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Cultural and Arts Studies

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A Review of Studies on the Translation of *Shiji*

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Abstract: Based on the academic papers retrieved from the CNKI database, this paper presents a visual analysis of the number of domestic studies on the translation of *Shiji*, and classifies the literature along five dimensions: experience-based research, quantitative research, translation history research, dissemination and impact research, and minor-language translation research. On this basis, and organized around these five research directions, the paper conducts a classified review of *Shiji* translation studies, summarizes the shortcomings of existing research, and offers suggestions for future research. The study finds that although *Shiji* translation research has achieved certain results, experience-based studies account for a high proportion and multidimensional research is unbalanced. This paper aims to promote the development of *Shiji* translation research in a deeper and more comprehensive direction, with a view to providing a reference for its further development.

Keywords: *Shiji*; Translation studies; Classified review; Research suggestions

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1. Introduction

Since the seventeenth century, *Shiji* has begun to break beyond the boundaries of the Chinese-speaking world, embarking on a magnificent cross-cultural journey. Over the course of nearly four hundred years of translation and introduction, the translingual travel of *Shiji* has displayed distinct stage-specific characteristics. At the time when sinology flourished in the nineteenth century, Édouard Chavannes' French translation set an academic model with its rigorous textual research and exquisite rendering; in the late twentieth century, Burton Watson's translation and the multi-volume annotated translation produced by William H. Nienhauser Jr.'s team marked the entry of English translation into a new era. Contemporary translations into more than forty languages, including Russian, German, Japanese, and Korean, have together woven a three-dimensional network for the global dissemination of *Shiji*. Systematic scholarly study of the translation of *Shiji* began in the late twentieth century and has now formed a multidimensional academic landscape. Although existing research has yielded rich results, there remains significant room for academic growth. Through a systematic review of the research achievements concerning *Shiji*, this paper aims to construct a holistic cognitive framework for Shiji translation studies and to provide new insights for the

global dissemination of Chinese classics.

2. Statistics and visual analysis of research papers

To date, international scholarship on the English translation of *Shiji* has consisted mostly of scattered book reviews, introductions to translations, or incidental discussions within sinological works, and lacks independent academic papers, monographs, or specialized studies; the relevant achievements are concentrated mainly in the domestic research of Chinese scholars. The domestic literature on *Shiji* translation studies can be divided into several categories, such as Chinese-language academic papers, monographs, and book reviews in English-language journals, among which the first category is the most numerous. In order to obtain this literature, an advanced search by "Subject" was conducted on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), using "*Shiji*," "translation," and "English translation" as Chinese keywords, which yielded research literature on the translation of *Shiji*. After duplicate and invalid items were removed, 154 valid papers were obtained. The overall trend of these papers is shown below.

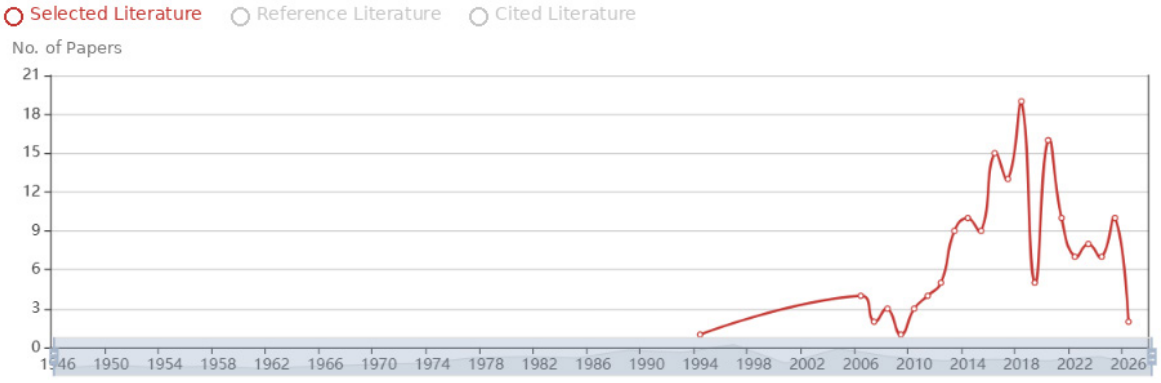

Figure 1. A visual analysis of the overall trend of research papers in CNKI.

As shown in **Figure 1**, domestic research on the translation of *Shiji* started relatively late. Luo compiled and translated Nienhauser's review concerning the translation of *Shiji* and published it in Social Sciences Abroad; this article concisely surveyed the major translation projects of *Shiji*[1]. The number of related research papers fluctuated from year to year while showing an upward trend, but the overall quantity remained limited; it was not until 2010 that the number of papers published each year gradually increased. In 2018, the publication volume of related research papers reached its peak, with an annual output of 18 papers. This shows that, although domestic academic circles were still somewhat indifferent to Shiji translation research, they had begun to pay attention to it, and the overall quality of the research papers still needs to be improved. Classifying the above papers yields **Table 1**.

Table 1. Statistical classification of studies on the translation of *Shiji*

Type	Experience-based	Review	Quantitative	Translation history	Dissemination and impact	Minor-language translation	Other	Total
Number of papers	118	3	4	7	15	5	2	154
Percentage (%)	76.7	1.9	2.6	4.6	9.9	3.3	1.3	100

It can be seen that, although the number of articles studying *Shiji* is quite considerable, the number of articles concerning *Shiji* and its translation is very limited, and most of these are experience-based, intuitive studies that focus on translation comparison, translation strategies, and the like, while research on other aspects still leaves a great deal of room. In recent years, under the call of "Chinese culture going global," research on the English translation of Chinese classics has opened up a new field for translation studies, and research on the English translation of *Shiji* has gradually drawn attention. The following sections mainly review five aspects of *Shiji* translation: experience-based research, quantitative research, translation history research, dissemination and impact research, and minor-language translation research.

3. A classified review of studies on the translation of Shiji

3.1. Experience-based studies

Experience-based studies occupy a relatively large proportion of *Shiji* translation research. This type of research is mostly based on the researcher's personal experience and subjective judgment, focusing on translation strategies and techniques and on the methods for translating specific words and sentences. Selections from *Shiji*, translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, is one of the classic English translations of Sima Qian's *Shiji*. Taking this as the text and drawing on translation aesthetics theory, Liu and Fan examined the Yang translation's rendering of the aesthetic factors of the original from the two aspects of presentational elements and non-presentational elements [2]. Based on the English translations of *Shiji* by Burton Watson and William H. Nienhauser Jr., Li and Kang explored the cultural mediation strategies the two translators adopted when handling the Daoist thought in the source language and the asymmetry between the source and target cultures [3]. Many researchers have also discussed the translation of culture-loaded terms in *Shiji*: for example, taking the English translation of " 中国 " in *Shiji* as a case to reflect on the problems of conceptual correspondence translation in terms of knowledge construction and discourse shaping [4], or pointing out that "retranslation" in *Shiji* is not merely a technical means but also a cultural practice of disseminating the benevolence of the Way of Heaven and realizing "great unity" [5]. A group of young researchers has studied the legal terms, costume terms, vessel and implement terms, animal and plant terms, calendar terms, geographical terms, military terms, and economic terms in Shiji, and has also achieved certain results. The comparative study of translations of *Shiji* is also a direction of interest to many researchers, involving the evaluation and analysis of specific translations or horizontal comparisons among the translations of different translators. Wu Tao conducted a detailed analysis of Burton Watson's English translation of *Shiji* from the perspectives of readers' receptivity and the principle of faithfulness, finding that Watson exercised the translator's subjectivity under dual constraints: the translation both accommodated the receptivity of target-language readers and fairly well retained the literary essence of *Shiji*, effectively achieving a unity of readability and faithfulness [6]. Some researchers, proceeding from the perspective of narratology, have compared the narrative structure of *Shiji* with that of Western novels and analyzed the features of the narrative structure in Watson's English translation of *Shiji* and its social and historical background [7]. Based on the English translations of *Shiji* by Watson and Nienhauser, Zhu and Li compared and analyzed the differences between the two in terms of translation motivation, individual versus team differences, and social context, emphasizing that the translation of cultural classics must take various factors into account and seek a balance between domestication and foreignization [8].

Although experience-based research has accumulated certain achievements in the field of *Shiji* translation, providing the academic community with multiple perspectives and lines of thought, several points that can be expanded remain at present. Case analyses dominate existing Shiji translation studies and are insufficiently systematic, making it difficult to construct a universal theoretical framework; the research methods rely heavily on subjective analysis and lack objective data support and scientific verification; and some studies, when focusing on translation techniques, neglect the historical-documentary nature of the works and the deeper value of cultural dissemination, thereby limiting the breadth and depth of research.

3.2. Quantitative studies

By constructing multidimensional corpus platforms and employing quantitative analysis tools such as word frequency statistics, sentence-length analysis, and term alignment, quantitative studies provide objective data support for the comparative study of *Shiji* original and its multilingual translations. This type of research is currently still at a developmental stage, and the academic share of its related achievements in the field of translation studies is not yet significant. Li mined the English-translation data of historical classics such as Shiji, analyzed the characteristics of their English translation and of the English translation of their terms, and attempted to use computational terminology algorithms to align and extract English term pairs [9]. The study found that there is a phenomenon of multiple correspondence in the English translation of terms in Chinese historical classics, for reasons including the dynamic nature of the referential meaning of terms and the existence of near-synonyms among the terms themselves. Quantitative research has provided a new methodology for *Shiji* translation studies, but a number of problems in this field remain to be solved. In terms of corpus construction, *Shiji* has many translated versions and translators' linguistic styles differ markedly; establishing representative corpus sampling standards and achieving standardized processing remain key factors constraining the depth of research. Existing studies mostly focus on descriptive analysis at the level of linguistic form, while quantitative research on non-linguistic factors needs to be deepened. The interpretation of research conclusions requires the construction of an interdisciplinary theoretical framework: relying solely on statistical data easily leads to a one-sided reading of translation phenomena, and subsequent research needs to strengthen the integration of linguistic analysis with translation practice and cultural studies.

3.3. Translation history studies

Research on the translation history of *Shiji* is mainly concerned with the translation course and developmental thread of *Shiji* in different historical periods and different linguistic regions. At present, research achievements in this area are relatively limited, and early studies mostly consisted of simple introductions to translations of *Shiji*. As research deepened, scholars began to proceed from a more macro historical background to explore the interrelationships between the translation of *Shiji* and factors such as society, culture, politics, and the economy, but these were mostly confined to the translation and study of *Shiji* in one specific country. Wei divided the course of *Shiji*'s translation and introduction in the United States into three stages: before the 1950s (the stage of sporadic translation), the 1950s to the 1980s (the stage of large-scale translation), and the 1990s to the present (the stage of complete translation) [10]. Wu, for his part, placed *Shiji* within the Twenty-Four Histories for discussion and briefly described its translation and introduction in the United States and its significance [11]. From the macro perspective of Chinese historiography, Zhu pointed out the importance that American scholars attach to the translation of *Shiji*, and Nienhauser's translation of the entire *Shiji* also reveals a new atmosphere in American Chinese studies regarding the research and translation

of Chinese historiography [12]. Unlike the above researchers, Li systematically reviewed the translation, introduction, and research of *Shiji* in the West, covering the translation courses and characteristics of the major translations as well as Western research on Sima Qian and *Shiji*, including research findings on their historiographical attitudes and other aspects, thereby presenting the developmental process of *Shiji* in the West from translation and introduction to in-depth research [13].

Current research on the translation history of *Shiji* still has several points that can be improved. The translation activities of *Shiji* span a long period and involve many countries and regions, and the relevant historical literature and archival materials are relatively scattered and difficult to obtain, so some studies can only conduct preliminary investigations. Existing studies mostly take single-language translations as their object and lack horizontal multilingual comparison, making it difficult to present its global translation and dissemination path fully. Translation history research is dominated by descriptive analysis, and the summarization of patterns of translation phenomena and theoretical exploration needs to be strengthened. Some studies contain subjective inference with insufficient support from objective historical evidence, and the credibility of the research needs to be enhanced.

3.4. Dissemination and impact studies

Research on the international dissemination and impact of *Shiji* has gradually become a hotspot, and the quantity and quality of related research achievements still need to be improved. Proceeding from a macro level, Wei systematically reviewed the English translation of *Shiji* and its reception history, finding that its reception developed from curiosity-driven reception and literary reception to diversified and comprehensive reception, with the degree of reception gradually deepening from surface-level literary reception to deep-level academic reception [14]. This process is one of the continuous fusion of readers' horizons and the deepening of interpretation, as well as a process of growing diversification and systematization. She also specifically described the translation situations of six English versions of *Shiji*, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to assess their reception and impact [15]. Taking *Shiji* as an example, Jin systematically reviewed the publishing paths and dissemination characteristics of outstanding traditional Chinese classics in modern and contemporary times [16]. Li and Zhu, targeting a specific translation, analyzed in detail—from the three aspects of recognizability, precision, and fidelity—the enhancing role of the paratext (such as annotations and references) in Nienhauser's translation of *Shiji*, and discussed the overseas reception of Nienhauser's version and the issue of fidelity in cultural dissemination [17].

Current research on the dissemination and impact of *Shiji* employs relatively singular methods and is dominated by descriptive research, with insufficient application of quantitative and empirical methods. Research on audience reception under different cultural backgrounds needs to be deepened, and the precision of dissemination-effect evaluation needs to be improved. Some studies emphasize the quantity and scope of dissemination, with insufficient systematic evaluation of dissemination quality and the cultural influence of translations, a low degree of integration with translation studies, and an inadequate revelation of the internal mechanisms by which translation strategies, translation quality, and dissemination effects interact.

3.5. Minor-language translation studies

Research on the translation of *Shiji* into minor languages has also gradually drawn attention. At present, *Shiji* has been translated into many minor languages, such as French, German, Spanish, and Arabic, but high-quality related research achievements are currently rather lacking. Taking research on the French translation as

an example, Lv roughly reviewed the translation, introduction, and study of *Shiji* in France [18]. Others pointed out that Tang Zaifu continuously participated in Édouard Chavannes' translation work on *Shiji*, holding that the cooperation between Tang Zaifu and Chavannes promoted the development of French sinology and advanced the foreign translation and dissemination of Chinese classics [19]. Other researchers have attended to the translation of *Shiji* in the German-speaking world, finding that its dissemination has gradually taken on a multi-dimensional and multi-layered developmental trend [20]. The resources and strength of minor-language translation research are relatively limited, and its research methods and theoretical system still need to be improved; it mostly draws on the achievements of English translation research, while original research methods tailored to the characteristics of minor languages need to be strengthened. Affected by the size of speaker populations, minor-language translation research suffers from conditions such as insufficient materials, with a low degree of corpus construction and interdisciplinary theoretical integration; the promotion and application of its research achievements are limited, and its academic and practical influence needs to be enhanced.

4. Research gaps and future research suggestions

4.1. Research gaps

Overall, *Shiji* translation research has the problems of an excessively high proportion of experience-based studies and relatively few high-quality research achievements. The various research dimensions are unevenly developed, with research on quantitative studies, translation history, dissemination and impact, and minor-language translation being relatively weak, making it difficult to fully reflect the overall picture of *Shiji* translation. In terms of research methods, innovation is insufficient: traditional qualitative analysis predominates, while quantitative and empirical methods are applied less, and the scientificity and reliability of research conclusions need to be improved. Interdisciplinary exploration is not deep enough and fails to fully draw on the theories and methods of related disciplines such as history and cultural studies, which limits the depth and breadth of research.

In addition, existing studies mostly focus on the translated text itself, while research on the translation process, the translator's psychology, and the interactive relationship between translation and its social and cultural context is relatively scarce, making it difficult to reveal the essential patterns of translation activity deeply.

4.2. Future research suggestions

Strengthen review-type research by conducting systematic sorting and summarization, and grasp research dynamics and developmental trends through precise data statistics and analysis, so as to provide a comprehensive and accurate reference for subsequent research.

Broaden research perspectives, strengthen macro-level research, attend to the relationship between translation and external factors such as society, history, and culture, and employ interdisciplinary theories and methods such as cultural communication studies to deeply analyze the dissemination mechanisms and cultural functions of *Shiji* translation in different cultural contexts.

Innovate research methods and increase the proportion of quantitative and empirical research. Further improve the construction of the *Shiji* corpus, expand the scale of the corpus, raise the accuracy of corpus annotation, and use corpus tools to carry out more in-depth research. At the same time, conduct empirical research such as questionnaire surveys and interviews to explore the patterns of translators' thinking and readers' reception.

Strengthen research on the translation of *Shiji* into minor languages, establish an academic exchange platform for minor-language translation research, and promote cooperation and resource sharing among researchers. Encourage more scholars to devote themselves to minor-language translation research, deeply explore the distinctive features and value of minor-language translations, and promote the broader dissemination of *Shiji* across the globe.

5. Conclusion

Current *Shiji* translation research has many shortcomings: experience-type studies are overabundant, high-quality achievements are scarce, the various research fields develop unevenly, empirical and quantitative research are insufficiently employed, and research methods lack innovation. At the same time, interdisciplinary integration is shallow, and research mostly emphasizes textual analysis while neglecting the translation process, the translator's mindset, and social and cultural connections, making it difficult to dig into the internal patterns of translation. In the future, the review and sorting of the *Shiji* translation field can be strengthened, relying on data analysis to grasp research trends; research horizons should be broadened by combining interdisciplinary theories to explore its cross-cultural dissemination mechanisms and value; research methods should be reformed by increasing quantitative and empirical research, improving the construction of specialized corpora, and supplementing this with surveys and interviews to investigate translators' thinking and readers' reception. Meanwhile, importance should be attached to minor-language translation research by building exchange platforms, consolidating research strength, and deeply exploring the value of translations, so as to help *Shiji* achieve broader international dissemination.

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From Orchestral Positions to Specialized Training: The Institutionalization of the Double Bass in Modern Shanghai

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Abstract: Taking Shanghai as its principal case, this article examines how the double bass acquired identifiable positions in professional orchestras and specialized music education from the 1930s through the 1950s. Orchestral development from late nineteenth-century Shanghai provides the institutional background; materials from the Central and Sichuan conservatories serve only as comparisons or later extensions. Using a document-based historical approach, the study evaluates concert programs, education and admissions documents, archival publications, institutional histories, specialist research, and performers' recollections according to their evidentiary limits. The evidence shows that Shanghai's professional orchestral environment provided named double-bass positions and conditions for professional practice. A 1934 record places the instrument in activities organized by the National Music Institute, while a student case beginning in 1943 documents specialized technical instruction, orchestral-part study, and ensemble training. The Central Conservatory's 1950 education plan separately demonstrates formal curricular inclusion at another institution. Later cases trace conservatory-trained musicians entering orchestras, performers taking teaching posts, and musicians returning to teach after interinstitutional study. Two relationships are most clearly supported. Teachers who worked across orchestras and conservatories brought professional materials and experience into instruction. Different training arrangements addressed learners with distinct occupational backgrounds, while interinstitutional study created a separate route of teacher succession. These findings identify connected components of institutionalization rather than a continuous national system. Available sources do not establish the annual continuity of posts, curricula, or graduate pathways, but they show how orchestral practice, specialized training, and teacher succession acquired local institutional support in the Shanghai-centered cases examined here.

Keywords: Double bass; Shanghai music history; Professional orchestra; Specialized music education; Institutionalization; Personnel continuity

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1. Introduction

The arrival of the double bass in China cannot be understood simply as the geographic transfer of a European instrument. As the lowest string section of a symphony orchestra, the instrument depends on ensemble staffing, rehearsal, score-based training, and professional positions. Without these organizational conditions, it may be used intermittently, but a sustainable performance practice is difficult to establish. Research on the global diffusion of orchestras has shown that symphony orchestras often entered new regions alongside Western-style institutions such as conservatories and examination systems, where they assumed functions shaped by local social conditions [1]. This article therefore begins not with the instrument's first appearance, but with the institutional support of performance and the incorporation of professional experience into specialized training.

Modern Shanghai provides a critical setting for this inquiry. The history of the Shanghai Public Band extends back to the late nineteenth century, and the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra that subsequently developed relied for many years on expatriate professional musicians [2,3]. The National Conservatory of Music, founded in 1927 and later known as the National Music Institute, brought Western music training into a Chinese-led institution of advanced professional education. Existing scholarship shows that the institution was not isolated from the city's musical life: orchestral musicians taught there, while Russian émigré teachers and their Chinese students formed important networks for the transfer of specialized knowledge [2,4,5]. The orchestra and the conservatory were thus not parallel lines but connected settings in which the double bass acquired both an organizational and a pedagogical position.

Specialized histories of the double bass preserve important leads for this inquiry. Wang Peng's doctoral dissertation systematically surveys expatriate teachers, early Chinese performers, conservatory teaching, and pedagogical materials [6], while Chen Ziping discusses the development of the instrument in China from the perspective of professional history [7]. These studies provide a basic chronology for otherwise scattered careers and institutional events, and they identify routes toward primary materials. Building on them, this article asks a question that remains insufficiently developed: through what concrete relationships did orchestral employment, conservatory teaching, and personnel movement become connected? Because professional histories, commemorative profiles, and later dissertations may repeat the same recollection, frequency of citation does not constitute independent corroboration. Claims about the "first" performer, a founder, or the complete establishment of a program in a particular year still require support from rosters, student files, curricular documents, or contemporary concert programs.

Institutionalization is used here as a working concept for analyzing these relationships, not as a completed historical outcome. The inquiry addresses three dimensions: whether the double bass acquired an identifiable place in orchestral staffing; whether relevant skills were converted into organized specialized training; and whether traceable forms of succession emerged among students, professional performers, and teachers. Stable positions, continuous admissions, instrument-specific assessment, and repeatable pathways into employment would provide the further evidence needed to establish institutional consolidation. The sources presently available do not confirm all of these conditions. This definition allows individual careers to serve as evidence of institutional connections rather than substituting personal reputation for institutional analysis.

The article asks three questions. First, in what kind of urban orchestral environment did the double bass acquire identifiable section positions and conditions for professional practice in Shanghai? Second, how did orchestral experience enter conservatory training through principal-study lessons, orchestral parts,

and ensemble work, and in what documents did the instrument obtain a formal curricular position? Third, which traceable personnel pathways show that specialized training began to extend across orchestras, conservatories, and regions? These questions address organizational position, training arrangements, and personnel continuity, respectively. Their purpose is to explain how components of institutionalization became connected, not to infer a continuously operating national system from several isolated points.

The first section examines the organizational position of the double bass in Shanghai's professional orchestras. The second considers school-based practice and specialized instruction at the National Music Institute, using the Central Conservatory of Music's formal education plan as a comparison from another institution. The third analyzes traceable personnel continuity among conservatories, orchestras, and interinstitutional training programs. The discussion situates these findings in relation to earlier professional histories and concentrates on two connections supported by the evidence: how teachers who held both orchestral and academic roles brought professional experience into teaching, and how training for different groups of learners and interinstitutional teacher preparation separately addressed personnel needs. Instrument making, material technology, consumer markets, and generalized international cooperation fall outside the scope of the article.

