Vol.2 No.5 2021
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2021.038

Inheritance and Protection of Mulao Ethnic Cloth Dyeing Technique under Intangible Cultural Heritage

Benjian Li*, Xiangzhou Yuan
College of Arts, Guilin University of Technology, Guilin, China
*Corresponding author, e-mail:1394593472@qq.com

Abstract: *With the change of modern population occupation, the adjustment of industrial structure and the change of land and regional space, some traditional crafts in China are on the verge of being lost. In order to better inherit the traditional crafts of ethnic minorities and protect the traditional culture of ethnic minorities in China, this paper takes the intangible cultural heritage of Mulao Ethnic Cloth Dying Technique as an example. Through the analysis and research of its development status, inherent value and existing problems, and combining with the current social development in the new era. From the perspectives of innovation-driven, interdisciplinary and information technology application, this paper explores the inheritance and protection path of Mulao ethnic homespun fabric dyeing skills, providing reference for the inheritance and protection of traditional crafts of ethnic minorities in China.*

Keywords: *Intangible Cultural Heritage; Dyeing Technique of Mulao Ethnic Homespun Cloth; Inheritance and Protection*

Introduction

With the promulgation of a series of policies such as the "Chinese traditional craft revitalization plan", the traditional craft has been paid more and more attention by the state. The "Chinese traditional craft revitalization plan" points out that the revitalization of traditional craft is conducive to the inheritance and development of China's excellent traditional culture, the conservation of cultural ecology, the enrichment of cultural resources, and the enhancement of cultural confidence; It is helpful to give better play to the creativity of manual work, discover the creative value of manual work, and foster and promote the craftsman spirit of striving for perfection in the whole society. It will help boost employment, achieve targeted poverty alleviation, raise urban and rural incomes, then enhance the vitality of traditional neighborhoods and villages.

The Mulao Ethnic Cloth Dying Technique has a long history. It contains the thought wisdom, cultural value and craftsman spirit of the Mulao Ethnic people, and is an important part of the traditional culture of the Mulao Ethnic minority. 2016 Mulao's handwoven cloth dyed skill in Guangxi autonomous region non-material cultural heritage, but now the intangible in gradually fade out Mulao young people's field of vision, and even the whole process for work in the "handwoven cloth dyed" laborious even few people continue to pursue the older generation handwoven cloth dyed. If we don't protect, Mulao minority homespun fabric production technology will be on the verge of extinction. In this regard, this paper will briefly analyze the development situation, the value and the existing problems of the Mulao Ethnic homespun cloth dyeing

technology, and put forward the inheritance and protection path of the Mulao Ethnic homespun cloth dyeing technology.

Development of Mulao Minority's Dyeing Technique

Development Course of Mulao Nationality Homespun Cloth Dyeing Technology

According to historical records, the Mulao ethnic minority mainly lived in Lingnan area in history. With the change of history, the Mulao Ethnic Minority Mulao Autonomous County in Luocheng is the center in Guangxi. In the long course of history, many cultures that can highlight the ethnic characteristics of the Mulao Ethnic Minority have been lost due to various reasons, but the technique of dyeing homespun fabric has been completely preserved. According to historical records, the dyeing skills of the Mulao Ethnic Minority began in the Ming Dynasty and flourished in the Qing Dynasty. In the development of the Mulao Ethnic Minority's costumes, the Mulao Ethnic Minority's costumes were all sewn with self-planting, self-spinning and self-dyeing homespun fabrics. The dyeing methods of Mulao ethnic homespun cloth mainly include: indigo dyeing, diamond dyeing, traditional Chinese medicine dyeing and tie-dyeing. Dyeing cloth is the most skilled work of the Mulao Ethnic Minor women. The Mulao Ethnic cloth is thick and wear-resistant. It is warm in winter and cool in summer, breathable and sweat-absorbing. It is said that clothes made with "indigo dyeing cloth" can prevent rheumatism and lumbago pain. Now, the technique of dyeing homespun fabric has been selected as one of Guangxi's intangible cultural heritages and is an important symbol of the Mulao ethnic minority.

