills, baking, etc. Insist on hand-made fans, polished fan bones are smooth and moist, and representative works include "water mill bones". Xu Yilin was born in Yangzhou in October 1933. At the age of 15, he studied fan making skills with Hu Handong from his teacher. In 1954, he joined the Suzhou fan factory as a fan technician. In the 1980s, he was responsible for the proofing and design of fan factory products (Zhou & Ge, 2015). He has been doing it for decades. The folding fan made by him has a strong ancient meaning and maintains a "boat-like" fan shape. It is characterized by convenient use and inherits the fan-making style of old artists, focusing more on the experience of the fan in use. While working at the Suzhou Fan Factory, Xu Yilin named a folding fan he designed "Peacock Brand". The moment he opened the folding fan, it was as colourful as a peacock. Due to the exquisite workmanship, the "Peacock" brand water mill bamboo folding fan bone won the Jiangsu Province Light Industry Product Award. Subsequently, "Peacock" became the registered trademark of Suzhou Fan Factory. In 1983, the 2-meter-long giant folding fan he designed and produced was the largest in the country at that time and caused a sensation in the fan industry across the country. Therefore, when Su Fan was successfully selected for the first batch of national “intangible cultural heritage” projects, it was discovered when the inheritors were evaluated that most of the fan artisans in Suzhou Fan Factory had already switched careers. Only Xu Yilin persisted in this way and improved the skills of Su

Fan (Shen, 2017). It has been passed on continuously, and therefore it has no dispute to become the representative inheritor of the national “intangible cultural heritage”.

Under the influence of Xu Yilin, the youngest son Xu Jiadong has been following his father in the fan making business, learning fan making techniques, and has conducted in-depth research on the crafts, types, and techniques of traditional Chinese fan bones. Now he is also one of the leading figures of Su Fan, but he did not completely inherit Xu Yilin's fan-making style, but moved closer to the modern aesthetic. His fan shape is no longer the traditional "boat shape", but has made the appearance thinner. Some are more gentle and refined. Xu Jiadong has also made certain innovations in fan making. The traditional fan making process emphasizes that the big bones must be polished with horsetail water. After polishing, the fan bones can illuminate people. Xu Jiadong went the other way and made "matte" instead of Fan bones. Traditional ossicles are top-grade if they are not air-tight from the side. Xu Jiadong also made improvements in this respect. He did the opposite, instead sparse ossicles, challenging traditional aesthetic viewpoints with innovative eyes.

When it comes to the symbol of Suzhou folding fans, I have to mention Xu Yilin's apprentice, Wang Jian, who is known as the youngest master of Su fan making and a new generation of Su fan leader. At that time, Wang Jian, who graduated from junior high school, wanted to enter the mahogany carving factory when he was looking for a job, but he was turned away because of his lack of height. Later, he walked to the entrance of the Suzhou Fan Factory and a master inside beckoned him to go in. It was this beckon that brought out a leading figure of Su Fan today. Now Wang Jian lives in Suzhou and is mainly engaged in the restoration of ancient fans. Only a dozen new fans are made every year, which is hard to find on the market. The price is far higher than Xu Yilin and Xu Jiadong, but it is still rare to see. Wang Jian has high attainments in the restoration of ancient fans. The acacia fan and small lacquer fan in the Ming Dynasty were all restored by Wang Jian based on ancient books. At the same time, the restoration of various ancient fans is also one of Wang Jian’s ongoing work. Renew the broken ancient fan by Wang Jian's wonderful hands. "There is currently no innovation plan, because we have lost too many good things after many years of cultural faults. For Su Fan, retro is a kind of innovation." Wang Jian said so, and also added this sentence. Words are consistent in life and fan making. Through his unremitting efforts, the Suzhou folding fan, the traditional Chinese folk arts and crafts, has been continuously carried forward.

As one of Suzhou's most representative handicrafts, folding fans have always been a play for literati and doctors (Yang, 2017). The traditional art of fan making, with the participation of cultural people in the past, has reached its peak of glory, but the current status quo is not optimistic. Under multiple pressures such as machine batch production technology and malicious competition in the market, many folding fans on the market have a poor workmanship. It is very rough and can only be reduced to tourist souvenirs and simple tools for the public to cool off in the summer. It is getting