2. Materials and method

Shanghai serves as the principal case because the available literature makes it possible to trace professional orchestras, specialized music institutions, and overlapping personnel within the same city. This concentration permits an examination of how section positions, teaching arrangements, and personnel continuity became connected. The core period is the 1930s through the 1950s: a 1934 record of school-based activity, recollections of study beginning in 1943, and teaching succession in the 1950s form the principal evidentiary sequence. Orchestral history from the late nineteenth century through the 1920s establishes the organizational background. Educational documents from the Central Conservatory of Music and a program history from the Sichuan Conservatory of Music are used for comparison or extension and do not support national generalizations.

Sources are used in layers according to their proximity to the research questions. Peer-reviewed studies of Western music in China and Shanghai's urban musical history, together with specialized double-bass research, establish the historical background and provide research leads. Contemporary concert programs, admissions documents, and education plans identify section names, institutional provisions, and admissions categories. Articles published by archives from their holdings and institutional program histories help reconstruct organizational arrangements. Performers' recollections and biographical reporting are used only when they provide specific dates, persons, and activities. Education plans and admissions regulations show what an institution intended to organize; they do not by themselves demonstrate that admissions, teaching, or assessment were implemented continuously, and they must be distinguished from student records, timetables, and grade reports.

The search for publicly available materials concluded on September 28, 2026. Search routes included journal and book pages linked to publication DOIs, university repositories, conservatory and archive websites, and biographical materials published by institutions or media organizations. The sources were used in the forms available to this study: full texts where obtainable, publisher or repository records for bibliographic verification, public institutional and media webpages, and later reproductions or transcriptions

of archival items not examined in the original. Claims were limited to the content accessible in each form. The 1946 program is used through the material published by Utz [8]; the 1934 Music Weekly record through Xiao Yang's study [9]; and the 1950 education plan and 1951 admissions materials through articles prepared by the Central Conservatory of Music Archives from its holdings [10,11]. References in the text to contemporary records therefore denote content published or transcribed in later sources and do not imply that the authors examined the originals.

Materials were included when they directly addressed at least one of three issues—section positions, training content, or personnel continuity—and identified an author, institution, date, or original documentary lead. The accounts by Chen Ziping, Wang Peng, and Zheng Deren may rely on the same recollection for certain facts and are not treated as three independent confirmations. When sources differ, priority is given to contemporary, object-specific programs, administrative documents, and signed records. Exclusive claims such as "first performer" or a definitive founding year remain open when primary evidence does not resolve them. Failure to locate a record in the publicly available materials indicates only that this study did not obtain the evidence; it does not demonstrate that the activity never occurred.

3. Organizational positions in professional orchestras

The sustained presence of the double bass in China depended on more than the purchase or occasional use of the instrument. An orchestra had to maintain a low-string section, recurring rehearsals, and mechanisms of employment. The spread of orchestras beyond Europe often accompanied the establishment of music-education institutions [1]. Viewed in this way, the early history of the double bass is first an organizational history: only when ensemble practice recurred, section responsibilities became identifiable, and successive performers could occupy those responsibilities could isolated performances develop into professional positions.

The Shanghai Public Band offers an important early instance of these organizational conditions. Drawing on municipal archives, concert programs, and newspapers, Yang traces the ensemble's predecessor to 1879, its transformation into a full orchestra in 1907, and the formal adoption of the name Municipal Orchestra and Band in 1922 [2]. Mario Paci's tenure from 1919 to 1942 spanned the ensemble's transition from the Public Band to the Municipal Orchestra. A Stanford University exhibition account of Paci also connects him to the orchestra, the participation of Chinese musicians, and the founding of the National Conservatory of Music in 1927 [12]. These sources show that the double bass entered not an abstract space of "Western music," but an urban institution sustained by municipal administration, employment relations, regular performance, and professional training.

This institutional point of departure was marked by colonial inequality. The Shanghai Municipal Orchestra consisted largely of foreign musicians for many years, and Chinese listeners and musicians were at times excluded from particular performance spaces. Chinese musicians and students from the National Music Institute participated more frequently in orchestra-related performances only from the late 1920s onward [2]. The orchestra's history therefore cannot be narrated as a linear diffusion of a European model to China. Professional standards, racialized employment, urban public culture, and Chinese elite aspirations for modern education operated simultaneously and sometimes in tension. The formation of double-bass positions may therefore have been shaped by these conditions, although section rosters and personnel files are still needed to establish specific appointments.

For the double-bass section itself, current evidence establishes its existence but not its early continuity. A program for the China Symphony Orchestra dated March 1, 1946, reproduced by Utz, lists a section labeled "Contrabass" [8]. The China Symphony Orchestra was not the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra. The program demonstrates only that the double bass was a publicly named section in the same urban musical environment. It cannot supply the section history of the Municipal Orchestra or establish the number, stability, or terms of double-bass appointments before or after that performance. Wang Peng's reconstruction of earlier section personnel offers leads for locating contemporary rosters, but the relevant conclusions still require verification against original records [6].

Zheng Deren's career provides a traceable case connecting orchestral employment with specialized education. Available sources record that he began studying the double bass at the National Music Institute in 1943, entered a professional Shanghai orchestra in 1946, and assumed double-bass teaching duties at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in the mid-1950s[6,7,13]. At this stage, the sequence confirms only his movement among roles; the pedagogical content and its implications for career pathways and teacher succession are considered in Section 5. The exclusive designation "the first Chinese double bassist" is not used as evidence.

The historical position of the double bass in professional orchestras should therefore not be measured by its first appearance. Existing sources confirm that Shanghai's urban orchestral system provided a named double-bass section and an environment for professional practice, and that at least one trained performer moved between orchestra and conservatory. Whether positions were maintained annually, appointments were stable, or such personnel movement recurred cannot yet be determined without continuous rosters and employment records. The following section's movement "from position to curriculum" is thus an institutional connection to be tested item by item, not a causal sequence assumed in advance.

4. From orchestral positions to curriculum

The phrase "from orchestral positions to curriculum" describes a direction of relationship traceable in the sources. It does not mean that orchestral labor demand has been established as the sole cause of curricular provision or admissions. Here, curriculum encompasses the placement of students within admissions or registration categories, relatively defined teaching responsibilities, the division of professional competence into principal-study and ensemble training, and the assessment or performance of learning outcomes. The available sources do not show that these arrangements began as an independent program or studio. Early teaching may instead have operated within the orchestral-instrument department and through individual teachers. An isolated performance, evidence that one teacher taught the instrument, or the existence of an orchestral department cannot independently demonstrate continuous implementation of a double-bass curriculum.

The National Conservatory of Music supplied an organizational space into which double-bass teaching could enter. Yang notes that within several years of its founding in 1927, the institution had established five divisions: theory and composition, keyboard, orchestral instruments, voice, and Chinese music. The orchestral division initially concentrated on violin and cello and later expanded to other instruments [2]. This evidence confirms that orchestral-instrument training had entered the institution's structure, but it does not establish continuous double-bass admissions, fixed instructional hours, or instrument-specific assessment during its earliest years. The more defensible conclusion is that the orchestral division served

as an institutional container for double-bass teaching, whose exact place must still be identified through contemporary student, faculty, and curricular records.

The double bass became visible in school-based practice before the 1943 date often used in professional histories. From a 1934 issue of Music Weekly, Xiao identifies a list of performers associated with the National Music Institute's Educational Music Broadcasting Committee that records Man Fumin alongside voice, piano, and double bass [9]. This contemporary lead is sufficient to show that 1943 should not be described as the instrument's first entry into the institution. Because the list combines multiple instruments with voice, however, it does not establish Man's principal field, enrollment category, or teacher, nor does it demonstrate a continuously operating curriculum. It confirms school-based use rather than the founding of a program.

One teaching pathway found in the available evidence involved expatriate musicians who held positions in both orchestras and the conservatory. Studies of Russian émigré musicians in interwar Shanghai show personnel networks between the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra and the National Music Institute; it was not unusual for orchestral performers to teach at the institution [4,5]. A Shanghai Conservatory historical notice identifies J. Shevtzoff as the first head of the "instrumental and orchestra section" [14], while specialized double-bass histories state that he taught the double bass alongside his work as a cello teacher [6,7]. The former establishes his institutional title; the latter supplies the instrument-specific connection. Because published institutional histories do not provide the dates of his double-bass teaching or annual student lists, this case cannot determine which category of teacher predominated in double-bass instruction at the time or establish continuous implementation.

Among the specialized student cases that can presently be identified, Zheng Deren's first-person recollection preserves relatively detailed pedagogical information. In the memoir he wrote in 2015, Zheng states that after entering the institution in 1943, he studied primarily from Zhdanov's double-bass method and an American collection of études. His work began with bowing, fingering, shifting, scales, and intervals before progressing to études, concertos, and variation works of increasing difficulty [13]. This account indicates that, at least in Zheng's case, lessons followed a technical progression rather than serving merely as emergency preparation to fill an orchestral part. The recollection nonetheless documents one student after 1943; it cannot replace timetables, registration books, or records for his cohort, and it does not encompass the school-based practice documented in 1934.

A more direct indication of professional practice entering instruction appears in the use of orchestral parts and chamber music. Zheng recalled that Shevtzoff borrowed double-bass parts from the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra for him to study. The institution also arranged chamber-music instruction using works by Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Schubert, and Saint-Saëns [13]. In this case, basic technique, orchestral parts, and chamber music addressed individual performance, section reading, and collaborative competence, respectively. The source demonstrates that some orchestral resources and experience entered teaching. Interpreting this training as a functional decomposition of professional competence is the authors' interpretation, not a curricular rationale explicitly stated in an institutional document.

Assessment requires a distinction between school-wide policy and instrument-specific evidence. Citing the Regulations of the National Conservatory of Music and the National Music Institute, Xiao reports that the institution held a concert each semester from 1928 onward to "display students' achievement"; after a 1930 revision, the number increased to between one and four each semester [9]. Wang also notes the

existence of semester examinations at the National Conservatory [6]. These sources establish mechanisms of assessment and public presentation at the institution in which double-bass lessons occurred, but they do not demonstrate an independent and continuous assessment regime for the instrument. The present search located no contemporary double-bass examination repertoire, grading criteria, or results; school-level assessment is therefore not treated as proof of a verified instrument-specific examination system.

An account published by the Central Conservatory of Music Archives from its holdings provides more direct support than personal recollection for the double bass's formal place in an education plan. The conservatory's 1950 plan placed the instrument within the undergraduate orchestral-instrument department, specified a three-year course of study, and divided the institution's curriculum into theory, technique, and practical experience. Principal instrument and chamber music or small ensemble were listed among the department's major courses [10]. The document demonstrates that the double bass was incorporated into a plan encompassing program length, course categories, and credit allocation. It identifies institutional provisions but cannot by itself show how the plan was implemented each year. Enrollment, instruction, and assessment must still be matched to student and administrative records.

The Central Conservatory Archives' account of the institution's first undergraduate admissions, based in part on holdings classified as "1951—Teaching and Academic Affairs—9," further reports that applicants to orchestral strings were expected either to have studied for at least one year or to show advanced ability on another instrument together with strong reading and aural skills. The examination included scales, an étude, a piece, and sight-reading [11]. String admissions had therefore translated technical preparation and score-reading into operational selection criteria. The prospectus, however, stated requirements for strings as a group rather than for individual instruments, and the published admissions list does not identify each student's principal instrument. The source establishes an admissions mechanism for the curricular category to which the double bass belonged, but it does not independently prove that a double-bass student was admitted in 1951.

By the mid-1950s, the Shanghai evidence shows clearer teaching succession and differentiated forms of training. Zheng recalled that he succeeded Shevtzoff as teacher in 1955 and that the Shanghai Conservatory began admitting double-bass students at both its affiliated middle school and undergraduate levels in 1956. He also taught in-service cadres and military students, adapting instruction to the positions they would resume in their home units [13]. The recollection suggests two parallel pathways: middle-school and undergraduate admissions offered long-term degree-oriented training, whereas in-service or assigned study responded more directly to personnel shortages in orchestras and performing organizations. The 1955 teaching succession and the 1956 admissions are separate claims. Exact cohort size, program length, and student names for the latter still require corroboration from the conservatory's admissions prospectus and registration books for that year.

The movement "from orchestral positions to curriculum" therefore cannot be reduced to a single founding date. A 1934 Shanghai record confirms the double bass in activities organized by the National Music Institute, while the Shanghai case beginning in 1943 preserves details of specialized lessons and orchestral-part study. The Central Conservatory of Music's 1950 plan supplies evidence that another institution formally incorporated the double bass into its curriculum [10]. The three items address school-based use in Shanghai, concrete training in Shanghai, and formal provision at the Central Conservatory, respectively. They may be compared as different levels of evidence but cannot be arranged as a continuous

institutional chronology. Nor can the Central Conservatory plan replace annual admissions, registration, and instrument-specific assessment records for Shanghai. The next section therefore turns to documented career pathways and teacher succession across conservatories and orchestras.

5. Personnel continuity across conservatories, orchestras, and interinstitutional training

Personnel continuity refers here to three observable pathways: conservatory-trained musicians entering professional positions, professional performers assuming teaching duties, and musicians returning to teach at their home institution after interinstitutional training. The term identifies ways in which professional competence extended across institutions. It does not presume clearly bounded membership, unified occupational standards, or the existence of a national professional community. The following analysis asks which sources support each pathway and how far their evidence extends.

Zheng Deren's career forms a traceable sequence of role transitions: he studied with Shevtzoff at the National Music Institute beginning in 1943, subsequently joined a professional Shanghai orchestra, and assumed double-bass teaching in the mid-1950s[6,7,13]. The case matters not because it establishes a founder narrative, but because one person successively occupied the positions of student, orchestral performer, and conservatory teacher. Zheng's recollection further indicates that he later incorporated orchestral parts, basic technique, and the requirements of professional positions into his teaching [13]. Existing evidence confirms this sequence of roles but cannot establish from a single case that the same cycle operated stably on a larger scale.

The link between conservatory education and professional staffing also developed through parallel long-term and in-service training. In Zheng's recollection, students at the affiliated middle school and undergraduate levels received extended technical and ensemble training, whereas in-service cadres and military students entered with specific occupational needs and returned to their original units after study [13]. The Central Conservatory's 1950 education plan likewise distinguished among undergraduate study, a youth class, a general course for working music cadres, and short-term training; it defined the general course as a means of improving the basic musicianship and technical skills of musicians already in service [10]. These materials do not provide complete numbers of double-bass students, but they distinguish two arrangements: longer degree-oriented study and shorter or in-service training for personnel already employed by cultural organizations. The extent to which each arrangement corresponded to particular positions still requires graduation and receiving-unit records.

Interinstitutional mobility provides a second kind of evidence for teacher succession. A program history published by the Sichuan Conservatory's Department of Orchestral Instruments states that when the institution established its double-bass program in 1978, it sent two musicians to study at the Shanghai and Shenyang conservatories; both returned to teach after graduation [15]. The record establishes a pathway of external study followed by a return to teaching and identifies Shanghai and Shenyang as nodes in that training. It does not state why the external training was arranged or show how methods, repertoire, or assessment practices were brought back to Sichuan. Answering the latter question would require timetables, teaching plans, and examination records.

A later case also allows the trajectory from student to performer and teacher to be checked. A China Daily interview reports that Yuanxiong Lu entered the middle school affiliated with the Shanghai

Conservatory in 1977 and studied with Zheng Deren for seven years, through his graduation from the institution [16]. A TCU Magazine profile further states that Lu briefly joined the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra after graduation and later continued his study, performance, and teaching in the United States [17]. This career demonstrates how extended conservatory training could lead to an orchestral position and then to a new teaching environment. It is evidence of one complete pathway, not a proxy for the destinations of all graduates in the same period.

These personnel pathways warrant analysis as institutional connections because the sources also identify transferable content. Zheng's account places bowing, fingering, shifting, scales, and études alongside orchestral parts and chamber music in his learning and teaching [13]. The Central Conservatory's 1950 plan, in a formal document from another institution, likewise lists principal instrument and chamber music or small ensemble [10]. The two kinds of sources show that basic technique and ensemble work held a place in both individual practice and formal curricular planning. No direct transmission between the institutions is established, however, and the comparison does not justify an inference of uniform training standards across conservatories.

For the second half of the twentieth century, the available materials therefore identify three career and teacher-succession pathways: Zheng's movement from student to orchestral performer and conservatory teacher [6,7,13]; one Sichuan Conservatory initiative in which externally trained musicians returned to teach [15]; and Lu's trajectory from extended conservatory training into an orchestra and later teaching [16,17]. The sources differ in evidentiary scope, but collectively show that specialized training extended beyond a single teacher or institution in several cases. The scale, duration, and representativeness of these pathways still require alumni records, employment destinations, and appointment files.

6. Discussion

Unlike earlier specialized histories of the double bass, this article does not construct another chronology of notable performers. Wang and Chen have already assembled important leads concerning expatriate teachers, Chinese performers, conservatory teaching, and professional activity [6,7]. The present contribution lies in changing the question asked of those materials: what enabled individuals to move among orchestras, conservatories, and regions, and what institutional connections can their careers actually demonstrate? Viewed in these terms, the entry of the double bass into urban musical life, its appearance in school activities, its inclusion in a formal education plan, and the succession of teachers are events supported by different kinds of evidence. They cannot be collapsed into a single origin through the language of "first appearance," nor can chronological order alone establish stable institutionalization.

The first mechanism supported by the evidence is that teachers who combined orchestral and academic roles brought professional practice into specialized training. Research on Russian émigré musicians and a Shanghai Conservatory historical notice establish the personnel conditions under which Municipal Orchestra musicians participated in conservatory teaching [4,5,14]. Zheng's recollection of Shevtzoff borrowing orchestral parts and organizing technical and ensemble work provides double-bass-specific detail [13]. Together, these sources show that orchestral resources and performance experience entered one documented course of study. In the absence of continuous timetables, lesson plans, and contemporary student records, this case cannot be generalized into a curriculum that operated uniformly throughout the period. A cello teacher's concurrent instruction of the double bass is documented in this case; its cause cannot be determined from the available

evidence.

The second finding comprises two distinct relationships. First, the Shanghai Conservatory's affiliated middle-school and undergraduate programs served different learners from its in-service and military-student training. Zheng's recollection indicates that the latter two groups were expected to return to positions in their home units [13]. The Central Conservatory's undergraduate, general, and short-term programs provide a comparison showing how another institution differentiated long-term and in-service training [10], but they do not establish that the two conservatories implemented the same model. Second, the Sichuan Conservatory used external study followed by return employment as a form of interinstitutional teacher preparation [15]. The first relationship concerns training arrangements and learners' occupational backgrounds; the second concerns how an institution obtained local teachers. Both are supported by personnel or institutional evidence, but they cannot be combined into a single mechanism driven by a unified staffing plan.

These connections did not unfold sequentially within an unchanging institutional environment. From the late nineteenth through the first half of the twentieth century, Shanghai's municipally administered professional orchestra, expatriate performers, and the National Music Institute supplied early positions and teaching resources while reproducing inequalities in colonial employment [2–5]. After 1949, the Central Conservatory's education plan shows the double bass entering the program and curricular documents at another institution [10,11], while the Shanghai materials document a case in which Chinese performers assumed teaching and long-term study existed alongside in-service training [13]. In the second half of the century, external teacher preparation created another route of teacher succession [15–17]. These points register changes in the providers of resources and the organization of training; they do not constitute proof of an uninterrupted linear history.

The study's evidentiary limits fall into three areas. First, insufficient early Shanghai section rosters and personnel records prevent an assessment of employment continuity. Second, incomplete double-bass registration, timetable, and instrument-specific examination records at the National Music Institute mean that school-wide regulations and individual recollection cannot replace evidence of annual implementation. Third, limited records of graduate destinations and appointments make the representativeness of the identified personnel pathways uncertain. Performers' recollections, biographical journalism, and institutional program histories provide valuable leads but are affected by source dependence and retrospective narration. The article therefore confirms specific organizational positions, training arrangements, and personnel connections without making further claims about their duration or reach.

7. Conclusion

The central conclusion of this Shanghai-based study is not that the double bass completed a stable process of institutionalization in modern China, but that several components of that process emerged and became connected. Shanghai's professional urban orchestras provided recognizable section positions, rehearsal resources, and conditions for professional practice. Activities at the National Music Institute in 1934 and a student case beginning in 1943 show that the double bass had entered school-based practice and specialized training. The Central Conservatory's 1950 education plan offers a comparison in which another institution formally included the instrument in its curriculum; it is not a subsequent stage in the continuous development of Shanghai's teaching system. Personnel evidence from the second half of the twentieth century further identifies trained musicians entering orchestras, professional performers assuming teaching

duties, and externally trained musicians returning to teach at their home institutions.

The article's principal contribution is to identify two concrete relationships within existing biographical and institutional materials. Dual orchestral and conservatory appointments enabled professional experience to enter teaching. Training arrangements for different groups addressed learners with distinct occupational backgrounds, while interinstitutional teacher preparation created a separate pathway in which musicians returned to teach after study elsewhere. For cultural and arts research, these cases suggest that when an artistic practice circulating across regions acquires local continuity, the organization of positions, the pedagogical decomposition of knowledge, and personnel succession can provide important forms of institutional support. This conclusion is limited to the Shanghai-centered cases and cross-institutional comparisons represented in the available evidence. The continuity of positions and curricula, and the representativeness of personnel pathways, require further testing against contemporary rosters, student records, academic-administration files, and appointment documents.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Class, Education and Social Change: A Study of Brian Simon's Historiography of Education

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Abstract: Brian Simon was one of the most influential British educational historians of the twentieth century, and he developed a new type of research in British educational history based on a Marxist school of thought. From 1780 to 1990, in his Studies in the History of Education, he systematically examined the institutional development of British education and used the theme of class struggle to show the dialectical relationship between schooling and broader changes in society. Simon's educational historiography has been systematically studied in the three areas of its formation conditions, basic features and research methods; this paper seeks to reveal the internal relations among class, education and social change in his ideas. Simon's system of historical writing offers a new path for the research of educational history and may provide some inspiration for tackling problems of educational equity and reform at present.

Keywords: Brian Simon; Marxism; Studies in the history of education; Historiography of education

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1. Introduction

Brian Simon is widely regarded as the most influential British educational historian of the 20th century, and he has changed the direction of research in the field through his own Marxist perspective. From 1780 to 1990, in his great work *Studies in the History of Education*, he has systematically rebuilt the institutional development of the British educational system and, at the core of his analysis, drawn lessons from class struggle to explore the interaction between education and social change. Simon's contribution is to break away from the old idea that educational history has always gone smoothly and, at the same time, provide a tool to study inequality in society through history. As Gary McCulloch pointed out, Simon's work "provided a theoretical rationale for the history of education and proposed that it should be based on the relationship between education and social change" [1]; Simon believed that this relationship was essentially a conflict over class interests. According to Simon's educational historiography, this paper will explore the origins, main characteristics and research methods of Simon. In doing so, it hopes to reveal the internal factors among class, education and social change that have driven his thought, grasp the main features of his intellectual

inheritance, and offer a reference for current research in educational history.

2. Factors shaping Simon's educational historiography

Brian Simon's historiography of education did not appear spontaneously; instead, it is the result of the combination of his family background, early education, formative years at Trinity College, Cambridge, and the existing scholarly tradition. The above reasons led him to put forward the main idea that "the history of education is the history of class struggle" and set a new standard for twentieth-century British educational historical research.