Production Process of Mulao Minority Homespun Cloth Dyeing Technology

The whole process of Mulao Minority's homespun cloth dyeing technique is very complicated. Generally speaking, the homespun fabric used in tie-dyeing is self-spun homespun fabric, in which the production process of homespun fabric must go through cotton picking, cotton pelletizing, springing, cotton sliving, spinning, yarn arrangement, machine weaving, beam coloring, cloth drying and grinding steps to make homespun fabric finally. The production of homespun fabric alone covers a lot of manual procedures, and the weaving and coloring of homespun fabric patterns in the middle and late period are also quite complex. The woven patterns of homespun cloth need to be painted on the dried homespun cloth with colored pens. Traditionally, there are flowers, birds, insects and fish, but now there are various Chinese characters or letters. After drawing the pattern, thread the needle with white cotton thread and tie the knot. Fold according to the pattern vein and then sew and tie according to the crease. It can be dyed after sew and tie.

The "indigo dyeing process" is also a complex process, in which the requirements for pigments are quite high. The processing method of tie-dyeing is to soak the collected blue leaves in a tank with water for about three days and get them out, then put lime water and homemade rice wine in, and pour the water out after settling, then collect the indigo at the bottom of the tank for use. Then dilute the dry indigo with water, and mash the rhizome of the plant soil cocos to deepen the color of the dye. Dyeing cloth can be carried out after 7-8 days, before die-dyeing, the cloth should be cleaned and wrung out, the cloth should be put into the bottom of the tank and taken out one hour later. After drying for one hour, the cloth should be put into the bottom of the

Vol.2 No.5 2021
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2021.038

tank again.

Development Status of Mulao Minority Cloth Dyeing Technology

The development of dyeing technology of Mulao ethnic homespun cloth is not optimistic. First, with the progress of generation and the improvement of living standard, people's clothes and fabrics have gradually become modernize. Except for major festivals, the daily wear of Mulao Ethnic Cloth Clothing has become rare, which poses a big obstacle to the inheritance and protection of the Mulao Ethnic Cloth Dyingtechnique. Second, with the increase of migrant workers, people are no longer restricted to relying on homespun fabric dyeing to make a living, and the homespun fabric dyeing technology gradually fades out of people's vision. Third, it takes time and effort for the whole process to flow down and few people are really willing to do it now. It will be lost if we do not protect and inherit the Mulao Ethnic Cotton Cloth Dying Technique. Fourth, although "homespun fabric dyeing skills" has been successfully included in the sixth batch of intangible cultural heritage protection projects of Guangxi Autonomous Region, the government and residents have not made enough efforts to promote the homespun fabric dyeing skills, so it is difficult for the intangible cultural heritage projects to "go out and introduce", and the development style of homespun fabric dyeing is relatively simple.

The Value of Mulao Minority's Dyeing Technique

The Historical value

The Mulao Ethnic Cotton Dying Technology comes with the development of the Mulao Ethnic Culture. It bears the different elements of each development stage of the Mulao Ethnic. At present, we can explore the historical development and cultural change of the Mulao Ethnic by exploring the Mulao Ethnic Cotton Dying Technology.

Affected by the environment and the limitation of productivity level, from the Ming dynasty used to wear the plants and animals such as cattle, sheep and disappear, to the Qing Dynasty is widely introduced since the cotton spinning condition weaving skills, Mulao bleaching are mostly for the sake of his family in producing cotton, but the area that near the town will also be the technology into the market for business interests. As a historical culture, the clothing of the Mulao Ethnic Minority used to be colorful. But now, the fabric dyeing and wearing of the Mulao Ethnic Minority have changed with the change of mainstream culture. Generally speaking, the characteristics of Mulao Ethnic Minority's clothing have gradually become Chinese. Only the Mulao Ethnic Minority's clothes are occasionally sent to their children when they get married to show their diligence and dexterity.