farther and farther away from "Huaishou Yawu". This has caused the public to pay less attention to fan making skills and collectors who invest in art Unwilling to bet funds on it. In addition, the art of folding fan is far from the current aesthetic concept and the taste of the younger generation, so its decline also reflects the way out of traditional arts and crafts. Since the fan-making system is purely manual operation, the process flow is complicated, the production is time-consuming and laborious, it is difficult to form a large-scale production, and the economic benefit is low. Nowadays, young people are not very able to endure hardship, and some intangible cultural heritage craftsmanship cannot have a high income, which makes it difficult to inherit. In addition, with the pace of urbanization, large bamboo forests have disappeared, and the raw materials for bamboo carvings have become scarce. All of these have led to the decline of Jiading's bamboo carving skills, and it is urgent to formulate measures to rescue them. It is worth mentioning that, in addition to the "master effect" of the inheritors of folding fan technology, there are also some people in the society who guard the technology and culture of folding fans who will join hands with fan artists to create their own brands and form a unique "brand effect" of folding fans. Many of them have created works that maintain both tradition and innovation, such as the famous "White Deer Bamboo Forest" in the industry in the past two years. The series of works produced by the founder "Dakun" design and fan maker Cheng Xinan are very good examples. Its biggest innovation lies in the creative change of the fan shape and the adjustment of the number of fan bones. These innovations have made folding fans closer to modern aesthetics, and at the same time gradually improved the collection function of folding fans. This combination of traditional and modern aesthetics has gradually been hailed, and thus has better promoted this intangible cultural heritage. Inheritance and protection have enabled more and more people to understand and love folding fan art.

Sustainable Development of Traditional Craftsmanship of Su Fan

Suzhou's arts and crafts production has a long history and a wide variety of varieties. Strengthening the protection and research of Suzhou folk crafts is not only the inheritance and development of folk culture, but also an important measure to achieve a culturally strong city and build a "cultural Suzhou". From the perspective of economic development, revitalizing folk arts and crafts and cultivating service industries with strong local characteristics have great potential for development. Especially after the liberation of the state’s emphasis on the arts and crafts industry, based on traditional culture, efforts to explore folk resources, vigorously develop folk crafts, improve the tourism environment, enhance the cultural atmosphere, and promote the simultaneous development of tourism industry and local economy, are of great significance Practical significance, this is also the historical responsibility given to us by the times (Zhang & Hu, 2018). The survival mechanism of market-oriented free trade has enabled Suzhou handicrafts to enter a virtuous circle of survival of the fittest and stimulated the development of high-tech skills. As a kind of traditional handicraft category, Su fan has gone through ups and downs and has established a foothold in traditional

handicrafts with its unique artistic value. It has a profound impact on the development of economy and culture, and it is listed as a national intangible culture. Legacy is a strong proof.

Through the previous explanation, we can see that all kinds of Su fan products are already symbols of cultural symbols in Jiangnan cultural life. It is not only a spare tool in people's lives, but also a collection of good things, integrating practicality and appreciation. Its unique form and size continue to inspire the artistic creation inspiration of arts and crafts artists, calligraphers and painters, such as the design and carving of the shape of the folding fan fan; the color and layout of the fan picture perfectly constitute the unique art of folding fan The charm of temperament. Su Shan's fan art is also widely used in daily life, whether it is movies, literature, or drama, we can see its shadow. For example, the shape of some utensils, the classic style of hollow windows and flower walls in garden buildings, the fans used as props in dancing, and the use of folding fans as poster design carriers in graphic design. Mr. Xu Xun, a famous collector in Suzhou, applied the art of calligraphy to folding fans. Through the difference in font size, number of characters, and layout, he conveyed the unique design concept and rich artistic courage of calligraphy on the fan. Su fan art can be said to be everywhere.

"For the intangible culture of a nation, its progress and evolution are manifested in two aspects: one is accumulation and the other is transmission." Suzhou fan-making skills have been continuously accumulated and transmitted from ancient times to the present. Down. However, it is a pity that most of the fans in Suzhou are currently private workshops and fan shops, which operate separately, do not communicate with each other, and some are still fortifying each other. In the field investigation, it was found that some stores were reluctant to disclose the source of their goods, fearing that others would know that they would create competitive pressure with them. Similarly, as fan artists, there are serious phenomena of not communicating with each other and even slandering each other. Faced with such a situation, the government can encourage artists to learn from each other, strengthen the exchanges of artists while protecting the uniqueness of the artists, and educate them in thought. This can be learned from other cities. Anji, Zhejiang has the earliest fan industry association in China, the Beijing Fan Cultural Association (Cai, 2016). The establishment of relevant industry associations to gather Suzhou fan artists and promote their exchanges can change the phenomenon of working behind closed doors. Although China issued the "Regulations on the Protection of Traditional Arts and Crafts" by the State Council in 1997, and later proposed intangible cultural heritage protection strategies, investigations have found that it has not really been implemented, and it has become a "slogan" in the traditional handicraft of the Su fan.