2.1. Family and early education background

Simon's family life and early education provided the foundation for his thinking, and at the same time, he developed a strong sense of social justice and independence. He was born into a well-known family of British liberal thinkers. His father, Ernest Simon, was a well-known industrialist who later became the Lord Mayor of Manchester; before establishing the Association for Education in Citizenship in 1934, he was also a Liberal MP. His mother, Shena Simon, was a well-known feminist and an influential member of the Board of Education's Consultative Committee. The home environment taught Simon to be a good citizen and valued equality among all people; thus, from an early age, he was aware that education should serve society. Although Simon's family was from an upper-class background and enjoyed all the advantages and power of the ruling class, they fostered liberal values and active participation in society, believing that privilege should be used to serve the common good; thus, this ideal later inspired his opposition to the class system.

Simon gained a critical consciousness as a result of his schooling at that time. Gresham's School was a good school with a modern spirit, but he still felt that it was too dull and restrictive. In 1933, he was at Kurt Hahn's Schule Schloss Salem for several months. There he saw Hitler rise to power and Hahn be arrested shortly after. Living directly under the new fascist government made him even more determined to fight fascism and live freely and independently. An early habit of questioning authority and a keen sense of social inequality provided the psychological foundation for his later adoption of Marxism.

2.2. The crucible of Trinity College, Cambridge

Simon was at Trinity College, Cambridge, and then he was introduced to Marxism. Through his participation in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), he created a lasting integration of politics and education in his own work. In 1935, while studying at Trinity, Simon was an undergraduate who joined the CPGB due to the strong left-wing sentiment of the time. Cambridge was a lively place for British Marxist thinkers at the time, and through people like Donald Maclean and James Klugmann, Simon was exposed to dialectical materialism and the theory of class struggle. At the same time, in the face of the 1930s capitalist crisis and the frightening rise of European fascism, he came to believe that "communism was the best and most honest choice to oppose capitalism, fascism and war" [2].

From then on, Simon was still a member of the Communist Party. Even after the 1956 Hungarian Uprising, and as a result of the departure of many other intellectuals from the party, he chose to remain and eventually served on the Executive Committee and led ideological work across culture and education. As the party's top educational official, Simon began to view the history of education through the lens of the overall ideological struggle. He hoped to show that the Communist Party was the rightful successor to the radical

traditions of Britain by discovering the forgotten history of working-class educational struggles. In addition, given his position on the party's Cultural Committee, he knew that educational history needed to be examined in light of Marxist theory and applied to the practical task of leading educational reform at that time.

2.3. Intellectual lineage and historiographical nourishment

Simon's educational historiography also drew on the ideas of some important thinkers in the West, such as Sir Fred Clarke. Simon was studying for his teaching diploma at the University of London Institute of Education and was under the guidance of Clarke. In Education and Social Change, Clarke was the first to suggest that the historical study of education should focus on the "social and historical forces that have shaped schools and curricula", rather than merely listing "statutes, regulations and the doctrines of famous educators" [3]. This view had a profound effect on Simon; he began to understand that the history of education was closely connected to the development of society. Simon later recognised Clarke as a forerunner of the modern social history school and credited him with the method of anchoring educational institutions in social changes.

At the same time, the intellectual culture of the Communist Party Historians' Group also provided some theoretical support for Simon. Coalescence of scholars such as Maurice Dobb and A. L. Morton, for one, wished that the focus of historical research be the class struggle and popular uprising. Morton's *A People's History of England* showed how to reconstruct national history from below, and Dobb's classic *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* offered an application model for historical materialism to structural changes in the economy and society. Assimilating these influences, Simon brought the spirit of "people's history" into educational research and expanded its scope to include educational initiatives, self-organisation and resistance by the working class from the margins to the centre.

3. Main features of Simon's educational historiography

Brian Simon was one of the first to break free from the traditional framework of British Marxist educational history and its exclusive circle of students. Based on the explicit Marxist position, the dialectical system of analysis and the orientation towards the "people's history" were used to construct a new theoretical system in this area. In Simon's system of thought, schooling is not independent of society and has not always followed an ideal path set by the educated class. Instead, it is a contested area of history deeply rooted in class structure, in continuous change with society, and shaped by the will and collective struggle of the working class. The following sections will present the three parts of this historical school.

3.1. A Marxist perspective on class struggle

Simon developed the Marxist theory of class conflict as the foundation for his research and saw institutional education primarily as a site of conflict among different classes. Simon's task as the educational historian is to uncover the underlying logic of class struggle that drives institutional development; "The modern educational system is a place of conflict among different social interests and aims, and various class groups are constantly meeting and clashing here..." Given these circumstances, as the historical record clearly shows, alternative solutions are possible, and depending on the balance of forces at any given time, some will be realised [4].

Far from being an abstract theoretical deduction, this conflictual dynamic can be seen in the actual situations of British schools. Simon did not consider the Elementary Education Act of 1870 to be an

unqualified achievement of democratization and thus did not address it. Instead, he described it as the consolidation of a class-bound school system: working-class children were grouped at the end of elementary school, and the growing middle class enjoyed better education to maintain their economic and political dominance. Similarly, he revealed the class nature of the mid-20th-century tripartite secondary school system (grammar, technical and secondary modern schools). By directing the privileged few to the academically excellent Grammar Schools and leaving most of the students at the under-resourced secondary moderns with limited opportunities, stratification was thus created. Therefore, Simon promoted the all-round school movement as an important working-class counter-attack against inherited educational privilege.

3.2. The dialectical interaction of education and social change

Simon believed that the main content of serious educational history should be the interaction between schooling and social change, so this will serve as the basis for his study. As early as the 1950s, he changed the task of the educational historian to uncover the powerful social and historical forces that shape school organisations and curricula, and more importantly, to distinguish between genuine educational theories and retroactive rationalisations that aimed to explain away rather than illuminate reality [2]. This way of expression broke free from the isolated, Whiggish idea of treating schools separately and firmly reintegrated educational history into the general course of social history.

Based on the foundation of historical materialism, Simon did not endorse the mechanical economic determinism of the time but believed that education, as a material phenomenon, would affect the superstructure accordingly. Cause and effect are dialectical and interrelated [1]. He traced the impact of social change on schooling through the three links of the mode of production, changes in class relations and evolution in ideology. Changes in production have altered class relations, and together they have created ideological readjustments that have been the direct cause of educational reform [1].

At the same time, Simon also mentioned the counter-effects of schooling on society. Education is not merely the reflection of the social structure; it changes the consciousness of individuals and groups, and this modified consciousness then has a deep impact on historical development [4]. Although the first British state system was designed by the ruling class to support the existing social and economic order, it was later challenged. Organised educational demands have expanded the political consciousness of the working class and gradually promoted reforms in society. Yet Simon was also acutely aware of the structural limits to pedagogical work, and he did not hold the naive hope that institutional schooling under capitalism would spontaneously achieve socialist transformation. Therefore, it was neither the idealistic dream of education nor a hopeless resignation to reality.

3.3. A Commitment to “People’s History”

The third characteristic of Simon’s historiography is that he has focused on the “people’s history” of schooling. He directly rejected the bourgeois-individualist idea that institutional development was due to the good deeds of middle-class philanthropists and instead proposed making working-class educational activism the focus of historical change. As Raphael Samuel noted, Simon’s additions have increased the scope of vision, expanded the subject of study, introduced new materials and improved the presentation of historical knowledge [5].

Simon released a fierce criticism of the old aristocracy and the new bourgeoisie. Reviewing A. V. Judges’ edited work *Pioneers of English Education* (1951), Simon mainly attributed the new educational

achievements to middle-class visionaries, and Simon wrote: “The real reasons for the development of education are not shown in these famous lectures...”. The working class was the one that fought for half a century against the bourgeoisie and achieved the victory that allowed for working-class education. Their strong, continuous fight for the rights of the people led to the founding of universal mass education [1].

He thought that working-class leaders, such as the Chartist William Lovett, who clearly stated the educational needs of the working class, were the true pioneers of English schooling. This revision was not merely a way of speaking; it was based on serious archival research at the University of London Institute of Education and elsewhere. By bringing the Chartist Manifestos, trade union minutes and grassroots labour pamphlets into the academic spotlight, Simon has rediscovered an authentic archive of the popular education movement and restored the agency of the working class in history.

4. The historiographical practice: A four-volume magnum opus

The first four volumes of Simon’s *Studies in the History of Education* are his most representative works. Tracing the course of British schooling from 1780 to 1990, this paper has broken down the Whiggish orthodoxy of gradual and linear development and established a Marxist-informed research system for the subject.

In Volume I, Simon took the restructuring of class relations due to the Industrial Revolution as his starting point to examine the character of educational reform. He proposed that after achieving economic and political leadership in the middle of the 19th century, the industrial bourgeoisie used the Elementary Education Act of 1870 to create a stratified school system, confining working-class children to basic elementary education and keeping the elite secondary school system for the middle class. Departing from the traditional historiography that regarded the Act as primarily a sign of universal literacy, Simon studied the current factory legislation and parliamentary discussions to find that the state’s intervention mainly served to protect and legitimize the power of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, he also regained the agency of the working class and formed its own education plan. Laboring communities began to see education as a way to achieve political liberation; imbued with rising class consciousness, they deliberately rejected bourgeois political economy and educational orthodoxy to develop their own theories and counter-hegemonic practices [6]. Based on working-class archives and grassroots materials, Simon had uncovered these repressed struggles and informed the public.

Volume II moved on to discuss the increase in educational class conflict. Moving beyond the abstract idea of “educational democratization”, Simon placed the Education Act of 1902 within the context of class conflict and pointed out that it was one of the main areas of contention in that period.[1] Through analysis of fiscal allocation, school board restructuring and institutional division before and after the Act, he found that the state’s main purpose was to curb the development of socialist consciousness and political mobilisation among the working class. Despite this, the continuing labour movement forced the government to make some concessions on secularisation and free education. As Simon observed, the history of education in this period is not a straightforward story of continuous enlightenment and charity, but rather a space for conflict and change, and from it we can learn important lessons about the labour movement [7]. He also pointed out the rise of organised socialism in the mid-1880s and showed how working-class demands evolved from local, defensive reactions into a unified, politically conscious movement led by trade unions and socialist organizations; thus, he demonstrated the interaction between the economic foundation and the ideological

system.

Simon analysed the period between the wars in Volume III according to the concept of "social control" and expanded his Marxist criticism of educational functions. He put forward that the educational environment in the interwar period had become "crystalised", and various levels of schooling had been rigidified to match and reproduce the existing division of labour and occupational hierarchy. By scrutinizing the secondary school admission regulations, curriculum differentiation and administrative reports, he found that the official policy assumed that elite culture was for a select few, and the working masses were merely tools for the production of capital and maintenance of the capitalist system [8]. Simon examined the celebrated Education Act of 1944 and, although it promised "secondary education for all", pointed out that the system was based on class distinctions; thus, considerable disparities in funding, teaching staff and other living standards at the three levels of grammar, technical and secondary modern schools remained. Simon did document the resilience of labour organisations, and although there were wars, working-class movements kept organising according to their own needs; thus, a cycle of struggle, tactical compromise and renewed resistance continued.

Simon reviewed the changes in education over the past 50 years in Volume IV and incorporated new political developments with an evolving historical materialism. Although he had left academia and was no longer active in the party, he still applied class analysis to argue that the changes after the war could only be understood by observing how educational opportunities and occupational class structures had changed. He pointed out that the main goal of the Education Reform Act of 1988 by the Thatcher government was to break up the all-through school system. Analyzing the provisions on the National Curriculum, local financial management and school autonomy, he showed that the market-driven agenda was an attempt to restore bourgeois cultural and institutional hegemony. Drawing on the ideas of Antonio Gramsci and Pierre Bourdieu, Simon pointed out that elite hegemony also functions in adult education and mass media, so a multi-front ideological response is needed [9]. His balanced assessment of the all-round school movement—praising it as the peak of working-class educational agitation and frankly addressing the political compromises of successive Labour governments—shows that he had strong dialectical skills.

5. Conclusion

Brian Simon was one of the leading educational historians in 20th-century Britain, and he changed the direction of the field with his Marxist historiographical system. Scholarly research has shown that structural problems in education are linked to the roles of the ruling class, individuals and centralisation of the state. Simon's historical tetralogy has shown the disappointments and failures of the past two centuries of educational reform, but it has also given eternal hope for democratic renewal. As Simon pointed out, although there are many intentional blockages or institutional compromises for educational progress at present, in the long run, we will build a truly common and all-encompassing national education system that meets the needs of all people [10]. Rigorous, thematic and persuasive, Simon's work remains a great work of British and world educational history.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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On Jane Austen and Her Work

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Abstract: Jane Austen lived a short life, wrote only six complete novels, two of which were published after her death. However, her six novels won her permanent honor. Today, we can still see the images in films and dramas that were created from her works. In these novels, the life of the gentry, landowners, and clergy at the end of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries is shown in detail. All of Jane Austen's works show a recognizable standard of values. Jane Austen's interest revolved around people---their eccentricities, appearances and dialogues. From them, she created the characters that give her novels universal and lasting appeal, of course, in most cases, using her peculiar writing skill---irony.

Keywords: Jane Austen; Work; Irony

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1. Jane Austen herself

Jane Austen (1775-1817) is one of the most famous novelists in England in the 18th century. She never married, lived her life without going out, and had little education, but she was very interested in the literature of her time. As a supreme prose stylist, Austen has secured a lasting place in English literature. She lived all of her life in the English countryside, a setting she uses in each of her novels. She wrote only six long novels in her life and several fragments, including her most famous Pride and Prejudice -- filled with reality, Northanger Abbey -- called a Gothic novel, Sense and Sensibility, Emma -- her favorite one, Persuasion, and Mansfield Park [1-2].

Austen has a talent for describing the involvements, feelings, and characters of ordinary life. Austen's concept of narrative perspective is unique and innovative. Her realm is comedy, and her sense of the comedic in human nature informs her technique, which is superb for its description of character, control of point of view, and ironic tone [3].

2. Jane Austen's work

Austen's novels are peopled with characters of her own social class: the ladies and gentlemen of the landed

gentry. The plot of her novels revolves around the intricacies of courtship and marriage between members of this class. The scenes and occasions she described are deliberated carefully. She gives us true-to-life characters by using her writing skill, and in addition to her critics with little harsh and clever dialogues, her novels are magnificent.

2.1. Popularity of Jane Austen's work

Miss Austen's power of interesting us in the commonplace is not confined to the characters she has introduced into her stories, but extends also to the stories themselves. In general, Miss Austen looks at "her characters" from one perspective: irony. There are no adventures in her books, no abstract ideas, no romantic reveries, no death scenes. Nor does she give much space to the impressions of the scenes. But irony is an intellectual thing, a critical comment on life. She surveys her creatures with separated irony [4].

Austen, as a female writer, full of kindness, humanity, and belief in religion, uses humor to reflect the ladies'frustration, prejudice, and misunderstanding they encounter during their lives. But the results are all good, in one word, "One good turn deserves another". Austen gives her ladies a happy end after they have striven for a long time [5].

Austen's dealing with the theme reflects her contradiction and characteristics as a writer, going beyond the century that not only affirms sensibility, but also tells us sense, not only finds the contradiction, but displays the superior and inferior, the common and different, not only plays a joke on it, but expects to be happy. Therefore, Austen plays an important part in the history of English literature in which realism converted into romanticism.

2.2 Setting of Jane Austen's work

Jane Austen lived in the 18th and 19th centuries, when the Industrial Revolution in England in the second half of the 18th century, the French Revolution of 1789-1794, and the ensuing Napoleonic Wars had a strong impact upon England's economic, political, and literary scenes in the first few decades of the 19th century. During this period, there appeared some writers who were called Enlightenists, and it was the beginning of self-conscious literature [6].

Following the Enlightenment and its impact on literature, there was a period of literature in Western Europe generally known as the Romantic Movement. It was not until this period that romanticism as a literary movement in England reached its full flowering. Such poets and writers as Byron, Shelley, Keats, Walter Scott, and Jane Austen expressed a more or less negative attitude toward the different social classes of the time and the existing social and political conditions [7].

3. About Jane Austen's theory of "irony"

The plots and scenes in Austen's works are described in minute detail with her painstaking care. She gives us many faces with vivid accounts and irony, so as her contemporaries pointed out: her works are unique and beautiful. No novelists ever had a better right to use irony than Miss Austen. She was easily and brilliantly superior to everyone whom she scorned in that aspect of the novel which she sought to ridicule and which was in her day the most vulnerable, namely, technique.

3.1. “Irony” itself

Irony is a broad term referring to the recognition of a reality different from the masking appearance. ‘ Irony’is likely to be confused with ‘sarcasm’, but it differs from ‘sarcasm’ in that it is usually lighter, less harsh in its wording, though its effects are probably more cutting because of its indirectness. ‘Irony’is the expression of one’s meaning by saying something which is the direct opposite to one’s thoughts, in order to make one’s remarks forceful [8].

3.2. Examples of irony in Jane Austen’s work

Emma is a good case in point in which the Theory is reflected vividly.

3.2.1. Irony 1

Emma is an arranger, a manager of other people’s affairs. She exhibits the strong need to dominate, the offhand cruelty, the protective playfulness, the malice of Jane Austen, the candid Jane Austen of the letters -- in which miscarriage is a joke: Mrs. Hall, of Sherborne, was brought to bed yesterday of a dead child, some weeks before she expected, owing to a fright, I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband. Death equally amusing: Only think if Mrs. Holder’s being dead! Poor woman, she has done the only thing in the world she could do to make one cease to abuse her [9].

3.2.2. Irony 2

Emma falls into every conceivable mistake and misjudgment. The simple irony of Emma’s flirtation with Frank Churchill rises, of course, from the fact that Churchill is in love with someone else and uses Emma as a decoy. More than this, however, Churchill uses Emma so successfully only because he knows her so well. Emma is a perfect decoy for a man in love with someone else. She enjoys and invites admiration, but will draw away from any sign of serious attachment [10].

The irony here of Emma is multiple, and its ultimate aspect is that there is no happy ending, no easy balance, if we care to project confirmed exploiters like Emma and Churchill into the future of their marriages. Emma and Frank Churchill’s society, which makes so much of surface, guarantees the triumph of surface [11-13].

4. The End

I am pressing this matter of the method of scene and the method of irony not only because it is through this method that the significance of the architectural structure of the work is brought home to us, but because it reveals an important fact about Jane Austen’s relation to her audience, then and now, and because, unless we understand this relation, we cannot see as much as we should see in that thematic structure. Jane Austen was in an ambiguous situation in relation to her readers, a situation in which she was committed simultaneously to cherish and abominate her world.

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Digitalization Empowerment and Collaborative Innovation between Henan and Borderland: Research on the Path of Activating Silk Road Textile Heritage from the Perspective of Cultural Enrichment of Borderland

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Abstract: Taking the Cultural Enrichment of Xinjiang strategy as its analytical standpoint, this study adopts cross-provincial collaborative innovation between Henan and Xinjiang as the entry point of investigation. Drawing on the abundant textile cultural heritage accumulated in the Central Plains, its mature industrial infrastructure, as well as the well-preserved, original intangible assets of Silk Road textile heritage in Xinjiang, this paper dissects the internal mechanisms and practical values of heritage revitalization driven by digital technologies. By sorting out the shared cultural roots and resource complementarity of textile civilizations across Henan and Xinjiang, the paper summarizes prevailing practical obstacles facing Silk Road textile heritage. It further establishes an operational framework for heritage activation, where digital technologies serve as technical support, cross-regional cooperation acts as the carrier, and integrated culture-tourism development functions as practical application scenarios. Targeted implementation pathways are put forward accordingly. This research intends to advance the living inheritance and industrial upgrading of Silk Road textile intangible cultural heritage. It also delivers practical references within textile culture research to sustain and regularize the promotion of the Cultural Enrichment of Xinjiang strategy.

Keywords: Cultural enrichment of Xinjiang; Henan-Xinjiang collaborative innovation; Digital empowerment; Silk Road textile heritage

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1. Introduction

The ancient Silk Road functioned as a pivotal channel for economic interaction and intercultural learning between Eastern and Western civilizations, nurturing a sophisticated and diversified textile culture. Textile

traditions of Henan and Xinjiang stem from identical cultural origins and possess mutually complementary resource endowments, laying inherent foundations for cross-administrative collaborative preservation and innovative development. Nevertheless, current cultural exchanges between Henan and Xinjiang mostly rely on short-term performances and episodic exchange events, lacking durable collaborative linkage mechanisms. Such limitations prevent precious Silk Road textile heritage from meeting the cultural development demands of the new era, and the cultural value underpinning Xinjiang's cultural enrichment has not been fully unleashed. Against this backdrop, anchored in the strategic context of Cultural Enrichment of Xinjiang, this paper focuses on two dimensions: coordinated regional development and digital-intelligent empowerment. It systematically examines feasible pathways to revitalize Silk Road textile heritage. The findings offer theoretical foundations and actionable solutions for the conservation-oriented development of Silk Road intangible heritage, deeper integration of cultural industries in Henan and Xinjiang, and the full implementation of the Cultural Enrichment of Xinjiang strategy.

2. Core concepts and theoretical foundations

2.1. Definition of core concepts

2.1.1. Silk Road textile heritage

Silk Road textile heritage constitutes a vital branch within the broader Silk Road cultural heritage system. It encompasses tangible textile relics and intangible cultural resources preserved along the Silk Road, with particular relevance to Xinjiang. Concretely, it covers traditional weaving craftsmanship, ethnic pattern genealogy, manual production workflows, folk cultural contexts, and surviving textile artifacts from successive historical periods. Representative resources include the weaving craft of Adelies silk, West Asian patterned brocade, and ethnic hand embroidery. Distinct from static cultural relics, Silk Road textile heritage represents living cultural heritage. It comprehensively records how Chinese textile techniques spread westward and how multiple ethnic cultures merged and innovated, embodying the inclusive and unified essence of Chinese civilization [1].

2.1.2. Henan-Xinjiang synergy

Henan-Xinjiang synergy refers to a cross-regional linked development model built on shared cultural origins, complementary resources and differentiated industrial strengths of Henan and Xinjiang. Henan boasts deep cultural reserves and mature systems in textile manufacturing, creative design research, digital media communication and university talent training. Xinjiang retains original intangible heritage resources, distinctive Silk Road regional culture, and untapped potential within cultural tourism industries. The core objective of this collaborative model is to break administrative boundaries and facilitate bidirectional flow and optimal allocation of technology, talent, creative ideas and market resources [2].

2.1.3. Digital-intelligent empowerment for heritage revitalization

Digital-intelligent empowerment for heritage revitalization represents an emerging development paradigm for intangible cultural heritage preservation and innovation amid the digital economy. Leveraging intelligent digital tools such as 3D scanning and virtual reality, researchers can carry out digital archiving, cultural content decoding, creative transformation and market-oriented promotion for traditional textile heritage. Unlike conventional passive conservation models, digital-intelligent revitalization follows the philosophy

of living inheritance. It transfers ancient textile craftsmanship out of traditional workshops and museum spaces into digital scenes and modern consumption contexts, enabling permanent preservation, innovative regeneration and sustainable development of cultural heritage.