The Practical Value

The dyeing of homespun cloth is the most basic guarantee for the daily necessities of the Mulao Ethnic Minority, such as clothes, table mats and pillowcases. Hand-made tunic cloth is regarded as treasures by the Mulao ethnic minority after it is colored with indigo. Mulao tunic cloth is the "thousand-layer bottom" for the

elderly, "straps" for elders to give younger generations and "shoes of the same year" for lovers to pledge love. Mulao ethnic area is humid and hot all the year round, and the Mulao ethnic fabric is thick and wear-resistant. It is warm in winter and cool in summer so it is permeable to sweat and absorb. A garment processed with "indigo technology" is the best health care clothing of the Mulao ethnic minority to resist diseases.

The Cultural Values

Intangible cultural heritage is one of the important carriers of traditional culture, which contains national cultural genes and carries national pride. Wearing blue is an important feature of the Mulao Ethnic Minority. Since the Ming and Qing Dynasties, men wear blue pipa lapels, collars and turban on their heads, while women wear blue turban on their heads and turban on their waists. Mulao homespun cloth fabric softness, smooth, bright white and texture clear, handwoven cloth dyed process under the Mulao clothing has the Mulao traditional "Pisces" design exquisite embroidery, men's wear the front hem embroidered with Mulao traditional pattern such as flowers, pest birds, lifelike performance the Mulao people's artistic talent, pregnant with strong ethnic characteristics. In today's era of mass production, the cultural value of the products produced by handicrafts in all aspects is extremely precious, and the national cultural characteristics they represent are also unique.

The Spiritual Values

The craftsmanship of the Mulao Ethnic Minority is exquisite and complex. Every link in the production process of the Mulao Ethnic Minority has a great test to the patience and meticulousness of producers. The Mulao Ethnic Minority's craftsman spirit is embodied in the dyeing process of the Mulao Ethnic Minority. Mulao ethnic minorities advocate green, cyan, blue and other natural colors, and homespun cloth is also called green cloth, indigo cloth and so on. The products dyed with homespun cloth are more of the Mulao ethnic minority. The natural nature of the Mulao ethnic minority is an important manifestation of the simple and modest spirit of the Mulao ethnic minority. Inheriting and protecting the dyeing skills of Mulao ethnic homespun cloth is not only inheriting the technology, but also inheriting the spirit of Mulao ethnic minority.

The Problems of Dyeing Technique of Mulao Minority Homespun Cloth

Impact of Modernized Products on the Dyeing Products of Mulao Minority Homespun Fabric

If the dyeing technique of Mulao ethnic group lost, it will be the loss of the traditional culture of the Mulao ethnic group and the loss of the traditional culture of the Chinese nation. With the continuous change of modern people's aesthetics, the fabrics and clothes produced by the Mulao Ethnic Minority's dyeing technique of Mulao Ethnic Minority can no longer meet people's pursuit of modern aesthetics. The aesthetic innovation degree of the Mulao Ethnic Minority's products under the dyeing technique of Mulao Ethnic Minority is not enough, mainly reflected in the following points. First, the color is too single, only blue color can not meet the color matching of people in the modern era; Second, the form is monotonous, and the derivative products

Vol.2 No.5 2021
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2021.038

of homespun fabric are not enough. The production of homespun fabric is only applicable to daily life, and the development direction is too limited. Third, ethnic patterns can not be integrated with modern elements, leading to modern clothes are subconsciously replacing every aspect of the Mulao Ethnic Minority life.

There are Few Successors to the Dyeing Technique of Mulao Ethnic Homespun Cloth

The whole process of homespun fabric dyeing technology is complex. The manufacturing process is especially complicated in the "indigo dyeing process", in which the producer needs to collect bluegrass and other plants for tie-dyeing, and the whole process is time-consuming and laborious. At present, people's demand for the dyeing products of Mulao ethnic homespun cloth is decreasing, and it is not enough to maintain people's life relying on the dyeing technique of Mulao ethnic homespun cloth. Facing with such cruel survival, most people choose to migrant workers, and engaged in Mulao handwoven cloth dyed techniques has become increasingly scarce and personnel quality lower, the traditional process have developed before, and no successor problem after seriously limits the Mulao handwoven cloth dyed skill development.