How to improve the overall situation of the Su fan industry has become a problem we need to think about. Regarding the existing problems, Mr. Sun of Sandalwood Fan Factory put forward his own ideas: "During the 12th Five-Year Plan, I want to establish a fan museum, and the other is to

establish a fan industry association. However, lack of funds is also the biggest problem. Without funds, everything is empty talk (Wang, 2018). Imagine holding the first fan boutique exposition in 2012, which will mainly display modern fans; to the second fan boutique exposition; and in the third year, an international fan boutique exposition. This has a unique feature every year. However, it would be difficult to make it without the support of the Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television and New Zealand." Through the boutique exhibition, it can promote the enthusiasm of practitioners in the fan industry and improve the overall quality of the fan. The key to improving skills lies in people. In this regard, artists should be encouraged to produce fans with high quality and good product quality. In particular, local governments should pay more attention, set up special funds, and conduct paid skills competition activities (Zhang & Hu, 2018). Hold relevant craft lectures or skill training, vigorously cultivate specialized talents in Su fan skills, improve the overall quality of fan making artists, and build a comprehensive intangible cultural heritage protection and inheritance system. Talents make an enterprise or industry stand alone. The fundamental guarantee of defeat. For counterfeit and shoddy goods, the industry and commerce management department should take corresponding measures to crack down on them. As fan manufacturers and inheritors, they can avoid them in various ways and have their own anti-counterfeiting marks. For example, the sandalwood fan factory has a special verification mark (Chu, Tan & Chen, 2018).

Conclusion

In recent years, driven by the national intangible cultural heritage protection policy and collection boom, Su Shan has returned to people's vision. The revival of Su fan making skills has also provided an important technical backing for Chengfan. Every art inheritor is committed to the research and production of Su fans. Many artists who worked in sandalwood fan factories and folding fan factories have begun to pick up tools again. Some even set up shops to operate Su fans. Driven by this kind of vigorous wind, the development of Su Shan can be described as the right time and place, and the three are perfect.

Funding

This paper is supported by the following two projects:

[1] “Outdoing-Predecessor Cultivating Project” for Outstanding Young Backbone Teachers from Jiangsu Provincial Higher Schools[No. 201905000023].

[2] Suzhou Vocational University Innovation Teams for Scientific Research “Suzhou-Fan Inheriting and Innovating Team” [No. 201804000079].

References

Li, L.P. (2015). Research on the status quo of Suzhou folding fans under the background of "intangible heritage". *Art Science and Technology*, 7(8), 78-78.

Ying, Z., & Yao, Y.L. (2019). Research on the cultivation of non-genetic inheritors of Suzhou Biluochun tea-making skills under the background of cultural self-confidence: A case study of Suzhou Vocational College of Tourism and Finance. *Research on Communication*, 6(16), 12-13.

Zhou, M., & Ge, X.M. (2015). Research on the Status Quo and Countermeasures of "Fan Making Skills" in Suzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Journal of Suzhou Vocational and Technical College of Arts and Crafts*, 7(1), 51-54.

Shen, Y. (2017). Research on Suzhou City Cultural Brand Positioning from the Perspective of "Intangible Cultural Heritage". *Journal of Urumqi Vocational University*, 6(03), 52-55.

Yang, S. (2017). Research on the Inheritance Mode of Contemporary Intangible Heritage in the Background of Cultural and Creative Industries—Taking "Xiangshan Gang" as an example. *Shandong Textile Economy*, 250(12), 16-17.

Zhang, Y., & Hu, Q. (2018). Research on the Status Quo of Inheritance of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Boat Boxing Skills in Suzhou. *Wushu Science*, 3(10), 39-41.

Cai, M.L. (2016). Analysis on the Status Quo of Suzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Jiangsu Business Review*, 12(011), 48-52.

Wang, B.Y. (2018). Research on the connotation of folding fan cover in Qing Dynasty. *Western Leather*, 40(21), 48-48.

Zhang, Y., & Hu, Q. (2018). Research on the Status Quo of Inheritance of Boat Boxing Skills in Suzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Wushu Research*, 3(10), 39-41.

Chu, L.Y., Tan, Y., & Chen, W.D. (2018). Research on the Status Quo and Countermeasures of Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance Education. *Popular Literature*, 7(003), 223-224.