2.2. Theoretical foundation

2.2.1. Theory of cultural enrichment of Xinjiang

Cultural Enrichment of Xinjiang is guided by advanced socialist culture and nourished by fine traditional Chinese culture. It fosters a positive social atmosphere and spiritual civilization construction in Xinjiang and strengthens cultural belonging and ethnic identity among all local ethnic groups.

2.2.2. Theory of regional coordinated development

The core of regional coordinated development theory lies in dismantling regional segmentation and resource barriers. It promotes free circulation and complementary advantages of production factors, including talent, technology, culture, and industries, across regions, generating overall benefits that a single region cannot achieve independently. Henan and Xinjiang differ greatly in industrial structures, technological levels and cultural resources, forming strong complementarity. The Central Plains' industrial and technological strengths can make up for the weak industrialization of Xinjiang's intangible heritage, while Xinjiang's authentic cultural resources enrich the core content of creative cultural industries. Guided by regional coordination theory, resources from both regions can be efficiently integrated to maximize the cultural and industrial value of Silk Road textile heritage.

2.2.3. Living inheritance theory of intangible cultural heritage

The living inheritance theory of intangible cultural heritage adopts a people-centered core principle. It rejects static, specimen-style conservation thinking and highlights that intangible heritage can sustain vitality only through practical inheritance, market application and cultural communication. Traditional written documents and physical collections merely preserve the outer form of heritage rather than craft details, folk implications and inheritance lineages. Cross-regional collaboration plus digital-intelligent empowerment can expand inheritance channels, enlarge inheritor groups and renovate inheritance forms. This allows ancient textile crafts to escape the confinement of small-scale master-apprentice teaching, integrate into modern society and achieve long-term, sustainable living transmission.

3. Basis and value of coordinated textile cultural development between Henan and Xinjiang from the perspective of cultural enrichment of Xinjiang

3.1. Realistic foundation for coordinated textile cultural development between Henan and Xinjiang

3.1.1. Cultural homology: Continuity of silk textile heritage along the Silk Road

The Central Plains serves as the birthplace of Chinese textile civilization. Textile cultures of Henan and Xinjiang originate from the same cultural root and maintain historical continuity, standing as tangible evidence of long-standing communication and integration among various ethnic groups throughout history. This creates a solid cultural foundation for joint efforts of Henan and Xinjiang to revitalize cultural heritage.

3.1.2. Resource complementarity: Dual empowerment of industry and intangible heritage

Textile cultural resources in Henan and Xinjiang form a clear complementary structure. Xinjiang holds rare, well-preserved Silk Road intangible heritage assets with high cultural recognition and distinctive regional features. Meanwhile, it faces challenges including underdeveloped digital infrastructure, insufficient creative design capacity and low efficiency in market transformation. As a core provincial player in China's textile sector, Henan owns mature systems for creative development, digital communication and talent training. It can deliver comprehensive support in technology, human resources and market channels for Xinjiang's textile intangible heritage. Xinjiang supplies high-value cultural resources, while Henan exports industrial and creative capabilities. This complementary resource structure constitutes core support for collaborative heritage activation.

3.1.3. Policy support: Mutual strategic benefits boost coordinated development

In recent years, China has continuously rolled out strategic deployments covering Cultural Enrichment of Xinjiang, east-west cultural tourism cooperation, digital preservation of intangible heritage and deep culture-tourism integration. Relevant policies explicitly encourage cross-regional cultural collaborative innovation and industrialization of intangible cultural heritage[3].

3.2. Value of collaborative digital empowerment for revitalizing Silk Road textile heritage under Henan-Xinjiang cooperation

3.2.1. Heritage value: Addressing inheritance crises and realizing living sustainability

Traditional textile intangible heritage faces prominent risks of craft discontinuity. Conventional paper records and static archives cannot fully capture weaving skills, material processing methods and implicit knowledge embedded in pattern details. Using 3D scanning, dynamic image recording and cloud database storage, researchers can permanently document complete craft workflows and cultural connotations, realizing permanent digital preservation of intangible heritage resources. Combined with joint talent training programs between Henan and Xinjiang, inheritance channels can be widened, effectively easing the challenge of narrow inheritance groups and guaranteeing continuous living transmission of textile intangible heritage.

3.2.2. Industrial value: Facilitating industrial transformation and increasing cultural tourism revenue

Digital technologies enable modern transformation of traditional textile patterns and ancient weaving techniques. Breaking the limitations of conventional product forms, heritage resources can be combined with contemporary aesthetic tastes and consumption scenarios to develop diversified products and raise the added value of intangible heritage commodities. Drawing on Henan's complete textile industrial chains, e-commerce channels and brand operation experience, Xinjiang's textile intangible heritage can transform from manual craftsmanship into market-oriented, industrial cultural products. This extends cultural tourism industrial chains, fosters new business formats and drives local cultural tourism economy and income growth of grassroots communities in Xinjiang.

3.2.3. Communication value: Innovating Silk Road narratives and telling Chinese stories

Digital platforms, including cloud exhibition halls, short-video distribution, and VR immersive experiences, break geographical restrictions. Border-region ethnic textile intangible heritage can transcend regional boundaries and gain nationwide public exposure.

4. Practical dilemmas in activating Silk Road textile heritage and Henan-Xinjiang coordinated development

4.1. Simplified digital conservation and limited application scenarios for digital-intelligent empowerment

Most intangible heritage resources in Xinjiang have only undergone basic text and image archiving, lacking in-depth digital construction. Digital technologies are applied in relatively narrow scenarios, mostly limited to static online display. Deep integration between digital technology and heritage conservation, industrial development and cultural communication remains insufficient. Furthermore, inconsistent data collection standards for intangible heritage across regions lead to isolated, independent data storage and severe data silo issues. High-quality cultural resources cannot be shared and reused, resulting in resource waste.

4.2. Incomplete Henan-Xinjiang collaboration mechanism and low efficiency of linked development

At present, Henan and Xinjiang have not established specialized long-term collaborative mechanisms targeting Silk Road textile heritage revitalization. Regular communication platforms between the two regions are absent, hindering the free flow of talent, technology, creative resources and capital. Existing cooperation tends to prioritize publicity and exhibitions while neglecting practical implementation and transformation. In-depth joint initiatives such as co-research and development, industrial incubation, brand co-construction and collaborative technology innovation remain scarce. Cross-regional cooperation also lacks targeted policy and financial support. Ambiguous rights and responsibilities among stakeholders reduce participation willingness, making it hard to form stable, long-term bidirectional empowerment patterns.

4.3. Deficient talent system and severe shortage of high-skilled professionals

Insufficient talent supply acts as the core bottleneck restricting the revitalization of Silk Road textile heritage.

4.4. Weak industrial transformation capacity and severe product homogenization

The industrial development of Silk Road textile heritage stays at the preliminary exploratory stage with obvious shortcomings. In terms of product innovation, most cultural derivatives merely copy traditional patterns without digging deep into cultural connotations and historical contexts, leading to serious homogenization. Such products fail to meet modern aesthetic preferences and market demands. From the perspective of industrial chains, the industry remains confined to primary manual processing, missing core value-adding links and resulting in low product added value. Regarding culture-tourism integration, textile intangible heritage is not closely integrated with tourism scenes and digital consumption scenarios. New business models develop slowly, and distinctive cultural brands are lacking [4].

5. Optimized pathways for digital empowerment and cultural enrichment to revitalize Silk Road textile heritage from Henan-Xinjiang cultural integration

5.1. Build standardized digital conservation systems to achieve precise and living heritage preservation

Centered on digital technologies, a dedicated digital conservation system for Silk Road textile heritage should be constructed. Cultural and tourism authorities of Henan and Xinjiang, university research teams

and heritage protection institutions can jointly carry out comprehensive surveys of regional textile heritage resources. High-definition shooting, 3D scanning and digital twin technologies can record weaving workflows, pattern styles, material characteristics, folk contexts and historical backgrounds comprehensively, supporting the construction of a dedicated Silk Road textile heritage digital resource database. Unified technical standards shall be formulated to break regional data barriers and realize joint construction, shared access and collaborative utilization of heritage resources between the two provinces. Meanwhile, expand digital application scenarios and build cloud-based digital exhibition halls for textile heritage, delivering permanent digital preservation and panoramic communication of Silk Road textile heritage.

5.2. Improve Henan-Xinjiang collaborative mechanisms and build cross-regional coordinated development patterns

Efforts should be made to fully remove administrative barriers and establish sustainable collaborative development frameworks linking Henan and Xinjiang.

5.3. Cultivate compound talent teams to consolidate industrial development foundations

Targeting weaknesses in talent cultivation, a two-way connected, multi-level training system for interdisciplinary talents should be established between Henan and Xinjiang. Regular empowerment training for traditional inheritors will be organized to strengthen their innovative capacity.

5.4. Deepen industrial innovation and transformation to foster new intangible heritage tourism business forms

Guided by market demand, researchers can further explore cultural symbols, Silk Road civilization connotations and narratives of ethnic integration carried by heritage resources. Simple pattern replication should be abandoned to realize modern creative transformation of cultural meanings. Henan's design resources and digital strengths, alongside its industrial bases, e-commerce platforms and sales channels, can be leveraged to expand market access for heritage products. Further culture-tourism integration can incorporate weaving experience activities, digital exhibitions, creative consumption and intangible heritage study tours into Xinjiang's tourism systems. Immersive experiences and themed study tour products can be developed to build unique cultural IP themed on Silk Road textiles.

5.5. Innovate digital-intelligent communication paradigms and strengthen practical outcomes of cultural enrichment of Xinjiang

Reconstruct the cultural communication system of the Silk Road textile industry. Centered on the core goal of Cultural Enrichment of Xinjiang, optimize communication content and forms. Adjust narrative priorities to highlight cultural homology, ethnic integration and symbiotic relations along the Silk Road. Produce high-quality content including short videos, digital illustrations and special documentary series, vividly narrating stories of ethnic unity and cultural integration behind Silk Road textile heritage.

6. Conclusion and outlook

Silk Road textile heritage serves as a vital carrier for inheritance and development of Silk Road civilizations. It records the formation of the pattern of multi-ethnic unity within Chinese civilization and constitutes

valuable cultural resources for advancing Xinjiang's cultural revitalization projects in the new era. Under the rapid development of the digital economy, digital-intelligent empowerment and Henan-Xinjiang cooperation represent core approaches to tackle inheritance difficulties and realize living activation of Silk Road textile heritage. Textile cultures of Henan and Xinjiang share common origins and coexist with complementary resource endowments and differentiated industrial advantages, creating favorable conditions for coordinated development. By constructing standardized digital-intelligent preservation systems, improving cross-regional collaboration mechanisms, cultivating interdisciplinary talent teams, promoting industrial innovation and transformation, and renovating digital communication modes, stakeholders can comprehensively advance protective inheritance, innovative development and industrial upgrading of Silk Road textile heritage. These measures consolidate the cultural foundation of cultural enrichment in Xinjiang and help forge a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation.

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Research on the Cultural Heritage Value Background of Shangdu Site Museum's Cultural Products Design and Promotion

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Abstract: As the earliest capital remains of the Shang Dynasty, the Shangdu Site embodies the core developmental values of early urban civilization in China. Serving as a pivotal platform for cultural inheritance and publicity of the relics, Shangdu Site Museum develops cultural and creative commodities that act as vital carriers for the dynamic inheritance and innovative dissemination of cultural heritage. Taking Shangdu Site Museum as the research subject, this study proceeds from the perspective of cultural heritage value transformation. It systematically sorts out the resource advantages of the museum's cultural and creative development and summarizes the practical bottlenecks restricting its industrial progress. Targeted development strategies are proposed from three core dimensions, including design innovation, brand communication, and operational guarantee. The research aims to facilitate the contemporary interpretation and innovative transformation of Shang cultural symbols, while enhancing the cultural dissemination influence and sustainable developmental capacity of heritage museums.

Keywords: Shangdu Site; Shangdu Site Museum; Cultural and creative product design; Cultural heritage value; Promotion strategy

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1. Introduction

China's museum industry is undergoing a critical transformation from the traditional object-oriented collection and display mode to a people-centered public cultural service system. In this context, cultural and creative products have become a key bridge connecting museums, cultural heritage and the general public. As the location of the early Shang Dynasty capital city, Zhengzhou boasts the Shang Palace Ruins, which serve as the core cultural symbol of urban civilization and a key research carrier for exploring the origin of Chinese civilization. Officially opened to the public in 2022, Shangdu Site Museum has made steady progress in site protection, cultural exhibition and heritage popularization. Nevertheless, its cultural and creative industry

development lags far behind the overall construction and operational progress of the museum. How to deeply explore the intrinsic value of local cultural heritage and build a sound cultural and creative system that balances cultural identity and market competitiveness has become an urgent practical problem to be solved for the sustainable development of Shangdu Site Museum.

2. Cultural heritage value foundation and cultural and creative development context of Shangdu Site Museum

2.1. Core cultural heritage value of Zhengzhou Shangdu Site

Situated in the hinterland of the Central Plains, Zhengzhou functioned as a crucial political, economic and cultural hub in ancient China. Endowed with abundant cultural heritage resources, the city ranks among the top regions in China in terms of the quantity and scale of historical relics and sites. As a significant archaeological discovery in Chinese academic circles, Zhengzhou Shangdu Site represents a large-scale urban relic of early Chinese civilization with profound historical and cultural significance [1]. Dating back approximately 3,600 years, the early Shang capital ruins clarify the developmental origin of the Yin Ruins civilization of the late Shang Dynasty, provide critical chronological and spatial coordinates for the research of Xia culture, and fill the academic gap in the study of early urban civilization in China. In terms of relic layout, the Shangdu Site retains a complete three-layer city wall structure, with clearly divided functional zones including palace areas, handicraft workshop clusters and residential districts, reflecting the advanced urban planning concepts of the early Shang period. A large number of precious cultural relics have been unearthed from the site, such as bronze square tripods with beast face patterns, primitive porcelain wares, oracle bone inscriptions and pottery inscriptions marked with the character “Bo”. These relics comprehensively witness the mature bronze civilization, sophisticated handicraft techniques and primitive writing system of the early Shang Dynasty. Cultural heritage not only serves as tangible historical evidence, but also constitutes the core connotation of Zhengzhou’s Shang cultural identity and the fundamental support for urban cultural construction. Since 2017, the Zhengzhou Municipal Government has designated the Shangdu Historical and Cultural Zone as a key urban cultural functional area, promoting the integrated development of large-scale heritage protection and urban construction, and providing solid policy support and spatial guarantee for the prosperity of local cultural and creative industries.

2.2 Exhibition system and cultural resource endowment of Shangdu Site Museum

Shangdu Site Museum is a specialized thematic museum constructed based on the Shangdu Site, and it also acts as the core cultural landmark of Zhengzhou Shangdu National Archaeological Site Park. Established for the protection and display of Shang Dynasty relics, the museum is a core component of the national archaeological park, undertaking the important function of displaying the historical charm and cultural connotation of Shangdu Site in an all-round manner [2]. Officially launched in July 2022, the museum covers an exhibition area of about 5,500 square meters, with seven themed exhibition sections, namely the Cradle of Civilization, Birds Breeding the Shang Dynasty, Majestic Shangdu, Grand Shang Capital, Center of the Four Directions, Eternal Heritage, and Heritage Protection. The museum collects and displays more than 1,000 cultural relics covering bronze wares, jade artifacts, bone crafts and pottery wares. In terms of exhibition methods, the museum abandons the single display mode of traditional museums and adopts diversified presentation means including scene restoration, sand table models and multimedia audio-visual technologies.

These innovative methods vividly reproduce the urban spatial layout, handicraft production scenarios, social operation modes, and sacrificial rituals of the early Shang capital, enabling visitors to gain an immersive experience of ancient Shang civilization. The three-dimensional and diversified exhibition system lays a rich material foundation for cultural and creative product development. Diverse cultural elements can be extracted from museum resources, including the beast face decorative patterns on the Du Ling Square Tripod, the legendary totem of bird-origin Shang culture, rammed earth textures of ancient city walls, pictographic pottery inscriptions, and primitive porcelain glaze colors. All these distinctive cultural symbols can be transformed into innovative design inspirations for cultural and creative products. In addition, the museum is located in the core urban area of Zhengzhou, integrating with residents' daily living spaces. With an average annual passenger flow of over 10 million person-times, it possesses superior natural market conditions for the popularization and consumption of cultural and creative products.

3. Current dilemmas and root causes of cultural and creative product development of Shangdu Site Museum

3.1. Supply-side deficiencies: Single product category and superficial cultural interpretation

The existing cultural and creative products of Shangdu Site Museum face prominent problems of homogeneous design and shallow cultural expression. In terms of product categories, commodities with exclusive Shangdu cultural attributes are limited to a small number of types such as printed cushions, canvas bags, scarves and decorative ornaments. More than half of the on-sale products belong to universal cultural commodities without unique site cultural symbols, resulting in weak cultural recognition. From the perspective of design logic, most products merely adopt simple pattern printing and element splicing techniques. Developers fail to deeply explore and refine the core cultural symbols of Shang civilization, and lack innovative transformation of the aesthetic characteristics of representative cultural relics such as Du Ling Square Tripod and primitive porcelain. Meanwhile, the historical stories and cultural connotations behind classic legends, including the bird-origin Shang founding and the establishment of Bo Capital, have not been fully integrated into product design. Outdated design languages and insufficient aesthetic expression greatly reduce the competitiveness of museum cultural and creative products. This predicament stems from two main aspects. On the one hand, the museum's cultural and creative industry started late with insufficient capital investment, failing to form a systematic and standardized industrial development system. On the other hand, the depth of cultural interpretation in the design process is inadequate. Most design practices only copy superficial visual symbols mechanically, without combining contemporary life scenarios for secondary innovation and creative upgrading. Such problems lead to a lack of unique cultural memory points in products, which cannot meet the diversified aesthetic demands and practical usage needs of modern consumers.

3.2. Brand communication defects: Low public recognition and narrow channel coverage

In terms of brand construction, although Shangdu Site Museum has an independent official logo, it has not yet built a unified visual identification system for cultural and creative products. Inconsistent design styles and packaging specifications of different product lines make it difficult for consumers to form stable and unified brand cognition. Compared with mature IP operation cases of domestic top museums, the brand

influence and public recognition of Shangdu cultural and creative products remain at a relatively low level. The museum has not developed core communicable cultural symbols and market-popular products, resulting in the absence of a scalable brand effect. In terms of marketing channels, the sales of cultural and creative products mainly rely on offline physical stores inside the museum, with consumer groups limited to on-site visitors. The single-channel layout and narrow coverage restrict the market promotion and popularization of Shangdu cultural and creative products, severely hindering the sustainable development of the museum's cultural and creative industry.

3.3. Operational support shortcomings: Inadequate resource integration and marketization capacity

The development of cultural and creative industries requires interdisciplinary resource integration and professional market operation capabilities, which are the main weaknesses of Shangdu Site Museum's industrial construction. In terms of talent allocation, the museum's existing team is dominated by professionals engaged in archaeology and cultural heritage protection, lacking professional talents in creative design, brand planning, market promotion and e-commerce operation. The unbalanced talent structure cannot support the high-quality and systematic development of cultural and creative businesses. In terms of resource docking, the museum has not established in-depth cooperative relationships with local design colleges, cultural tourism enterprises and cultural and creative institutions. A mature operation mode integrating museum-campus cooperation and government-enterprise linkage has not been formed, leading to low utilization efficiency of external social resources. In terms of operational mechanism, the cultural and creative business still adheres to the traditional public institution operation mode with a low degree of marketization. The lack of flexible incentive systems and profit feedback mechanisms results in weak independent innovation and iterative upgrading capacity of the cultural and creative industry.From the perspective of long-term heritage protection, cultural and creative development is not a simple commercial behavior. Qualified cultural and creative products can integrate Shang civilization into modern public life, help the public understand the historical value of Zhengzhou Shangdu Site, and effectively improve citizens' cultural heritage protection awareness and cultural literacy [3]. Therefore, optimizing the museum's operational support system is not only an essential requirement for industrial upgrading, but also an inevitable choice for the inheritance and revitalization of Shang cultural heritage.

4. Heritage value-oriented innovative design and promotion paths for Shangdu Site Museum's cultural products

4.1. Deep heritage embedding: Innovative upgrade of cultural and creative product design

The core of museum cultural and creative design lies in the contemporary innovative transformation of traditional cultural symbols, which needs to retain the spiritual connotation of cultural heritage while adapting to modern aesthetic concepts and daily usage scenarios. Shangdu Site Museum should first establish a standardized and systematic Shang cultural symbol database by extracting core elements from three dimensions, including museum collections, site spatial forms, and historical cultural connotations. Specifically, decorative elements cover beast face patterns on bronze tripods and hollow carvings on bronze axes; spatial elements include rammed earth textures of city walls and square capital urban layout; cultural

elements involve bird totems, “Bo” character pottery inscriptions and Shang Dynasty divination and sacrificial cultural symbols. All extracted cultural elements should be simplified and modernized through flat design processing to form reusable standardized design materials, avoiding random and blind element application. In terms of product system construction, hierarchical and categorized development strategies should be adopted to meet the consumption needs of different groups. First, collection-oriented high-end products are designed for cultural enthusiasts and collectors, including high-precision cultural relic replicas and limited-edition artistic derivatives made by traditional craftsmanship, with both artistic appreciation value and collection value. Second, daily practical products target ordinary consumer groups, integrating Shang cultural symbols into stationery, home supplies, accessories and digital peripheral products to realize the organic integration of traditional culture and modern daily life. Third, trendy youth-oriented products focus on young consumer groups, developing themed figurines, archaeological surprise boxes and other popular commodities. Referencing the mature operation experience of Henan Museum’s archaeological blind boxes, the study designs innovative products based on Shang bronze ritual vessels, pottery and primitive porcelain, matched with professional cultural explanation cards, enabling consumers to acquire cultural knowledge and experience archaeological fun in the consumption process. In terms of design concepts, the rigid and heavy expression of historical culture should be abandoned, and lightweight and modern design languages should be adopted to interpret Shang civilization. Complex bronze beast face patterns can be decomposed into minimalist geometric patterns for application in clothing and home products; “Bo” character pottery inscriptions can be optimized through calligraphy design to build distinctive text IP. Meanwhile, product material innovation should be emphasized. The adoption of environmentally friendly new materials and advanced production technologies can effectively improve product texture, realizing the unified integration of culturality, practicality and aesthetics, and creating distinctive Shangdu cultural and creative products with contemporary aesthetic characteristics.