The Homespun Fabric Dyeing Technology cannot "Go Out"

From the perspective of development, the government and residents still do not publicize the technique of dyeing native cloth enough and do not make enough use of modern media technology, so the technique of dyeing native cloth cannot “go out and come in” , thus the periphery knows little about the technique of dyeing native cloth. It is difficult to make a major breakthrough in the development of the products under the technique of dyeing native cloth because they cannot go out.

The Inheritance and Protection Path of Mulao Minority's Dyeing Technique

Innovation Drives and Builds National Brands

Intangible cultural heritage is an important part of Chinese culture and a symbol of a country's soft power, and the inheritance and protection of intangible cultural heritage is the only way to revive the Chinese nation. The technique of dyeing Mulao cloth, which is listed as intangible cultural heritage, is a unique traditional craft of Mulao people. Nowadays, with the rapid development of technology, the inheritance of Mulao cloth dyeing technique is facing different opportunities and challenges. One of the reasons why the Mulao native cloth dyeing technique is on the verge of being lost is that the content of its products is no longer sufficient to meet the aesthetic pursuit of modern people, and in order to obtain long-term development, the Mulao native cloth dyeing technique and the products of the "indigo dyeing technique" should be changed accordingly. Firstly, on the premise of guarding the traditional native cloth dyeing technique and maintaining the national characteristics, we should combine the native cloth dyeing technique with modern technology and diversify the products, not only in the production of native cloth and traditional clothing craft, but also aim at the traditional craft market, and focus on developing practical products with national characteristics, tourist

souvenirs and craft gifts, and redesign the products. For example, using the native cloth dyeing technique to to make DIY bags with modern aesthetics, combining indigo-dyeing techniques with materials such as ceramics or plastics to make household products, making screens with the backing of earthen cloth under indigo-dyeing techniques and packaging design under indigo-dyeing techniques, etc. Secondly, under the premise of maintaining the characteristics of the nation, the indigo dyeing technique can be combined with the advanced techniques of other nationalities. In today's rapid development of science and technology, the development of traditional culture is not going forward, so the products under the indigo dyeing technique should absorb more modern elements and integrate national elements with modern elements for sustainable innovation. Finally, the products should be redesigned by means of indigo dyeing process, so that the nation can make the real national trend products.

Interdisciplinary Production Maximizes Homespun Fabric Production Efficiency

Mulao native cloth dyeing technique is time-consuming and laborious, which hinders its development to a great extent. It is possible to make reasonable use of modern mechanical automation technology in the whole process of "native cloth making" and "indigo dyeing process", then to combine and complete the operation with modern machines in the process of cotton picking, cotton grain removal, flower popping, cotton strip rolling and yarn arrangement. In addition, in the process of weaving on the machine, the width of the traditional loom is narrow, which leads to low production efficiency on the one hand, and the limitation of width also plays a restrictive role in the development of product varieties, to address this problem, the loom can be improved or modern air-jet loom can be used to increase the width of production to improve production efficiency. At the same time, it also lays the foundation for the innovation of product types of earth cloth. In the indigo dyeing process, some mechanical products can be made to replace the time consuming and laborious work of people, for example, the introduction of Karl Mayer's sizing and dyeing combine machine, which uses nitrogen to control the dyeing chemical process. Compared with the traditional indigo dyeing process, GREENDYE dyeing technology requires less space and fewer operators, and enables industrialized production in a way that "people control the machine and the machine operates the task" to maximize production efficiency.

Using Information Technology to Drive Development

In this modern society with high speed development, information technology is indispensable to inherit and protect the Mulao native cloth dyeing techniques. Three aspects should be carried out to inherit and protect Mulao native cloth dyeing techniques by using Internet technology. Firstly, a digital museum should be established to bring together the national culture, products, artistic value and historical origin under the Mulao native cloth dyeing technique and display and explain them online; Secondly, the traditional craft should actively study CIS theory, carefully build its own craft brand, and thoroughly implement the policy of "going out and coming in" by using network technology and international cultural exchange platform. "Thirdly, the government can make use of network resources to open public welfare classes and shoot public welfare short videos in conjunction with social media, such as Kuaishou, Tiktok and Blibli, as well as regularly we invite non-genetic inheritors to give public welfare lectures, and promote Mulao native cloth dyeing skills with low cost and high return through online teaching. For example, through the combination of Taobao, Jingdong,

Pinduoduo, Xianyu and other e-commerce platforms, the ethnic characteristics can be sold out from the "mountains" and actively integrated into the market to increase the income of the industry and expand the influence of Mulao native cloth dyeing skills.