4.2. Scenario-based full coverage: Construction of integrated brand promotion system

The cultural communication influence of cultural and creative products relies on unified brand positioning and comprehensive three-dimensional promotion networks. Shangdu Site Museum should build an exclusive “Shangdu Cultural Creativity” independent brand and form a complete visual identity system. It is necessary to unify brand logos, standard colors, auxiliary graphics and product packaging styles, and integrate core cultural symbols such as bird totems and Du Ling Square Tripod into all product design and promotion links, forming unique brand memory points. Meanwhile, the museum can develop serialized cultural content including short video programs of “Shangdu Relics Interpretation” and illustrated story albums of bird-origin Shang culture, enriching brand cultural connotation and strengthening emotional connection between the brand and the public. In terms of offline channels, a three-level sales network covering museum flagship stores, site scenic outlets and urban cooperative terminals should be established. First, optimize the internal cultural and creative stores of the museum, set up themed cultural and creative zones corresponding to exhibition halls, build bronze culture experience areas beside bronze exhibition areas, and arrange blind box interactive experience areas in archaeological exhibition zones, realizing seamless connection between exhibition viewing and cultural consumption. Second, arrange self-service vending machines and mini sales points at key scenic nodes of Shangdu Site to meet the consumption needs of mobile tourist groups. Third, expand urban scenario coverage by cooperating with Zhengzhou’s commercial districts, bookstores, hotels,

and railway stations, setting up special sales counters for Shangdu cultural and creative products to realize full coverage of urban consumption scenarios. In terms of online communication, build a diversified matrix covering e-commerce platforms and social media, carry out precise online promotion and sales, and expand the brand's online influence and market coverage.

4.3. Multi-subject collaboration: Construction of diversified operational guarantee mechanism

The sustainable development of museum cultural and creative industries requires sound operational mechanisms and diversified resource support. Shangdu Site Museum needs to break the restriction of internal single resources and build an open and collaborative industrial operation mode. In terms of talent training and industry cooperation, the museum should deepen school-local integration and government-enterprise linkage. Cooperate with local art and design colleges to build a cultural heritage R&D base, hold special cultural and creative design competitions, and attract young professional designers to participate in product innovation. Meanwhile, introduce professional cultural and creative operation teams through cooperation with market-oriented enterprises, undertake professional work such as brand planning, channel expansion and e-commerce operation, and make up for the shortage of internal professional talents. In terms of cultural tourism integration, strengthen cooperation with tourism management departments and tourism enterprises, incorporate Shangdu Site Museum into Zhengzhou's core cultural tourism routes, and launch characteristic tourism products integrating heritage viewing and cultural and creative experience. Rely on tourist passenger flow to drive product sales and brand popularization. In terms of operational mechanism, adhere to the development principle of "public welfare orientation and market-oriented operation". Classify cultural and creative products according to public welfare attributes and market attributes: popular cultural popularization products maintain break-even operation to ensure the public service nature of museum culture; limited-edition collection products and co-branded products adopt market-oriented pricing strategies. The operating profits are fed back into cultural and creative R&D and heritage protection work, forming a virtuous cycle of cultural inheritance and industrial development. In addition, the museum needs to establish a standardized IP management system, standardize the commercial authorization of cultural symbols, protect brand intellectual property rights, and avoid excessive commercialization and vulgarization of cultural heritage. A strict product review mechanism should be implemented to conduct multi-dimensional inspection of product cultural authenticity, production quality, and safety standards before launch, so as to maintain the professional credibility and cultural authority of the museum's cultural and creative products.

5. Conclusion

The cultural and creative development of Shangdu Site Museum essentially realizes the innovative transformation of 3,600-year-old Shang civilization from static museum display to dynamic public cultural experience. From in-depth exploration of heritage cultural connotation and innovative product design to multi-scenario brand communication and full-channel market promotion, the upgrading of Shangdu cultural and creative industries not only provides sustainable economic support for museum operation and heritage protection, but also activates the contemporary vitality of traditional cultural heritage. In future development, the museum should always balance heritage protection and innovative development, continuously explore a distinctive development path suitable for archaeological site museums, realize the long-term inheritance

and contemporary revitalization of Shang civilization, and enrich the profound cultural connotation of urban cultural construction.

Disclosure statement

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Optimization and Practical Exploration of the Product Design Process in the Background of Digital Empowerment

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of the digital economy, technologies such as big data, generative artificial intelligence, and digital twins are deeply involved in the whole chain of product research and development, promoting the transformation of traditional product design from experience-driven to data-driven. Aiming at the problems existing in traditional processes, including subjectivity in demand research, fragmented links with long iteration cycles, high costs of physical prototypes, and lagging user feedback, this paper adopts a combined method of literature analysis and case study. It sorts out the existing pain points of traditional processes, analyzes the empowerment logic of digital technologies in each design link, and constructs a full-process framework for digitally-transformed product design. Optimization paths are proposed from five dimensions: demand mining, concept generation, simulation verification, collaborative iteration, and implementation transformation, and implementation strategies are summarized and combined with industrial practices. The study shows that digital empowerment can effectively shorten R&D cycles, reduce trial-and-error costs and improve the market adaptability of products. Nevertheless, data governance, human-machine collaboration mechanisms and talent team building should be simultaneously improved to fully release the efficiency of digital design.

Keywords: Digital empowerment; Product design; Process optimization; Human-machine collaboration; Digital twin

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1. Introduction

The digital transformation of the manufacturing industry has become a key starting point for the high-quality development of the real economy. As the source link of product R&D, product design directly determines product functions, user experience, production costs and market competitiveness. Traditional product design follows the linear process of "market research — conceptual conception — drawing drafting — physical prototyping — test modification — finalization and mass production". It relies heavily on designers' personal

experience, and serious information barriers exist among various departments. Demand analysis mostly adopts traditional methods such as questionnaires and offline interviews, where users' real demands are easily filtered out. Scheme verification mainly depends on physical prototypes. Repeated prototyping and modification will extend R&D cycles, increase development costs and weaken market response speed.

With the continuous iteration of tools including generative artificial intelligence, big data analysis, digital twins and cloud-based collaborative simulation, digital technologies break the linear constraints of traditional design processes and open up data flows among user demands, creative design, simulation testing and manufacturing, forming closed-loop iteration for design links. More and more enterprises introduce digital tools into product development so as to shorten R&D cycles and improve scheme innovation as well as market adaptability. However, the digital transformation of some enterprises merely stays at the stage of replacing manual drawing with digital drawing software. The reconstruction of the full-process system has not been completed, the value of data has not been fully tapped, and imperfect human-machine collaboration mechanisms hinder the performance of digital design. Accordingly, exploring improvement approaches for product design processes under digital empowerment and summarizing practical problems and countermeasures are of vital significance for promoting the high-quality development of the manufacturing industry.

2. Practical pain points of traditional product design processes

Traditional product design proceeds in a linear sequence. Departments of design, marketing, technology and production operate independently, which exposes numerous shortcomings amid rapidly-changing consumer demands.

2.1. Strong subjectivity in demand mining and insufficient accuracy of demand transformation

In the traditional mode, market research mainly relies on offline questionnaires, interviews and manual analysis of competing products with limited sample sizes. Designers interpret market information based on personal experience, which is prone to subjective prediction bias and fails to capture users' fragmented and implicit real demands. Lan Yuqi et al. hold that user experience research under artificial intelligence has shifted from small-sample surveys to big-data-supported full-coverage analysis [1]. It is common for design schemes to be divorced from market demands under the traditional mode, and user satisfaction often fails to meet expectations after products are launched. Demand information tends to decay in cross-department transmission, and end-user demands from the marketing department cannot be fully delivered to design teams.

2.2. Fragmented process links and low iteration efficiency

The traditional design process advances unidirectionally. Structural design is carried out after conceptual design, and performance tests are conducted after physical prototypes are completed. When defects are detected in tests, early design drawings need to be revised retroactively, resulting in substantial rework and time consumption. Information is not shared among design, technology and manufacturing departments. Production process constraints are rarely considered in the design phase. Some creative schemes face great

difficulties in technological realization, and feasibility defects are only discovered in the production phase, leading to severe waste of design resources.

2.3. High costs of physical prototype testing and delayed risk exposure

Performance verification is highly dependent on physical prototypes whose fabrication consumes materials and working hours. Iterations of multiple versions bring high costs. Test conditions for safety performance and extreme working conditions of some products are limited. Many potential defects are only exposed in mass production and application. Delayed risk exposure will bring higher modification costs and damage to brand reputation.

2.4. Low user participation and absence of closed-loop feedback

In the traditional mode, users are mostly involved only in preliminary research and post-launch evaluation. They rarely participate in design and testing phases without real-time feedback channels. User opinions are collected only after product finalization, which can hardly guide the optimization of early-stage product design and impedes continuous product iteration and upgrading.

3. Internal logic of product design process empowered by digital technologies

Digital empowerment is not simply replacing hand-drawn drawings with software. Instead, it reconstructs the full process of demand, creation, verification, collaboration and implementation relying on big data, generative AI, digital twins and cloud-based collaborative simulation technologies. It promotes the transformation of product design from experience-driven to data-driven mode and upgrades linear processes into closed-loop iterative processes, realizing both efficiency improvement and design-mode reform [2].

Big data mines fragmented user information from e-commerce platforms, social media and product operation records to output quantitative design indicators and reduce bias in demand interpretation. Algorithms can convert customers' vague demands into concrete design parameters [3]. Generative AI expands creative schemes and realizes human-machine collaborative creation, allowing designers to focus on scheme evaluation and selection. Digital twins and virtual simulation build digital prototypes for multi-dimensional simulation tests to identify design risks in advance and reduce the number of physical prototypes. Cloud-based collaboration breaks information barriers to realize multi-agent online cooperation, and design data can be directly delivered to production links. User-end operational data flows back to design links to form a complete iterative closed-loop. Data elements connect all business nodes to balance innovation efficiency, scheme feasibility and market adaptability.

4. Optimization paths for product design processes under digital empowerment

Digital technologies transform traditional unidirectional design processes into closed loops: data-driven demand mining — human-machine collaborative concept generation — multi-dimensional virtual simulation verification — cross-role cloud-based collaborative iteration — data-connected implementation and transformation — feedback-driven continuous optimization.

4.1. Optimization of demand mining link driven by data

Demand analysis serves as the starting point of product design. The core of digital transformation is to

expand data sources and convert vague demands into vectorized parameters. On one hand, multi-source data are integrated, including online user comments, consumption behavior data, public parameters of competing products, historical product operation-maintenance data, as well as traditional user interviews and questionnaires to enrich demand samples. Natural language processing is adopted to parse text data, extract users' frequent pain points, aesthetic preferences and functional requirements, and eliminate invalid noise data. On the other hand, a demand analysis model is established to convert users' vague perceptions into executable design parameters. For instance, users' requirement for "comfortable grip feeling" can be transformed into quantitative indicators such as dimension, surface radius, and weight. Standardized demand lists are shared with design and technical teams to reduce deviations in cross-department information transmission.

4.2. Optimization of concept scheme generation link with human-machine collaboration

In the conceptual design phase, the traditional designer-led brainstorming is transformed into a human-machine collaboration mode where AI assists divergent creation and designers make convergent decisions. Wu Jing et al. constructed an AIGC-aided product design framework based on prompt optimization, which improves design quality through collaborative cycles of demand analysis, concept generation and scheme evaluation [4]. After designers input product positioning, constraints, and quantitative demand parameters, generative artificial intelligence tools can rapidly generate multiple modeling sketches, color schemes, and structural concepts to expand creative scope and break traditional thinking sets. Nevertheless, AI-generated schemes contain logical loopholes and impractical technological problems and cannot be directly adopted as final versions. They need to be screened, revised and re-created according to industrial experience, technological levels and cost budgets. Total reliance on AI outputs should be avoided. Besides, a scheme library should be built to store previous successful schemes and corresponding constraints for reference in new projects so as to achieve better outcomes.

4.3. Scheme verification optimization based on digital twins and simulation technologies

The traditional verification mode relying on physical prototypes is transformed into a mode dominated by virtual simulation supplemented by physical prototypes. Three-dimensional digital models are applied to build digital-twin virtual prototypes for multi-dimensional simulation tests: mechanical simulation for structural-strength inspection, fluid simulation for product operation under different working conditions, ergonomic simulation for comfort verification, and process simulation for predicting processing and assembly feasibility. Multi-parameter comparative tests are completed in virtual environments to select optimal parameter combinations. A small number of physical prototypes are produced for physical verification after virtual-simulation iterations. Most design defects are eliminated in virtual phases, greatly reducing prototype quantity and test duration. Complete reports are output after simulation, with risk points and optimization directions supporting subsequent revisions.

4.4. Cross-department iteration optimization on cloud-based collaborative platforms

Cloud-based collaborative design platforms are established to open up data channels for design, marketing, technology and supply-chain teams and replace traditional file-transfer-based cooperation. All three-dimensional models, demand documents and simulation reports are stored on cloud platforms with corresponding access permissions for each role. Process engineers can directly view design models to judge

processing difficulties in advance. Supply-chain staff can synchronously check material-supply feasibility and put forward revision suggestions in early design phases, preventing unfeasible schemes discovered only after design completion. Opinions from all parties are marked on corresponding model nodes. Revised versions are automatically saved with traceable versions to reduce communication errors. Cross-domain collaboration effectively avoids the trap of "aesthetically appealing but unmanufacturable" designs and balances innovation and implementability.

4.5. Realizing transformation from design to production through data connection

After product design finalization, digital three-dimensional models, parameter lists and bill of materials are directly output to downstream manufacturing systems to realize lossless transmission of design data. Manual secondary entry of drawings is not required, thus reducing man-made transcription errors. According to Zhang Chao et al.'s research on digital manufacturing of household wood products, the connection between design data and manufacturing systems can significantly improve production efficiency and processing accuracy [5]. Design data are connected with 3D printing and numerical-control processing equipment to realize rapid small-batch trial production and accelerate transformation from digital models to physical products. After products are launched into the market, operational data and user feedback are collected, cleaned and analyzed, then fed back to design modules to identify defects in practical application, which provides basis for iterative optimization of next-generation products and realizes continuous optimization throughout the whole product life cycle.

5. Practical case analysis of digitally-enabled product design processes

A domestic household-appliance enterprise has built a complete digital product-development system and systematically reformed its original design processes. In the demand phase, multi-source data including e-commerce comments, after-sales feedback and offline surveys are integrated. Text-analysis technology is adopted to analyze users' major demands for household appliances in terms of appearance, noise-reduction performance and operation experience, forming a demand list containing 23 quantitative indicators.

In the conceptual phase, designers adopt generative-AI tools to produce multiple appearance schemes. Three schemes are selected for verification from the perspectives of modeling language, brand recognition and technological feasibility. Digital-twin prototypes are built to carry out noise simulation, structural-strength simulation and human-computer operation simulation, with multi-round parameter debugging in virtual environments. Compared with the pre-transformation period, the quantity of physical prototypes is reduced by approximately 60 %, and the R&D cycle is shortened by about one-third.

With cloud-based collaborative platforms, technical and supply-chain personnel participate in early design phases to solve numerous problems. After product launch, continuous user-usage data provide references for subsequent version updates. The enterprise's practice proves that digital transformation is not merely the upgrading of software tools but the reconstruction of process systems. However, practical problems still exist: some designers rely excessively on AI-generated schemes with weakened original thinking; inconsistent data standards among business systems block data flow; some designers lack in-depth understanding of digital-simulation tools, which undermines process efficiency.

6. Dilemmas and countermeasures for implementing digitally-enabled product design processes

6.1. Existing dilemmas in digital-process implementation

First, imperfect data-governance systems. Multi-source data adopt inconsistent standards and formats among different business systems with uneven data quality. Invalid or noisy data interfere with demand judgment. Some enterprises lack data-security management systems, bringing leakage risks for product-design models and core parameters. Second, unbalanced human-machine collaboration. Some enterprises over-emphasize AI and directly take AI outputs as final schemes, ignoring designers' value judgment, aesthetic perception and process experience. By contrast, some designers stick to traditional working habits and reject digital tools, making digital transformation a mere formality. Third, insufficient compound-talent supply. Digitally-enabled product design calls for designers with both professional product knowledge and digital capabilities such as simulation and data analysis. Most existing designers excel in creative modeling yet are weak in data analysis and simulation evaluation. Fourth, mismatched organizational mechanisms. Some enterprises still adopt traditional function-segmented organizational structures. Departments of marketing, design and technology operate in isolation without complementary evaluation systems.

6.2. Optimized implementation countermeasures

First, improve data governance and security guarantees. Unify data standards throughout design chains and establish data cleaning and verification mechanisms to guarantee input-data quality. Divide data access permissions, encrypt core design models and technical parameters, and build traceable data-access logs to prevent intellectual-property leakage. Second, clarify human-machine collaboration positioning and stick to designers' dominant role. Adhere to the principle of "AI for assistance and humans for decision-making". Generative-AI and simulation tools are used for creative divergence and computational deduction, while aesthetic judgment, value selection and scheme decision-making are undertaken by designers to exert human innovative thinking and comprehensive evaluation and avoid homogenization defects of AI schemes. Third, strengthen compound-talent team building. Provide training on simulation tools and data-analysis skills for existing designers, recruit compound talents with multidisciplinary knowledge of design, digital technology and manufacturing processes, and build cross-post cooperation teams to facilitate information sharing. Fourth, promote supporting reforms of organizations and systems. Break departmental barriers and set up cross-department product-development project teams. Take process feasibility and market adaptability into design assessment indexes, enabling technical and supply-chain personnel to participate in early-stage design and realize matching between digital processes and organizational systems.

7. Conclusion

Digital waves bring profound changes to product-design modes. Digital empowerment is not a simple upgrade of tools but the systematic reconstruction of full processes covering demand mining, conceptual creation, simulation verification and collaborative development. This study constructs a data-driven closed-loop product-design process model, puts forward five optimization paths on the basis of enriching digital-design theories and provides reference cases for manufacturing enterprises. Digitally-driven closed-loop product-development routes are fundamentally different from previous experience-guided unidirectional processes and physical-test-oriented modes. Virtual verification of design schemes can

accelerate new-product launch, reduce R&D risks and enhance product market share. To achieve these goals, enterprises should not only optimize processes, but also pay attention to hardware-software construction, data sorting and talent allocation, and adhere to designers' dominant position in innovation. In the future, integrating technologies, creativity and markets through whole-life-cycle data flow will remain a key research topic for the industry.

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From Museum Collections to Digital Interpretation: An Evidence-to-Audience Workflow for Cultural Heritage Communication and Learning

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Abstract: A digitised collection can be extensive and still be difficult to explain. Museum records, photographs, 3D files, and related assets are usually made for documentation, research, conservation, or reuse; public communication asks a different question: what should a visitor meet first, and why? This article examines the editorial work between those two ends. Rather than comparing technologies, it brings together literature on digital museums, online collections, interfaces, and cultural-heritage communication to identify four recurring trouble spots: specialist entry barriers, media that accumulate without an interpretive role, loss of context, and projects that start with a platform instead of a communication problem. From these issues, a five-stage Evidence-to-Audience Workflow is set out: source verification, audience-purpose selection, interpretive structuring, media assignment, and adaptation and review. A short planning matrix accompanies the workflow. The proposal is deliberately practical. It does not predict audience response; it helps teams keep what they publish connected to collection evidence, a stated purpose, and the circumstances in which the material will be used.

Keywords: Digital interpretation; Museum collections; Cultural heritage communication; Digital museums; Public learning

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1. Introduction

A museum can place thousands of records online and still leave a visitor wondering why a particular object matters. High-resolution images, 3D models, virtual exhibitions, and interactive installations have widened access, and digital technologies now appear across exhibition, education, collection management, and visitor engagement [1]. More access is useful. It is not the same thing as explanation.

Records of collections were written to be read by specialists. A registrar or curator depends on accurate identification, provenance, measurements, and research notes. A member of the public approaches the same text with other questions. Technical terms can require glossing, and one detail can weigh more than the rest of the entry. A record by itself may also need a theme or comparison in order to make sense. The same combination of interests - visual browsing, factual information, provenance, and context - is found in work on museum websites [2-4].

Most interpretive labour sits between the database and the screen. Someone decides which facts come forward, which remain secondary, how uncertainty is worded, and whether a medium clarifies the object or merely decorates the interface. Because those choices are spread across curatorial, educational, writing, and design work, they often disappear from accounts of the final product. The Evidence-to-Audience Workflow makes that middle layer visible.

The concern is intentionally narrow. A collection record should not be rewritten as though documentation and public communication were the same task, but neither should public interpretation float free of the record. The practical question is how to build a public layer that remains answerable to professional documentation while giving non-specialists a sensible way into the material.

2. Analytical approach and scope

The discussion draws on a focused narrative synthesis, not a systematic review. Sources were selected for four parts of the problem: digitisation and virtual access, the distance between collection metadata and public language [5,6], narrative and interface choices [7-10], and the use and ethical handling of digital collections. The aim is to organise a planning sequence that can be applied and questioned in practice, not to claim exhaustive coverage or estimate effects.

One practical test recurs throughout the sequence: can an important public claim still be followed back to the evidence and the reason it was included? I use interpretive traceability as shorthand for that test. It links source evidence, communicative purpose, information layer, and use context. It is not a measured construct, but a way to keep editorial decisions visible before audience evaluation.

3. From collection digitization to public interpretation

More digital material can still produce a poor first encounter. A database may list title, date, material, dimensions, accession number, provenance, and specialist notes, yet a non-specialist may not know which detail explains the object's significance. Kist and Economou describe this distance between collection metadata and public-facing use as a semantic problem. The remedy is not weaker documentation, but a deliberate first public layer with deeper evidence still available.

The first screen must not do too much. When one comes across the object for the first time, identifying it and providing some basic orientation is normally sufficient. Technique, use, relationships, and historical setting can be postponed for readers who want to go further. Nappi et al. advocate the same open, flexible structure of cultural-heritage knowledge [6]. Layering retains specialist material without having to place the entire record in the initial view.

Media complicate the same problem. A photograph shows the object; a diagram may clarify construction or comparison; video can show process; audio can carry voice or pronunciation; a 3D model supports

inspection from several angles. Research on virtual-reality narrative, tangible interfaces, digital exhibit labels, and museum digitalisation indicates that information structure and delivery shape heritage encounters. Having a medium available, however, is not yet a reason to use it.

What is displayed first is an editorial choice, not a default of the layout. For browsing purposes, identification, date, material, use, and a brief note of significance may be the first to appear. A learning resource can begin with a comparison or question. There is no one-size-fits-all set of fields. What is included and what is left out should follow the project's communication purpose.

After selection comes sequence. A short orientation can lead to context, related objects, technical detail, or references, and not every user has to travel through the same amount of information. Connections often do more interpretive work than extra text. Place, period, material, maker, function, or theme can turn a stand-alone record into something that can be situated and compared.

The page should not be determined by the media that a project happens to have. There can be photographs, video, and a 3D scan, but each of them must have a reason for being there. A diagram with labels can usually explain construction better than prose, and a brief video is appropriate for a making process. Different media should carry different parts of the explanation rather than duplicate what another medium already covers.

4. Four recurrent breakdowns

4.1. Semantic entry barriers

Searchable is not the same as readable. Controlled vocabulary, abbreviations, long metadata fields, and specialist classifications can be essential inside a collection system while creating an immediate barrier for a general reader. Important technical terms need not be removed, but they do need explanation and a hierarchy that tells the reader where to start.

4.2. Fragmented multimedia

A digital display can be crowded and still feel thin. Text, photographs, video, maps, and 3D material may sit together without a division of labour: several items repeat one fact while the relationship the visitor needs remains unstated. The problem is media without an assigned interpretive role.

4.3. Decontextualization

An object page can strip away relationships that a gallery supplies almost silently. Scale, neighbouring objects, sequence, place, and theme may vanish when the record is viewed alone. Reuse can remove more. An image may continue circulating after provenance, function, uncertainty, or source notes have fallen away, leaving an attractive asset that is harder to interpret responsibly.

4.4. Technology-first development

Planning that starts with technology can bend the brief out of shape. A team can commit to VR, AR, or an interactive wall before the interpretive task is even settled, and the content then has to fit the platform. When the communication problem is still open, the task and the application scenario should come first; only then is it possible to judge whether a given technology is actually useful.

5. Evidence-to-audience workflow

Seen together, these problems are failures of handoff rather than failures of digitisation. Evidence is gathered, but purpose is vague; content is selected, but hierarchy is unclear; media are added, but their role is uncertain. **Figure 1** turns those handoffs into five planning stages. The route is reversible: a late review may reveal a weak source, a dense layer, or a medium that decorates more than it explains.

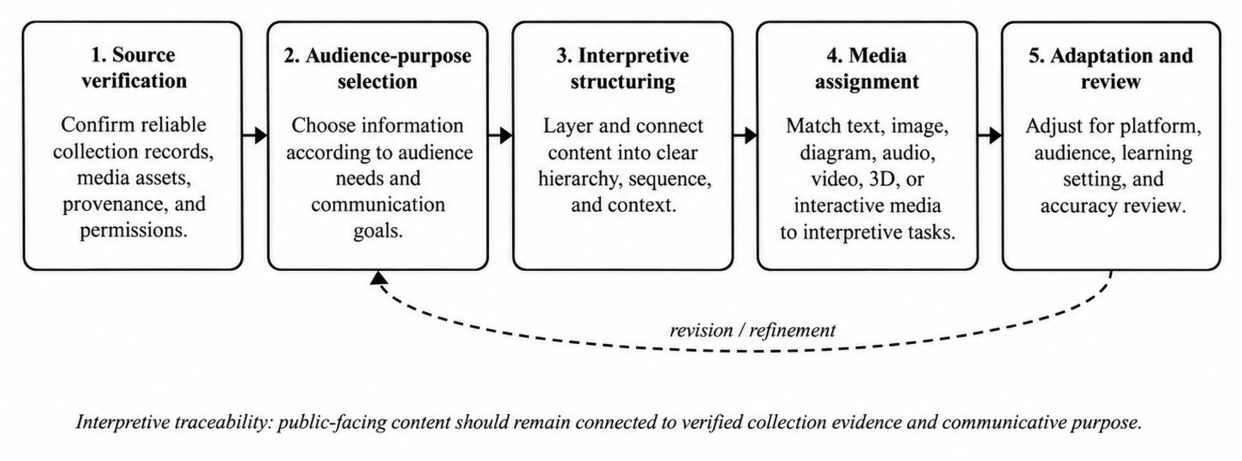

Figure 1. Evidence-to-Audience Workflow for digital interpretation.

The workflow starts by checking what the project can actually stand behind. Records, images, earlier interpretation, conservation material, audiovisual files, and 3D assets are inventoried together with limits such as uncertain attribution, incomplete provenance, or reuse restrictions. Only then is a public content set chosen. That second decision is editorial, not clerical; a metadata field is not promoted simply because it exists.

After the content has been selected, the next problem is arrangement. The first layer must assist a user to locate and position the object. Subsequent content may cover technique, use, comparison, or further learning based on context. Uncertainty also needs an apparent home. If attribution remains unresolved, the wording must indicate this rather than present a provisional statement as settled fact.

Only once the hierarchy is clear is it worth asking which media carry each part best. A 3D model is justified when spatial inspection matters; a labelled image may answer another question more directly. The last stage adapts the verified content to the setting — touchscreen, website, mobile guide, school resource, or university task — and checks whether the main claims still lead back to evidence and purpose.

When adaptation is considered resizing, reuse tends to go awry. A visitor in a gallery can spend seconds with an object, but a reader on a website can remain much longer. School material also requires more scaffolding than a university assignment. The evidence may remain consistent in these environments as pacing, emphasis, and wording change. Planning those differences in advance is what maintains the context.

Uncertainty provides a useful stress test. Museum information may contain a debated attribution, a gap in provenance, or a date revised by new scholarship. Public text need not become a miniature research article, but it should not erase that status. A fuller internal note can record the basis of a claim; the public version can use proportionate wording such as “probably,” “attributed to,” or “scholars disagree.”

These planning documents are modest outputs, but they matter when responsibility is split across teams.

A curator, educator, writer, designer, and developer may otherwise work from different assumptions about the same object. A checked resource set, priority statement, content hierarchy, and media map provide shared reference points, especially when work is outsourced or revised later by people who were not part of the original discussion.

6. Implications for museum practice and learning resources

For museum practice, the immediate change is procedural. Evidence, public purpose, hierarchy, and media roles need to be settled far enough in advance that interface design responds to an interpretive brief rather than replacing one. This is not an argument against ambitious technology. It is an argument for knowing what the technology is being asked to explain.

Technical access can coexist with interpretive difficulty. A page may load quickly and still be hard to understand because the vocabulary is specialist, the hierarchy is weak, or relationships are left implicit. Plain language, layered detail, useful cross-links, and brief explanations of necessary terms can widen entry without thinning the scholarship behind it.

The other risk of reuse is that an asset can go further than the information that provides it with authority. A photograph might be transferred from an exhibition page to a learning platform or a social-media post after its attribution, uncertainty, or source information has fallen away. Work on impact, ownership, and reuse cautions against treating availability as sufficient [11,12]. Reuse in education also implies a task that requires learners to compare, question, explain, or apply the material.

The workflow also exposes omissions before they become expensive. If a team cannot explain why an asset is present, who it is for, or what part of the interpretation it carries, the problem appears while content is still cheap to change. Unsupported claims become visible in the same way: a statement that cannot be traced to a catalogue, record, or other reliable source can be checked before publication.

Accessibility does not imply a very short label. There are museum-website users who want substantial factual and contextual information. The question is whether they can get into that material and find their way around it. A brief introduction may be placed next to more substantial material, and being clear does not necessarily mean being less scholarly.

7. Discussion

Much of this process relates to work that does not get displayed in project showcases. Scanners, models, immersive systems, and interfaces are readily displayable, but editorial decisions are not. Yet all public-facing representations already involve decisions about what to include, what to exclude, how to sequence, how to qualify, and how media are combined. Documenting those decisions gives the team something concrete to refer back to.

The majority of interpretive traceability can remain behind the interface. A label does not have to be made longer because the team maintains a record of the evidence and reasoning behind it. Such a record comes in handy when material is corrected, reused, or passed on to another group, particularly after the original decision-makers are no longer present. Recent research on digital cultural-heritage communication raises a similar concern: digital form may eclipse the content [13].

What remains unresolved is empirical. The workflow cannot tell us which hierarchy produces the best

comprehension, how much context different audiences want, or when one medium outperforms another. Those questions need testing in particular museums through comprehension tasks, search behaviour, interviews, professional judgement, or learning outcomes.

That distinction matters. Better planning may produce a clearer object for evaluation, but it is not evidence that visitors will understand, enjoy, remember, or learn from it. The value claimed here is narrower: the assumptions behind selection and presentation become explicit enough for later audience research to examine rather than inherit unnoticed.

8. Conclusion

Digitisation puts an object within reach, whereas interpretation is concerned with how that object is made ready for use. The work flows through selection, context, explanation, and adaptation. Those decisions are held together by the five-stage Evidence-to-Audience Workflow, which remains tied to collection evidence. Its practical principle is modest: resolve the communication requirement before selecting the technology, and retain the source and context when the content is repurposed.

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Optimization Pathways for Key-Pressing Techniques in Piano Tone Control

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Abstract: Timbre constitutes the essential essence of piano performance, and key-striking techniques—serving as the direct means to control timbre—determine the emotional expression and artistic quality of a performance through their standardization, refinement, and flexibility. Unlike mechanical note production, high-quality piano timbre is achieved through scientifically calibrated key pressure, angle, velocity, and force application patterns, enabling dynamic control. However, many performers currently exhibit limited understanding of key-striking techniques, rigid technical habits, and imbalanced force application, which often results in thin, harsh timbres lacking depth and layering—thereby failing to align with the artistic core of the repertoire. From a practical performance perspective, this paper explores the intrinsic relationship between key-striking techniques and timbre control, analyzes the key issues encountered in everyday performance practice, and—considering the demands of diverse musical styles—proposes targeted optimization strategies for key-striking techniques. This work aims to provide actionable guidance for piano performers to enhance their timbre control capabilities and achieve precise emotional conveyance in their performances.

Keywords: Piano performance; Timbre control; Key-press technique; Technical optimization

Online publication: June 30, 2026

1. Introduction

The most fundamental charm of piano art lies in using a diverse range of timbres to shape musical imagery and convey the core emotional essence; precise timbre control serves as a crucial criterion for distinguishing mechanical playing from artistic performance. The piano is a fixed-tuning instrument—the pitch of its notes cannot be altered artificially; instead, the performer must rely on varying the manner of key touch to adjust the amplitude of the string vibrations and the resulting resonance, thereby producing a variety of timbres—such as soft, rich, bright, or deep. While key touch may appear to be merely a simple finger-striking motion, it is actually a comprehensive technique involving coordinated effort from the wrist, arm, and entire body; any misstep in this process can lead to distortion of the timbre. Therefore, analyzing the practical aspects of key-touch technique and identifying scientifically sound optimization methods is key to enhancing the artistic

expressiveness of piano performance.

2. Core overview of piano key-touch techniques and tone control

2.1. The core essence of key-pressing technique

Piano key-pressing is not merely a finger-dexterity exercise, but rather a comprehensive system of body-coordinated key-pressing techniques that encompasses four core elements: key-pressing force, key-pressing speed, key-pressing angle, and force application method. These elements work in synergy and together shape the performers distinctive tonal character. Proper key-pressing technique requires the performer to abandon the habit of relying solely on individual finger force, ensuring that the force is effectively transmitted through the fingertip, wrist, forearm, upper arm, and ultimately throughout the entire body; the key-pressing technique should be adjusted according to the rhythm, emotional expression, and musical style of the piece [1]. For slow, lyrical passages, use a gentle touch speed, a soft vertical touch angle, and consistent force application; for fast, technical passages, employ short, precise touches, light body-driven force, and agile fingertip transitions – this reflects the underlying logic behind applying touch techniques to convey musical expression.

2.2. The intrinsic relationship between key depression and timbre

The variation in piano tone is essentially the physical response to the key-pressing action; the depth of key depression, the striking speed of the action mechanism, and the duration of string resonance are all determined by this key-pressing motion [2]. From a practical standpoint, the key force has a direct impact on the strength and fullness of a tone: when the force is evenly and appropriately applied, the tone becomes full and transparent; conversely, if the force fluctuates between too strong and too weak, the tone becomes disorganized and unbalanced. The key velocity influences the brightness and darkness of the tone—slow keying diminishes the percussive quality, yielding a soft and warm tone, while fast keying enhances the tone's penetrating power, creating a bright and lively tone. The key angle determines the subtlety of the tone: a perpendicular key strike produces a solid and full tone, whereas a slightly angled strike yields a light and soft tone. Ultimately, the artistic shaping of piano tones relies on the precise adjustment of key-striking techniques; these techniques constitute the sole practical means of tone control.

2.3. Timbre control as the core requirement of the key-pressing technique

Artistic timbre control aims to achieve a balance between standardization, flexibility, and appropriateness. Standardization serves as the foundation: it requires the performer to maintain relaxed body posture and ensure seamless force application, avoiding incorrect techniques such as stiff striking or superficial key pressing, thereby ensuring a clean timbre free of noise; flexibility is the key aspect: it enables the performer to adjust key-pressing parameters in real time according to the musical phrases dynamics and emotional shifts, facilitating dynamic transitions in timbre; appropriateness is the core principle: the key-pressing technique must align with the style of the piece—classical music demands a steady, disciplined approach to key-pressing, producing an elegant and rich timbre, whereas modern pop music requires a lively and versatile key-pressing technique that suits its light and vibrant musical atmosphere; adhering to a standardized key-pressing technique that does not reflect the pieces specific style will only diminish the artistic impact of the performance.

3. Core issues in piano key-touch techniques

3.1. Uniform keystroke force application with lack of tonal layering

This is a common issue among beginners as well as some advanced performers. Most musicians have long relied solely on localized finger force—using only their fingertip muscles to strike the keys—while neglecting the transmission and support provided by their arm strength. Using only a single finger for striking results in weak key pressure and a limited dynamic range; the produced tone sounds thin and flat, lacking depth and resonance. This problem becomes even more pronounced in polyphonic performances, where the performer fails to employ varying levels of force to distinguish between the main melody and the accompaniment; as a result, all notes sound identical, leading to unclear musical phrasing and a flat, linear presentation that fails to capture the piece's dynamic rhythm and variation. Prolonged reliance on a single method of force application can cause stiffness in the fingertips and a rigid application of force, preventing the creation of smooth dynamic transitions in tone color and resulting in an overall, stiff and mechanical performance.

3.2. Fixed key-pressing speed; monotonous and rigid timbre quality

Many performers adhere to a fixed key-touching technique; regardless of the musical style or emotional tone of the passage being played, they employ the same key-touching speed, resulting in a monotonous and lackluster timbre. When performers execute slow, lyrical passages at an excessively fast tempo with abrupt, forceful keystrokes, they may produce a sharp, intrusive noise that disrupts the piece's gentle, lingering atmosphere; the resulting timbre sounds harsh and cold. Conversely, during fast, dynamic technical passages, some performers use a slow key-touching speed or press the keys too deeply, leading to sluggish note transitions and a muddy, indistinct timbre, thereby missing the essential lively rhythmic quality inherent in the music. Additionally, some performers fail to utilize varying key-touching speeds to control the sustain effect—unable to use slow key-touching to extend resonance or fast key-touching to tighten the timbre—resulting in a lack of nuanced timbre treatment and a significant reduction in their artistic expressiveness.

3.3. Uncontrolled key-press angle; insufficient tonal purity

Even a slight variation in the key-pressing angle can affect the purity of the tone. Some performers exhibit issues such as collapsed fingertips, loose joints, an excessively steep key-pressing angle, or uneven force application when striking the keys; these factors can lead to unstable key depression, resulting in a hollow, ethereal tone that lacks solidity. Other performers deliberately maintain rigid fingertips, employ forceful, vertical key presses, keep their fingertips tightly contracted, or maintain stiff wrists, which creates an overly heavy striking sensation, producing harsh, brittle sounds with a heavy, oppressive timbre. Furthermore, during continuous passages such as scales or arpeggios, the key-pressing angle may fluctuate unpredictably, causing significant contrasts in brightness or intensity between adjacent notes, creating awkward transitions between musical phrases, pronounced tonal discontinuities, and prominent noise – all of which undermine the musical integrity of the performance.

3.4. Improper limb coordination and poor timbre stability

Piano key action is a coordinated movement involving the entire body; however, many performers exhibit an imbalance in their bodily coordination, characterized primarily by a tense wrist, a stiff arm, and a disconnect in the transmission of force from the body [3]. Some performers position their wrists too high or too low

during performance, which prevents the wrist from serving its functions of cushioning and transmitting force; this either results in excessive force that produces a rigid tone color, or insufficient force that yields a hollow tone color. Other performers exhibit rigidity in their upper arms, relying solely on their forearms to move their fingers; this leads to inadequate and unstable force application, causing repeated notes within the same musical phrase to exhibit differing tone colors. Yet again, some performers overemphasize technical speed, resulting in a tense body posture, disconnection between their breathing and playing rhythm, and consequently, erratic key pressure—characterized by fluctuations in intensity—leading to inconsistent and unstable tone colors, and an inability to produce a continuous, uniform timbre.

4. Optimization strategies for piano key-playing techniques

4.1. Optimize the force delivery system to create a layered tonal character

The key to addressing the lack of tonal layering lies in establishing a comprehensive force-generation system—where the fingertips serve as the primary driving force, the wrist acts as a buffer, and the arm provides the driving power—thereby overcoming the flawed approach of relying solely on individual finger force. During daily practice, focus on developing the ability to transmit force effectively: relax the shoulders and upper arms so that the force can naturally flow down to the fingertips, engaging the entire body's strength simultaneously. For multi-part performances, practice targeted force-generation techniques for different vocal sections: increase the arms' contribution in the main melody section to achieve a fuller, more prominent timbre; reduce the fingertip pressure in the accompaniment section to diminish the timbral richness and thereby highlight the hierarchical structure between the primary and secondary parts. Additionally, strengthen exercises involving gradual dynamic variation—utilizing the slow modulation of arm force to create natural transitions between crescendos and decrescendos, ensuring that the musical phrases flow with natural rhythm and fundamentally eliminating the tendency toward flat, monotonous timbre delivery.

4.2. Flexibly adjust key velocity to meet the tonal requirements of diverse musical genres

Discard the fixed touch technique and adjust the touch speed according to the style, mood, and rhythmic variations of the piece, thereby achieving precise tonal matching [4]. When performing lyrical, slow-paced musical pieces, employ the slow key-pressing technique: gently tap the piano keys with your fingertips, then press down slowly and gradually, thereby reducing the mechanical impact of the keystrokes and allowing the strings to resonate fully, producing a warm, lingering, and soft sound that complements the soothing musical atmosphere. When performing cheerful or lively, fast-paced pieces, use the rapid key-pressing technique: press the piano keys with your fingertips in a light yet forceful manner, releasing the keys swiftly; this shortens the time the keys remain depressed or held, resulting in a bright, clear, and crisp tone that highlights the rhythm and vitality of the piece. When performing solemn or grand classical music, maintain an appropriate and steady key-pressing speed to achieve a solid, rich timbre; when performing gentle, light music, use a swift and soft key-pressing speed to create a light and dynamic tone, utilizing flexible adjustments in tempo to enrich the artistic quality of the sound.

4.3. Standardize the key strike angle to enhance tonal purity

Correctly mastering the angle at which the fingertips contact the keys lays the foundation for achieving a pure tone. During routine foundational practice, the finger joints should remain firm and not collapse; make subtle

adjustments to the key-contact angle according to the desired tone quality to develop muscle memory. During standard performance, keep the fingertips perpendicular to the keys, applying even pressure and ensuring a smooth, steady descent; this produces a solid, clean tone free of noise, which is suitable for performing most classical music pieces. When a soft, delicate tone is required, slightly tilt the fingertips to reduce the contact area and decrease the striking force, thereby producing a warm, gentle sound; when a bright, sharp tone is needed, slightly adjust the angle of the fingertips, tighten them to generate more force, and enhance the projection of the note. During practice of continuous scales or arpeggios, maintain a consistent and stable key-contact angle to prevent tonal discontinuities caused by frequent changes in this angle, ensuring a consistent and pure tone throughout the musical phrase.

4.4. Coordinate limb movements to enhance timbre stability

The relaxation and coordination of the limbs are essential guarantees for consistent timbre; this requires targeted adjustments to one's playing posture and limb coordination patterns. First, maintain a correct fundamental playing posture: sit upright with a stable center of gravity, keep the shoulders relaxed and sunk, and avoid shrugging or rigidity, thereby laying the foundation for effective force transmission. Second, standardize the wrist position: keep the wrist parallel to the keys, maintaining a relaxed and natural state—neither suspended and tense nor collapsed and sluggish—treating the wrist as a buffering hub for force transmission to minimize a harsh, percussive quality. Finally, synchronize your breathing with your playing rhythm: employ slow, deliberate breaths during slow phrases, and consistent, even breaths during fast phrases, ensuring that the application of force by the limbs remains fluid and stable. Through the coordinated movement of the entire body, one can prevent fluctuations in timbre—such as sudden variations in loudness or disorganized, distorted sounds—thereby ensuring consistent and stable timbre throughout the entire piece.

Standard key-attack technique forms the foundation, while the adoption of personalized techniques is the key to enhancing the quality of one's performance. Once a performer has mastered the standardized key-attack motions, they should interpret the compositional background, emotional connotations, and stylistic characteristics of the piece, thereby tailoring their key-attack approach accordingly [5]. When performing Bach's polyphonic works, one should exhibit steadiness and strength, meticulous precision and depth, and a clear sense of musical layering; when performing Beethoven's sonatas, one should demonstrate distinct dynamics—with prominent accents—and employ a gentle, delicate touch in lyrical passages; when performing Romantic-era compositions, one should exercise flexibility and versatility, utilizing subtle variations in tempo and dynamics to shape shifting timbres and convey complex emotional transitions. By integrating touch techniques into musical expression, one can seamlessly fuse technical proficiency with artistic conception.

5. Conclusion

The refinement of key-pressing technique represents a journey from standardization to precision and from mechanical execution to artistic expression; precise tonal control depends on a scientifically grounded approach to force application, flexible parameter adjustment, and coordinated limb movement. Common issues in contemporary piano performance—such as overly simplistic force application, rigid performance patterns, loss of control over playing angles, and physical imbalance—are primary contributors to the degradation of tonal quality. Performers should move beyond the misconception of prioritizing technical

skill over tonal quality, grounding their practice in practical, hands-on exercises, and continuously hone their key-pressing technique across five dimensions—force application system, key-pressing speed, key-pressing angle, limb coordination, and the artistic conception of the piece—thereby transcending the limitations of mechanical playing. Through meticulous key-pressing technique, performers can create musical tones that are diverse, pure, layered, and imbued with warmth, truly achieving the unity of technical mastery and artistic expression in piano performance.

Disclosure statement

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A Comparative Study of Aesthetic Ontology Theories from the Perspective of Divergent Visual Concepts in Chinese and Western Art

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Abstract: This paper conducts a comparative study of the theory of artistic ontology from the perspective of the differences in visual conceptual frameworks between China and the West. By tracing China's imagery tradition of "capturing the spirit through form" and the Western representation tradition of "imitating nature," this study analyzes the essential differences between the two traditions across three dimensions: visual cognition, formal language, and aesthetic aims. The research demonstrates that the theories of artistic ontology in China and the West are rooted in their respective philosophical soils and cultural contexts, exhibiting systematic distinctions—such as the contrast between scattered perspective and focal perspective, between brushwork/ink lines and color/lighting, and between the harmony of heaven and humanity and the subject-object dichotomy. This comparative analysis contributes to deepening the multifaceted understanding of artistic ontology and provides a theoretical reference for the construction of contemporary art theory and cross-cultural dialogue.

Keywords: Image concept; Artistic ontology; Capturing the spirit through form; Imitation theory; Comparative study

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1. Introduction

The theory of the ontology of art constitutes a central issue in aesthetics and the philosophy of art, addressing fundamental questions concerning the essence of art, visual cognition, and aesthetic value. Throughout their long historical development, Chinese and Western visual arts have cultivated distinct conceptual frameworks and theoretical systems for imagery; these differences manifest not merely as superficial variations in technique and style but are deeply rooted in the structural disparities of their respective philosophical traditions, modes of thinking, and cultural psychologies. Previous scholarly investigations have predominantly focused on the systematic organization of theories within individual cultural contexts or confined themselves to parallel comparisons of styles and techniques, yet have often failed to conduct a systematic and in-depth exploration of the ontological foundations underlying the differences in their imagery

concepts. This paper takes the concept of imagery as its starting point and conducts a comparative study of the ontological theories of Chinese and Western visual arts across three dimensions—visual cognition, formal language, and aesthetic purpose—aiming to reveal their essential characteristics and internal logic, thereby providing a theoretical foundation for the dialogue and integration of cross-cultural art theory.