Training Modern Inheritors from Universities

The inheritors are the active carriers of intangible cultural heritage and an indispensable part of the development of intangible cultural heritage inheritance, and the quality of the inheritors directly determines the quality of the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. University students, as the main body of the future development of the country, should let the technique of dyeing native cloth come into the campus, enter the university as an elective subject, open training courses within the university and let professionals carry out institutionalized teaching. On the one hand, students should be taught the practical methods of the technique, on the other hand, they should be taught the cultural connotation of the technique, and most importantly, lecturers should cultivate students' sense of social responsibility and honor as inheritors, and train them to become "inheritors" with modern awareness and modern responsibility.

The Government Strengthened Mechanisms to Ensure the Expansion of Peripheral Markets

The government should always focus on the work policy of "protection first, rescue first, reasonable utilization, and inheritance development", and put the work into practice according to the contents of the "Chinese Traditional Craft Revitalization Plan", actively carry out promotional and interactive activities for the Mulao native cloth dyeing techniques, and make use of preferential policies of the NRM to create an environment and provide services for the dyeing of native cloth. The government should set up an environment and provide services for the production of Mulao cloth. On the one hand, the government should set up special funds for Mulao native cloth dyeing skills, open training courses for Mulao native cloth dyeing skills, set up an institute for Mulao native cloth dyeing skills, actively carry out training activities for Mulao native cloth dyeing skills on and offline with the government as the leader and the public as the main body, improve the employability of people left behind, increase the publicity of Mulao native cloth dyeing skills, and improve the popularity of Mulao native cloth dyeing skills. On the other hand, the government should make efforts to open the peripheral market for Mulao native cloth dyeing products, broaden the market of products under the native cloth dyeing technique, let the native cloth dyeing products "go out", increase the sales volume of the native cloth dyeing products, develop and expand the production market of Mulao native cloth dyeing, improve the income of urban and rural residents, and create the brand of Mulao native cloth. The brand of Mulao native cloth is created, and the economic and cultural revitalization is achieved.

Conclusion

The dyeing technique of Mulam ethnic cloth is the crystallization of the diligence and wisdom of the Mulao ethnic people, and it is also the most precious gift left by the old ancestors to our later generations. In this era of both opportunities and challenges, innovation and integration are the only way for intangible cultural heritage to be passed on. Only by facing up to the challenges can intangible cultural heritage find the best

development path when each dilemma comes.

References

Li, X. R., & Li, L. (2015). *Mulao Nationality.* Liaoning Nationalities Publishing House.

Lu, Y. X., & Luo, S. X. (2012). *Mulao Ethnic Minority in China*. Ningxia People's Publishing House.

Zou, Y. (2016). Interpretation of the Making Techniques of Buyi homespun Cloth—A Case Study of Hedong Village, Luozhi Town, Luodian County, Guizhou Province. *Journal of Aba Normal University*, (3), 30-34.

Zhang, X. Y. (2018). Study on indigo dyeing process of Mulao ethnic homespun fabric. *Apparel Guide*, 7(006), 17-22.

Chen, Z. J. (2003). *History and Culture of the Mulao Ethnic Minority in Guizhou*. Guizhou Minzu Publishing House.

China.org.cn. (2017). Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, Ministry of Finance: Revitalization Plan of Chinese Traditional Craft. Research on Non-genetic Succession, 000(002), 58-58.

Wang, Y. (2010). Discussion and research on the industrialization development of Shaanxi folk handmade homespun fabric. *Business in China*, (04), 171, 270.

Li, Y., Zhang, M. M., Wang, Y. Y., & Yang, H. Y. (2021). Research on inheritance and application of intangible cultural heritage in Heilongjiang Province: A case study of birch bark products. *China's collective economy*, (16), 129-130.