2. The historical origins and philosophical foundations of Chinese and Western visual concepts

2.1. China's imagery tradition of "capturing the spirit through form"

The visual conception in Chinese art originated from the distinctions between "Dao and Object" and "Language and Meaning" in pre-Qin philosophy; during the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties periods, it established its theoretical foundation with the proposal of Gu Kaizhi's principle of "capturing the spirit through form" [1]. This tradition does not aim at the realistic reproduction of objective entities but emphasizes conveying the inherent spiritual essence of the subject through the refinement and generalization of form. Placing "vibrant spirit and rhythm" at the forefront among Xie He's Six Principles represents a systematic expression of this concept. Chinese painters do not seek to replicate visual illusions; instead, they pursue an integration of subject and object—where "the external is learned from nature, while the internal derives from the mind" —and a process of imagery generation in which the intention precedes the brushstroke and the meaning persists even after the painting is completed [2]. This visual conception is rooted in the holistic philosophy of Chinese thought regarding the unity of heaven and humanity, which holds that the ultimate goal of art is not to merely depict the external world but to bridge the finite brush-and-ink imagery with the infinite cosmic vitality and life-affection. Thus, the "image" in Chinese art has never been a mechanical reflection of objective entities, but rather an aesthetic imagery resulting from the fusion of the painter's subjective emotions and the objective world—a spiritual creation "between resemblance and non-resemblance." Fan Kuan's Northern Song painting *Travelers Among Streams and Mountains* (see **Figure 1**) employs majestic and expansive landscape imagery to convey the grand spiritual resonance of the universe and nature; it stands as a paradigmatic example of this imagery tradition.



Figure 1. *Travelers Among Streams and Mountains* by Fan Kuan (Northern Song Dynasty).

2.2. The Western tradition of representation through "imitating nature"

The conceptual framework of Western visual art can be traced back to the theory of imitation found in ancient Greek philosophy. Plato viewed art as an imitation of the shadowy reflection of the world of Ideas, whereas Aristotle saw imitation as an inherent human nature, asserting that art imitates both the laws of contingency and the laws of necessity governing things. This intellectual tradition was further reinforced during the Renaissance; Leonardo da Vinci explicitly described painting as "the legitimate daughter of nature," advocating that painters should take the mirror as their teacher and faithfully represent the objective world. The core pursuit of Western visual art lies in constructing a three-dimensional imaginary space that approximates visual reality through the application of scientific principles such as perspective, anatomy, and the laws of light and shadow [3]. In *On Painting*, Alberti defined painting as "a cross-section of the visual pyramid," thereby laying a theoretical foundation for representational painting from the perspectives of mathematics and optics. This conceptual approach to imagery is rooted in the Western philosophical tradition of subject–object dichotomy, which positions the subject and the object, the mind and matter, as opposing poles; thus, the mission of art is precisely the accurate perception and representation of the object by the subject. Consequently, the concept of the "image" in Western visual art has long been understood as a reflection or reproduction of objective reality, and an important criterion for measuring artistic value has been the degree of resemblance to nature. Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (see Figure 2) employs meticulous portraiture to capture the subject's subtle expressions and psychological depth, making it a pinnacle achievement of the Western representational tradition. It was not until the rise of Impressionism and Modernism in the 19th century that this representational tradition faced fundamental challenges and was subverted.

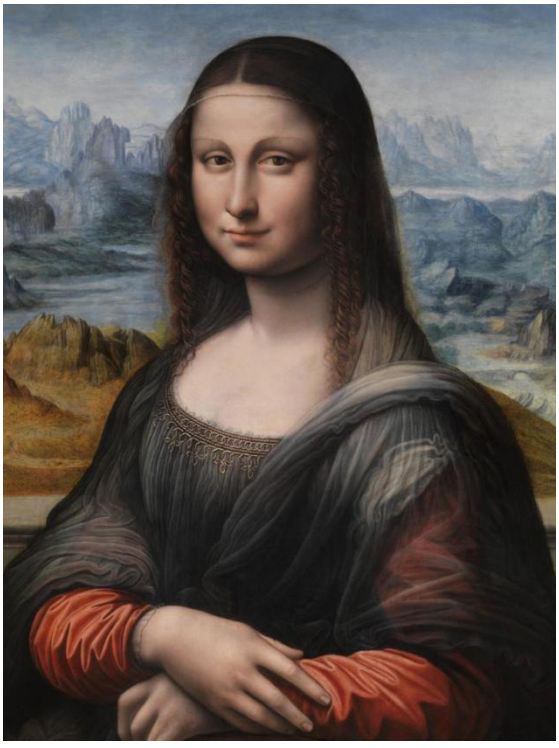

Figure 2. Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa.*

3. Ontological differences in visual cognitive approaches

3.1. Scattered perspective and dynamic space

Chinese art employs a spatial organization technique based on scattered-point perspective in its visual cognition; painters do not adhere to a single viewpoint but instead adopt an approach of "moving step by step and viewing from every angle" to integrate objects observed at different times and from various perspectives into a single composition [4]. This spatial concept breaks the limitations of a fixed viewpoint, endowing the artwork with immense freedom and inclusiveness. In landscape painting, artists can simultaneously depict distant mountains and nearby waters, as well as scenes of the four seasons and scenic views from all directions; when viewing such works, the audience experiences a "journey-like" visual journey as the composition unfolds. The "Three Distances Technique" —high distance, deep distance, and flat distance— proposed by Guo Xi in his work *High Ambitions in Forests and Springs* represents a theoretical synthesis of this multi-point-of-view spatial organization method. The essence of scattered-point perspective lies not in constructing an illusory space that conforms to the optical laws of a single viewpoint, but in conveying the overall spirit and life rhythm of natural landscapes through a dynamic sequence of viewpoints [5]. This spatial concept is closely linked to the Chinese philosophical worldview of the unity of all things and the unity of space and time; it does not regard space as a static, objective container, but as a realm within which humans exist and experience the world. The space depicted in the painting is not merely an object to be observed, but a spiritual home that can be traversed and inhabited; through this immersive "wandering" experience, the viewer enters the painted world and achieves a connection and resonance with the vitality of the universe.

3.2. Linear perspective and fixed viewpoint

Western art, in terms of visual cognition, takes focal perspective as its core principle; painters fixate on a single viewpoint and, based on the principles of geometric optics, project three-dimensional objects onto a two-dimensional plane, thereby constructing a unified space that evokes a sense of depth. The mathematical foundation of focal perspective is linear perspective, which was established through experimentation by Brunelleschi in the early fifteenth century and later theorized by scholars such as Alberti and Piero della Francesca, becoming the spatial paradigm for Western painting [6]. Within the focal perspective system, all parallel lines converge at a vanishing point on the horizon line; the size of an object decreases proportionally as its distance from the viewer increases, thus creating on the canvas a depth space that closely aligns with the viewer's actual visual experience [7]. This spatial organization places the viewer at a fixed position, enabling them to view the real scene outside the painting as if through a window. The epistemological basis of focal perspective lies in the objectivist spirit of modern Western science, which posits the existence of an objective space independent of the subject, which the subject can precisely measure and reproduce through rational methods [8]. Consequently, space in Western painting is an objective entity observed by the subject— a geometric structure that can be quantified and analyzed. This conception of space held an absolutely dominant position in Western painting from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century; it was not until Cézanne began questioning the single-point-of-view nature of focal perspective, and Cubism further deconstructed traditional space through the juxtaposition of multiple viewpoints, that the spatial concept in Western painting underwent a fundamental transformation.

4. Ontological differences in formal language systems

4.1. Vivid brushstrokes, lines, and charm

The formal language of Chinese art is centered around brush and ink, and lines are not only a means of shaping the contours of objects, but also an independent aesthetic carrier that carries the emotions, temperament, and cultivation of the painter. The lines in Chinese painting have rich expressive power and independent aesthetic value. The so-called "bone style brushwork" emphasizes the inherent strength, rhythm, and charm of the lines in painting. From Gu Kaizhi's silk spinning of spring silkworms to Wu Daozi's strip painting of water shield vegetables, from Li Gonglin's white painting to Liang Kai's reduced brushwork, Chinese painters have developed an extremely rich system of techniques and aesthetic categories in the use of lines. Brush and ink are not only formal techniques, but also the essence of Chinese painting, which is the direct externalization of the painter's spiritual world and cultural cultivation. The use of ink in Chinese painting is also unique, with ink divided into five colors: focal, thick, heavy, light, and clear. The amount of water is used to adjust the ink's intensity, dryness, and wetness, creating rich layers and charm in the monochromatic ink color changes. This aesthetic choice of using ink instead of color reflects the aesthetic ideal of Chinese aesthetics, which is "the extreme of splendor, returning to simplicity", and also embodies the Chinese philosophy's admiration for simplicity. The ultimate goal of brush and ink language is to convey the vitality and spiritual rhythm of all things in the universe through the movement and rhythm of brush and ink. Therefore, the formal language of Chinese painting is not a depiction of the appearance of objective objects, but a spiritual manifestation of the painter's communication with the universe and life through brush and ink, which is an ontological practice of technological advancement.

4.2. Color, light, shadow, and volume shaping

The formal language of Western art revolves around color, light, and shadow, shaping the sense of volume and space of objects through contrast and color gradient, and pursuing a visually realistic reproduction effect. Western painting began to explore the technique of light and shade with Giotto, and through the development of Masaccio, Leonardo da Vinci, and others, reached the pinnacle of Caravaggio's dark tonality, forming a light and shade modeling method that uses contrast to shape volume. Leonardo da Vinci proposed the method of gradual disappearance, which blurs contours and creates a sense of illusion in light and shadow similar to that of air. In terms of color, Western painting has gone through a process from fixed color to conditioned color, from local color to overall tone, while Impressionism introduced optical color theory into painting, using color juxtaposition to grasp the instantaneous changes of light in different times and environments. The expression techniques of Western painting are based on a scientific understanding of the external visual properties of things. Anatomy ensures the accuracy of human body structure, perspective ensures the rationality of spatial relationships, and color and optics provide a theoretical basis for the use of color and light. Their main goal is to accurately grasp the various visual elements in the picture and reconstruct a three-dimensional spatial illusion in a plane. Therefore, color and light in Western painting are first and foremost tools for imitating nature, with their beauty attached to the object being imitated. It was not until the modernist movement that color and lines gradually gained independent status. Kandinsky and Mondrian's abstract paintings freed formal language from the constraints of realism and made it a pure spiritual expression.

5. Ontological differences in aesthetic intentionality

5.1. Harmony between heaven and man and the creation of poetic atmosphere

The aesthetic goal of Chinese art lies in the creation of artistic conception, which conveys boundless cosmic emotions and life reflections through finite artistic imagery, achieving the aesthetic realm of unity between heaven and humanity. Artistic conception is the core category of Chinese aesthetics, composed of two dimensions: "yi" (meaning) and "jing" (scene). "Yi" refers to the painter's subjective emotions and spiritual ideals, while "jing" denotes the objective imagery and spatial atmosphere presented in the artwork. The integration of these two aspects constitutes artistic conception. Chinese painters do not strive for realistic representation but instead pursue expressiveness, seeking images beyond images, scenes beyond scenes, and meanings beyond meanings. Every mountain, river, grass, and tree in their paintings is not a mere natural object but the embodiment and symbol of the painter's spiritual character and cosmic sentiments. Ni Zan painted bamboo "to express the free spirit within," while Bada Shanren depicted fish and birds "with a white eye to the world," both projecting their subjective spirit onto objective imagery, transforming the painting into an externalization of the spiritual world [9]. The highest aesthetic realm in Chinese art is the unity of heaven and humanity, which dissolves the opposition between subject and object, merging human spirit with the cosmos. In landscape painting, the artist expresses their understanding of the cosmic way and a return to the primal truth of life through the depiction of natural mountains and rivers. Meanwhile, viewers enter a state of aesthetic experience where they forget both the self and the object, achieving harmony between heaven and humanity. This aesthetic goal determines that Chinese art must inevitably evolve toward expressiveness and abstraction, with vitality and grace as the supreme standard, and must pursue an aesthetic character of simplicity, spontaneity, and distant elegance.

5.2. Subject–object dichotomy and typical representation

The principle of typical representation has long dominated Western art's aesthetic approach—namely, grasping the essential laws of things through the refinement and generalization of concrete, sensory images to achieve a truthful understanding of the object. Since Aristotle, Western aesthetics has placed great emphasis on the cognitive dimension of art, viewing it not merely as a simulation of an object's external form but as a means of expressing its internal structure and possibilities; Horace advocated the idea of "educating through entertainment," placing significant importance on art's moral edifying function; during the Renaissance, art and science were seamlessly integrated—painters acted as scientists, exploring and depicting nature through a rational mindset, treating art as a means of understanding the world; guided by this aesthetic sensibility, Western painting sought to portray typical characters within typical settings—that is, using representative artistic imagery to reflect general social realities and the essence of human nature [10]. Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* is not merely a representation of a Florentine woman's portrait but also a profound exploration of the humanist spirit and the complexity of human nature during the Renaissance; Rembrandt's portraiture, through its mastery of light and shadow on the face, reveals the depth and diversity of the human soul. The aesthetic experience in Western art is rooted in an epistemological framework based on the subject–object dichotomy: the subject observes the artwork as an object with a tranquil mind, deriving both aesthetic pleasure and intellectual enrichment from the process of understanding and interpreting the content depicted in the work. This aesthetic orientation dictates that traditional Western art inevitably gravitates toward realism and representation, adopts the imitation of nature as its fundamental principle, and pursues the classical aesthetic ideals of harmony, proportion, and perfection. It was not until the late 19th and

early 20th centuries, with the rise of the Modernist movement, that Western art began to break free from the constraints of representational painting and shift toward expression and abstraction—marking a fundamental transformation in its aesthetic aims.

6. Conclusion

Under the overarching concept of imagery, the ontological theories of Chinese and Western art exhibit systematic differences across three dimensions: visual cognition, formal language, and aesthetic objectives. Chinese art, with "expressing the spirit through form" as its core, is characterized by scattered perspective, brush and ink techniques, and the cultivation of artistic conception, aiming for the aesthetic realm of harmony between heaven and humanity. Western art, adhering to the tradition of imitating nature, is marked by linear perspective, color and light effects, and typical representation, rooted in the epistemological soil of subject-object dichotomy. The divergence between the two is not a matter of superiority or inferiority but an inevitable product of distinct cultural traditions and philosophical modes of thinking. In the contemporary context of deepening globalization and cross-cultural dialogue, comparative studies of the ontological theories of Chinese and Western art not only contribute to a deeper understanding of their respective theoretical characteristics but also provide valuable intellectual resources for mutual learning, integration, and the innovative construction of contemporary art theory.

Disclosure statement

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Landscape Optimization Design of King Yu's Terrace Historical Heritage Site Park

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of growing global awareness of heritage conservation, increasingly sound and relevant legal and regulatory systems, and continuous iteration of conservation philosophies and technical approaches, substantial progress has been made in heritageconservation practices. Nevertheless, in the context of historic cities, how to reconcile the physical preservation of heritage sites as material cultural heritage with the sustainable development of urban culture, and how to realize the organic integration of historicrelic conservation and contemporary urban functional renewal remain critical issues to be urgently addressed [1]. In recent years, as a comprehensive spatial paradigm integrating conservation, interpretation and revitalization, "heritage site parks" have increasingly become an important approach to coordinate urban development and heritage protection [1]. They not only help strengthen the holistic conservation of heritage sites and their buffer zones, but also facilitate the systematic interpretation and public communication of culturalheritage values. As the renowned "ancient capital of eight dynasties" in Chinese history, Kaifeng boasts profound cultural heritage and abundant historic remains, among which King Yu's Terrace Park serves as a typical representative. Taking urban heritage site parks as the research subject, this paper selects King Yu's Terrace Park as an empirical case to conduct systematic research on landscape optimization and design [2]. The proposed comprehensive renewal scheme balances the authentic conservation of heritage sites, coordination of environmental style and features, and integrity of cultural narratives. It effectively improves heritage recognition and culturalbearing capacity of the ancientrelic conservation zone in the suburbs of Kaifeng. It also carries important practical value and demonstrative significance for furthering the research, dissemination and dynamic inheritance of SongDynasty culture [2].

Keywords: Heritage site park; Landscape optimization; Cultural inheritance; Urban renewal

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1. Overall planning

1.1. Bubble diagram

This project focuses on the central activity area of the park, covering a total land area of 8.2 hectares. Combined with the site conditions and overall design strategy, the site space is reorganized and divided into

11 functional zones. Three original functional zones are retained: the entrance square serves as the gateway space of the park for crowd distribution and image display; the peony garden relies on the existing plant base to create a characteristic specialized botanical garden; the central lawn provides an open venue for outdoor rest and group activities (**Figure 1**).

Eight new functional zones are designed: the flower ornamental area features various flowering plants to form seasonal landscapes; the children's area is equipped with amusement facilities to meet children's game and entertainment needs; the central waterscape is dominated by water features, with wetlands and dry creeks to build an ecological water system; the woodland rest area takes advantage of tree canopies to offer quiet shaded spaces; the cultural display area centers on the history and culture of King Yu for cultural popularization and exhibition; the sports area arranges fitness sites to satisfy residents' daily exercise demands; the parking lot is built to solve visitors' parking problems [3]. All functional zones interact with one another, balancing ecological, cultural, recreational, and service functions [3].

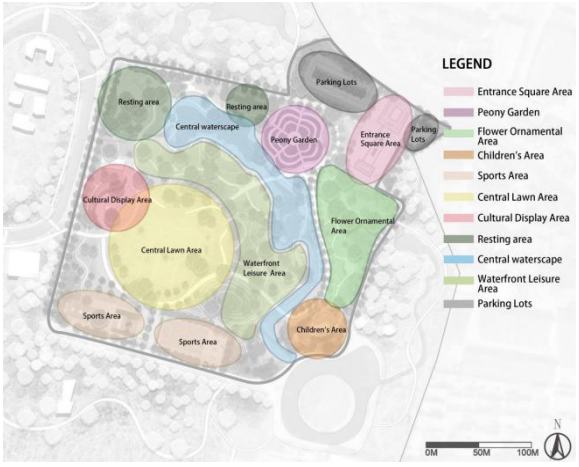

Figure 1. King Yu's Terrace Park Bubble Diagram.

1.2. Master plan

The master plan for the renewal of the central area of King Yu's Terrace Park includes a total of 26 independent landscape nodes. Under the strict premise of heritage site protection, cultural interpretation and exhibition, the design fully meets visitors' diverse demands for daily recreation, public research and popular science education (**Figure 2**). These landscape nodes cover a wide range of functional types, including entrance squares, themed sculptures, cultural exhibition facilities, waterscape spots, sports venues, children's activity zones, ornamental gardens, rest pavilions and supporting service buildings.

Reasonably arranged according to the site terrain, original spatial texture and constraints of heritage protection, the nodes are connected to form an integrated and interlinked landscape system. The design respects historical relics and minimizes excessive disturbance to the original site. It comprehensively balances ecological benefits, cultural expression and public service. On the basis of preserving the historical context of King Yu's Terrace, the park undertakes the core functions of heritage display and cultural inheritance [4]. Meanwhile, it creates high-quality urban open spaces for groups of all ages, realizing the organic integration of historical heritage conservation, ecological restoration and citizens' leisure activities.



Figure 2. King Yu's Terrace Park Master Plan Diagram.

2. Detail design

2.1. Section of master plan

Two sectional drawings along different directions run through the whole central area of King Yu's Terrace Park, which can intuitively display the complex topographic undulations and layered spatial changes of the site. The longitudinal section mainly demonstrates the morphological characteristics of the open lawn space and the elevation variations around the central lake. It clearly presents the height transition relationship between the water body and the surrounding green space, and reflects the vertical change of terrain from the lawn platform down to the waterfront zone. In contrast, the transverse section shows continuous topographic transformations across three core functional zones, namely the cultural display area, waterfront leisure area and flower ornamental area. It records the gentle terrain reshaping and micro-topography adjustments adopted in the renewal design (**Figure 3**).

These two sectional drawings not only visually interpret the spatial connection and transition between different functional plots, but also fully embody the core design philosophy of respecting the original landform and minimizing site disturbance. Instead of large-scale earthwork, the scheme adopts gentle terrain modification to adapt to the existing relic environment. The sectional analysis provides reliable technical support for subsequent landscape construction, plant layout and detailed implementation of the project, ensuring that the design scheme can be constructed smoothly under the premise of heritage protection [4].

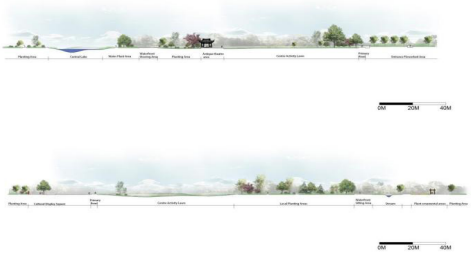

Figure 3. King Yu's Terrace Park Section of Master Plan.

2.2. Road system design

To preserve the integrity of the original spatial pattern of King Yu's Terrace Park, a five-level hierarchical road system is designed to organize visitor circulation and sightseeing routes (**Figure 4**). The design retains the existing main road of 5 meters in width and the 1.4-meter circular runway, respecting the original site texture and avoiding large-scale demolition of the existing road infrastructure. The primary road is 3.5 meters wide and links all park entrances and exits. Its pavement adopts cultural characteristic patterns to deliver heritage display effects. Meanwhile, ecological grass planting ditches are arranged on both sides of the road to collect and filter rainwater, realizing sustainable drainage and reducing pressure on the municipal pipe network.

The secondary road has a width ranging from 2 to 2.4 meters. It extends deeply into the site to connect scattered landscape nodes and guides visitors' sight lines to frame picturesque views. Grass planting ditches are also equipped alongside secondary roads to maintain consistent ecological stormwater management. Tertiary roads are 1 to 1.5 meters wide. Designed with graceful curved lines and strong landscape appeal, they form intimate walking paths and enrich the spatial layers and rhythm of the whole park. This hierarchical road network balances heritage conservation, sightseeing experience and ecological stormwater treatment, creating a gentle and low-disturbance travel system for the heritage park [5].

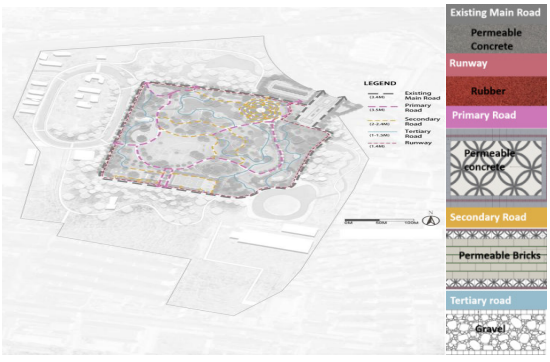

Figure 4. King Yu's Terrace Park Road System Design Diagram.

2.3. Cultural services facilities

The architecture of cultural service facilities takes a four-level hierarchical signage system, in which the information content progressively changes to provide an overview to more detailed interpretation level-by-level, creating a complete and coherent visitor guidance system (**Figure 5**).

The first-level signage is the general map of the park guide. It provides a simple introduction to the entire park and shows the master plan layout. It is placed at the main entrances of the park and assists visitors in quickly getting the overall spatial organization and having a general idea about the functional zones and landscape nodes of the park before they begin sightseeing (**Figure 6**).

The second-level signage combines three fundamental functions: location marking, directional guidance, and introduction of the tour route. It indicates the current locations of visitors and the location of major service facilities such as parking lots, gateways and public restrooms.It also indicates the direction and approximate distance to park buildings, heritage nodes and other scenic spots. Besides, it presents the distribution of featured tour routes and landscape nodes. Such signs are mainly placed at transportation junctions and the entrances of each functional zone to assist visitors in route selection (**Figure 7**).

The third-level signage focuses on the interpretation of relics and scenic attractions. It provides in-depth textual information about heritage sites, landscape features and relevant historical stories, helping visitors understand the cultural connotation behind the scenery. These signs are arranged beside heritage relics and major viewing spots for on-site cultural popularization (**Figure 8**).

The fourth-level signage system belongs to outdoor service furniture, including rest benches, landscape lamps and waste bins for daily use. They are distributed across heritage sites, squares and green spaces according to site conditions and visitor activity rules. In terms of visual style, the whole signage system takes dark red and log wood tones as the main color palette, creating a sedate and elegant visual effect. The design incorporates solid wooden structures, park emblems and other decorative elements, fully embodying the distinctive cultural atmosphere related to King Yu. The four-tier signage system not only satisfies visitors' practical needs for navigation and rest, but also acts as a medium for cultural interpretation, seamlessly combining service function and cultural display (**Figure 9**).

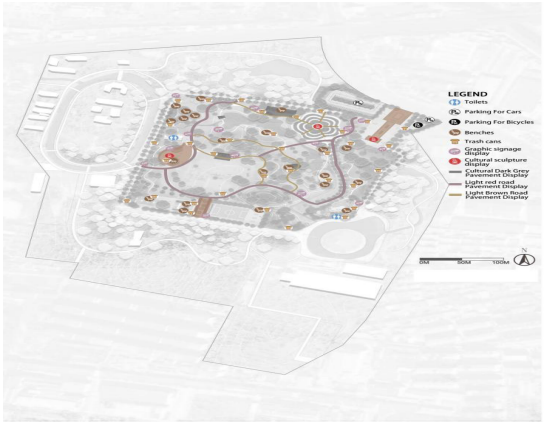

Figure 5. King Yu's Terrace Park Cultural Services Facilities Diagram.



Figure 26. General guide map model

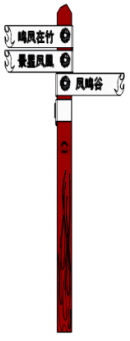

Figure 27. Directional sign model

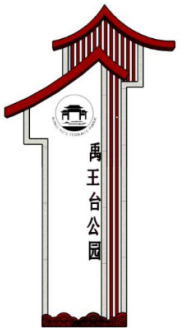

Figure 8. Information introduction to attractions model

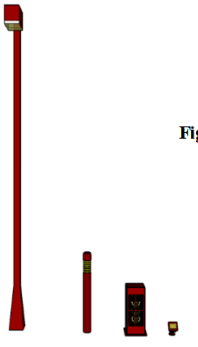

Figure 9. (a) Park lighting model

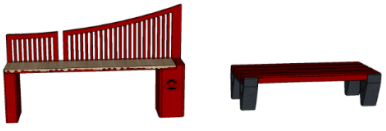

Figure 9. (b) Bench model

2.4. Water system ecological design

Firstly, three types of waterscape design are adopted to restore the water system pattern based on the overall site conditions of King Yu's Terrace Park. The first measure is to construct shallow lakes with natural revetments to replace the existing artificial lake. Unlike rigid concrete lake banks, natural revetments adopt native plants and stone stacking to soften the water boundary. This practice enhances the connection between water and land, creates habitats for aquatic organisms, and improves the landscape naturalness of the lake area. The second measure is to use constructed wetlands to substitute the existing artificial channels. The wetland system is planted with purification plants, which can intercept suspended solids and degrade pollutants, turning the originally single drainage channel into an ecological purification corridor. The third measure is to apply dry creeks to replace the open channels. Dry creeks are paved with gravel and pebbles. In dry seasons, they serve as landscape trails; in rainy periods, they temporarily store and guide rainwater to reduce surface runoff (**Figure 10**).

To establish a sound water circulation system, water is diverted into the park from the urban river at a higher elevation. After multi-stage purification by wetlands and dry creeks, the treated water flows into the urban river at a lower elevation. This ecological circulation strategy not only rehabilitates the original water system layout within the park and reconstructs the hydrological connection of the site, but also effectively improves the regional water quality [6]. The integrated waterscape scheme combines ecological purification, stormwater management and landscape appreciation, realizing the coordinated development of water environment restoration and park recreation function.

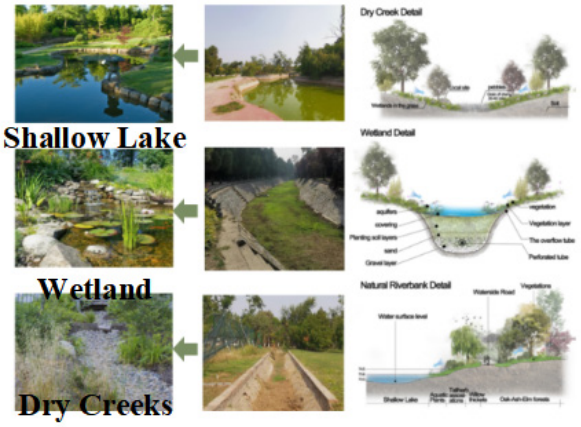

Figure 10. 3 Different Forms of Waterscape Diagram.

2.5. Plant community ecological design

2.5.1. Planting principles

(1) Protect and display the site as the fundamental principle

The planning and design of plants should respect the site itself and its characteristics. In the site area, shallow-rooted trees and shrubs Herbaceous plants are used in the site area to prevent the damage of deep-rooted trees to the soil of the site. Choose plants that are more resistant to drought to ensure less watering and protect the site. Because the depth of the planting soil covered above the site is limited, poor-tolerant species should be selected [6].

(2) Conform to site chronological properties principle

Select historical plants recorded in the literature to create a plant landscape with a historical atmosphere. The main selection is the Poetic Edda to create a historical plant landscape.

(3) Ecological principles

Follow the principle of suitable trees for the site, mainly deciduous broad-leaved trees and evergreen coniferous plants, and consider the planting of native plants; respect the current plants of the site and make use of them [7].

(4) Ornamental principle

The combination of natural and regular planting, the configuration of flowers, fruits, leaves, shapes, tastes and other ornamental characteristics, focusing on the seasonal changes of the site. The vegetation system is also used to create a spatial pattern and create axes and view corridors.

2.5.2. Overall plant combination

Ecological artificial vegetation design can influence carbon stabilization of the land positively and increase the concentration of organic carbon in the soil. The combination of trees, shrubs, ground cover and herbaceous plants has a more significant effect on the stabilization of soil plant organic matter. So, in this scenario, based on the above findings, the plant community is combined with trees, shrubs, ground covers, and herbs to maximize the ecological benefits of the plants (**Figure 11**).

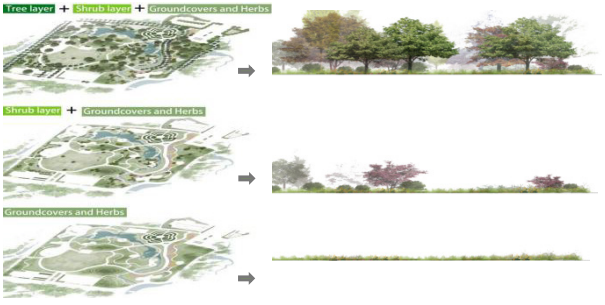

Figure 11. Ecological Plant Design Diagram.

3. Node design

3.1. Zoom in culture square area design

3.1.1. Zoom in master plan - culture square area

This section is the main cultural exhibition area of the Terrace Park of King Yu, which has the important role of decoding local historical heritage. Combined with artistic sculptures, multi-group historical and cultural walls and typical cultural paving, the space is a systematic interpretation and presentation of the deep history and culture of the park. The sculpture in the middle of the cultural square is called Shi Kuang Fondling the Qin, which serves as the cultural icon of the entire park. It recreates the historical scene of the site (classic), makes visitors stop, look and reflect, and makes tourists enter the historical ambiance of the Terrace of King Yu quickly (**Figure 12**).

The historical and cultural wall is behind the sculpture and is composed of three wall segments of different heights to create a layered and rhythmic interface of cultural exhibition. The former two walls are 2.3 meters high, depicting common architectural elements and touching upon the history of various periods. They

organize the chronological development context of the site and assist visitors in comprehending the evolution of the relic site. On the back 3-meter cultural wall, there is the park logo and traditional poems relating to King Yu, which brings out the special literary and cultural background of Kaifeng. Benches are placed on either side of the square to allow visitors to relax, socialize and enjoy the cultural environment around them (**Figure 13**).

Instead of being demolished, an abandoned building next to the cultural square is completely renovated and repurposed as a cultural experience hall. This regeneration mode is low-impact and fits into the idea of heritage conservation. Within the hall, various interactive display formats are installed, including panels introducing culture and scene displays, in order to enhance the immersive cultural experience of visitors. Together with the outdoor square landscape, it creates a complete chain of cultural experience that combines viewing, reading, and participatory interaction [8]. The general architecture of the cultural square integrates the beauty of landscapes, cultural communication and public service. It turns abstract historical data into concrete landscape images, achieving the organic combination of landscape space construction and cultural legacy of the Terrace of King Yu.

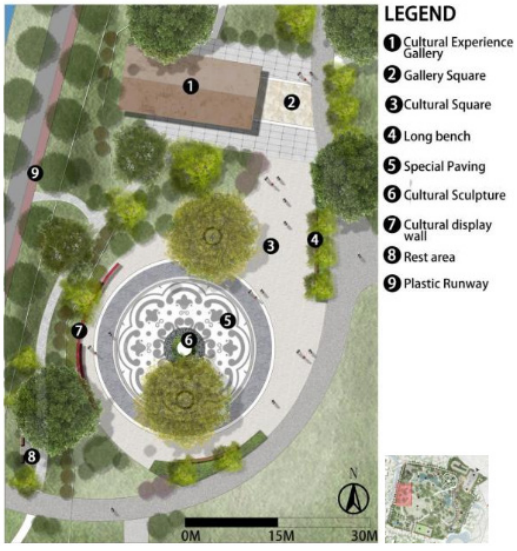

Figure 12. Zoom-in Master Plan - Culture Square Area Diagram.

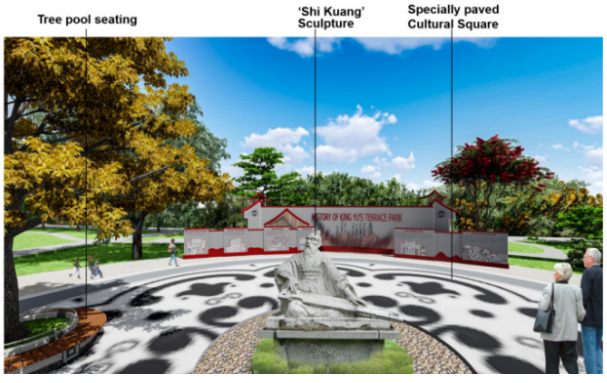

Figure 12. Zoom-in visualization — Culture Square Area Diagram.

3.2. Zoom-in flower ornamental area design

3.2.1. Zoom-in master plan -Flower Ornamental Area

Flower Ornamental Area is one of the fundamental features of the design of Terrace Park by King Yu, which emphasizes the ornamental presentation of flowering plants and restoration of native plant communities (**Figure 13**). The multi-level trails meander through the entire area in a winding path to slow down the pace of walking visitors and allow them to roam around and have an immersive view of the landscape. To offer a comfortable shaded rest area to tourists, a semi-enclosed circular flower pavilion is laid out in the middle of this space. Tourists can also stop here to admire the floral landscapes around and interact with others. With various and stratified plant associations of various heights, colors, and blooming seasons, this area provides informative and entertaining popular science education, combining a relaxing leisure experience with systematic learning of botany and ecological conservation.

At the other end of the main walkway is a composite wetland and dry-creek landscape. This hybrid hydrological system can be used to effectively capture and purify surface runoff in the park through the filtering effect of substrate and wetland plants. Meanwhile, it will form appealing waterfront landscapes, add visual value for visitors, and establish a positive interaction between human activity and the natural plant-water ecosystem. The whole area organically blends flower appreciation, ecological purification, and science popularization into one cohesive multi-functional landscape space [8]. While satisfying visitors' demand for flower viewing, it undertakes the task of stormwater management and ecological restoration. It also conveys ecological knowledge to visitors subtly, realizing the integration of aesthetic value, ecological function, and science popularization value of the heritage park (**Figure 14**).

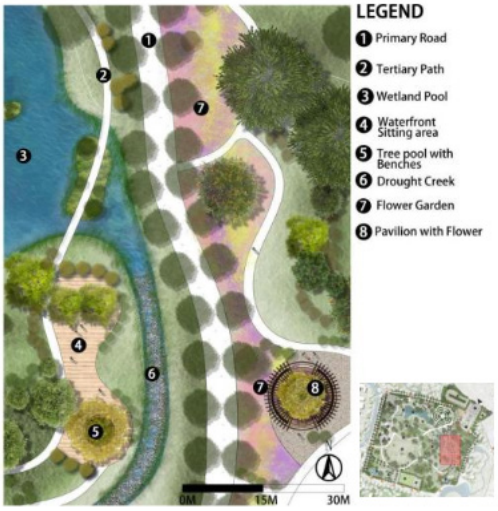

Figure 13. Zoom-in Master Plan — Flower Ornamental Area Diagram.



Figure 14. Zoom-in Visualization — Flower Ornamental Area Diagram.

4. Conclusions and deficiencies

This paper takes King Yu's Terrace Historical Heritage Site Park in Kaifeng as the research object and carries out landscape optimization design for its central activity area of 8.2 hectares. Aiming to resolve conflicts among heritage conservation, urban ecology and public leisure under urban renewal, the study adopts the "two axes, three zones and multiple nodes" framework. The site is divided into 11 functional zones with 26 landscape nodes, forming a coordinated landscape system.

The in-depth design covers a five-level road network, a four-level cultural signage system, an ecological water system, and plant community design. Three types of waterscapes, including natural revetment, shallow lakes, wetlands, and dry creeks, are applied to restore water circulation and purify runoff [9]. Plant design follows four principles to avoid damage to relics and build multi-layered vegetation. Two key areas, the cultural square and the flower ornamental area, are designed to interpret Yu culture and create seasonal flower landscapes.

This scheme integrates heritage protection, ecological restoration and public recreation. Nevertheless, this research lacks post-occupancy evaluation and long-term site monitoring data. It can provide practical references for the regeneration of similar heritage site parks[9].

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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The Musical and Dramatic Portrayal and Aesthetic Value of the Character Mingfeng in the Opera "Mingfeng"

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Abstract: Mingfeng, a servant girl in Ba Jin's novel "Family," is one of the most tragically touching female characters in the history of modern Chinese literature. In the opera of the same name, which premiered in 2013, she rose from a marginal supporting role to the absolute protagonist. This article analyzes the artistic portrayal of Mingfeng's character in the opera "Mingfeng" from four dimensions: dramatic positioning, musical portrayal, stage presentation, and aesthetic value. Based on faithfulness to the spiritual core of the original work, through centralized reconstruction, multi-layered arias, ethnic musical language, and symbolic stage presentation, Mingfeng is portrayed as a three-dimensional image combining tragic beauty and awakening female consciousness. This achieves an artistic sublimation from a literary archetype to an operatic archetype, providing valuable inspiration for the creation of Chinese national operas by combining classic adaptation with local originality.

Keywords: Opera "Mingfeng"; Mingfeng; Character portrayal; Musical portrayal

Online publication: June 30, 2026

1. Introduction

Since its publication in 1931, Ba Jin's novel "Family" has become an enduring monument in modern Chinese literature. Within the grand narrative centered on the decline of a feudal extended family, the servant girl Mingfeng, though not a central character, leaves an unforgettable impression on readers with her innocent character, tragic love, and courageous struggle [1]. Ba Jin once emotionally stated, "It has been my long-cherished wish to see Mingfeng brought to the opera stage." He believed that the emotional turmoil expressed in Mingfeng's final words could not be fully conveyed through writing, and that music (aria) should be used to release the emotions of a young girl. This viewpoint highlights the distinction between opera and other forms of art: music is not a supplement to literature, but rather the most direct form of expression for the spirit of characters.

On November 25, 2013, on the occasion of the 109th anniversary of Ba Jin's birth, the three-act modern national opera "Mingfeng", jointly produced by the Sichuan Symphony Orchestra and Chengdu Media Group, premiered in Chengdu, fulfilling Ba Jin's last wish [2]. The opera, directed by Li Yuanhua, composed by Liu Zhenqiu, and written by Liu Shuzhang, featured Wang Qian, a young soprano from the Sichuan Symphony Orchestra, as Mingfeng. It has won the Sichuan Cultural Award and the Sichuan Provincial Wenhua Award, and was selected as a performance for the 2nd China Opera Festival, becoming an important representative work of Sichuan's original operas.

This article intends to conduct an in-depth analysis of the character Mingfeng in the opera "Mingfeng" from the perspectives of the character's dramatic positioning, musical shaping techniques, stage presentation methods, and aesthetic value, in order to explore its artistic achievements and contemporary significance.

2. Dramatic positioning of Mingfeng's image: From a marginal supporting role to an absolute protagonist

2.1. The marginal existence in the original work and its artistic value

In the narrative structure of Ba Jin's "Family", Mingfeng, though not heavily portrayed, stands out as one of the most compelling supporting roles due to her innocence and fortitude. As a servant girl in the Gao residence, she occupies the lowest rung of the feudal hierarchy, with her love and destiny subject to the control of others. The original novel, through Juehui's perspective, indirectly reveals Mingfeng's inner world, preserving the character's mystique and building emotional tension for her tragic outcome through indirect narration. Ba Jin's preference for Mingfeng's character sets the stage for her later elevation to the lead role in the opera.

2.2. Centralization reconstruction and narrative strategy in opera

The opera "Mingfeng" structurally rewrites the original work, elevating Mingfeng, who was originally a marginal character, to the narrative center, making her the core protagonist of the entire play. This adaptation is not merely a visual transformation, but a deep exploration and interpretation of the spiritual core of the original work. Screenwriter Liu Shuzhang selects narrative elements related to Mingfeng from "Family", and constructs a dramatic network centered around Mingfeng, with eight characters: Mingfeng, Juehui, Juexin, Cousin Mei, Feng Leshan, Old Master Gao, Aunt Chen, and Wang.

In this network, Juehui represents Mingfeng's love and hope, Feng Leshan symbolizes the oppression of the weak by feudal forces, Old Master Gao embodies the decaying authority of the family, and Aunt Chen and Wang are the accomplices within the family. Their indifference and snobbishness contrast with Mingfeng's innocence and kindness [3]. Therefore, Mingfeng's image is not only defined by her own circumstances but also gradually constructed and highlighted within this network of relationships.

2.3. Enhancement of dramatic function and enrichment of character personality

Mingfeng in the opera serves multiple dramatic functions: as a direct victim of the feudal hierarchy, her experiences expose the "cannibalistic" nature of feudal ethics; as a persistent pursuer of pure love, her emotional entanglement with Juehui embodies the work's praise for the beautiful yet fragile aspects of human nature; as a resolute woman who fights with death, her decisive gesture before throwing herself into the lake demonstrates the dignity and courage of the lower-class people who refuse to accept

humiliation.

Compared to the original novel, Mingfeng's character in the opera is more fully developed. She is no longer just a weak woman passively enduring fate, but is reshaped into a life subject with emotions, thoughts, and a sense of resistance. She dares to express her love, to question the injustices of fate, and to defend her dignity even at the cost of her life. This reshaping of her character expands the modern interpretation space of Mingfeng's image and makes it more likely to evoke emotional identification and resonance from contemporary audiences.

3. Musical portrayal of Mingfeng's character: The soulful cry in the aria

3.1. Music as the core means of character portrayal

The fundamental difference between opera and other art forms such as drama and novels lies in the fact that music is not only an auxiliary means to enhance the atmosphere, but also a core carrier for shaping characters, driving the plot, and expressing emotions. American musicologist Joseph Coleman pointed out: "The essence of opera lies in the penetration and transformation of music into drama." This point is particularly evident in the opera "Ming Feng". Composer Liu Zhenqiu fully leveraged this characteristic, designing a series of highly expressive arias for Ming Feng, directly presenting the inner world of this young girl to the audience [4].

3.2. Emotional layers and structural layout of core aria

According to Ba Jin's wishes before his death, if Mingfeng were to simply deliver a long monologue before throwing herself into the lake, it would not truly express her inner feelings. Instead, she must express herself through intense arias. The opera "Mingfeng" faithfully adheres to this principle, designing a core aria for Mingfeng that is layered and emotionally intense, forming a clear emotional development thread throughout the entire play.

The first level is the innocence and joy when love is budding. When interacting with Juehui, Mingfeng's singing melodies are beautiful and smooth, with a lively and fast rhythm, full of the sweetness and shyness of a young girl's first love. These songs often adopt ethnic modes and incorporate local Sichuan musical elements, such as the melodic material of Sichuan river work songs and the rhythmic characteristics of Sichuan Qingyin. Representative songs such as "Moonlight Sentiment" express Mingfeng's longing for love with a gentle melody and delicate emotions.

The second level involves the fear and struggle faced when confronted with forced marriage. When Mingfeng learned that she was to be given to Feng Leshan as a concubine, the melody of the aria became rapid and uneasy, the harmony turned darker, and the instability of the rhythm aptly conveyed her inner panic and helplessness. Representative arias such as "The Shackles of Fate" gradually reveal Mingfeng's inner contradictions and pain through the repeated wandering of the melody and the use of semitones [5].

The third level represents the despair and accusation before the suicide into the lake. This is the climax of the entire play's emotions and the part that Ba Jin valued most. Mingfeng's aria reaches its dramatic peak here, with the melody gradually shifting from a low and mournful tone to a high and impassioned one. The range expands significantly, and the intensity contrasts sharply, pouring out Mingfeng's despair towards love, her accusation towards fate, and her resentment towards the feudal system. This aria is not only Mingfeng's personal expression but also a common cry of countless women who have been

devastated by feudal ethics. Representative arias such as "The Last Aria" push the emotions of the entire play to the peak with highly tensioned musical language.

3.3. Image creation in ensemble and chorus

In addition to solo arias, the opera also enriches its portrayal through duets between Mingfeng and Juehui, confrontations with other characters, and scene choruses. The duet between Mingfeng and Juehui serves as a significant means of expressing their love. The echo and interweaving of melodies symbolize the harmony of their hearts and the barriers of reality. For instance, in the duet "Hard to Love, Hard to Keep", the two voices sometimes parallel and sometimes interlace, ultimately ending with a clash of dissonant intervals, foreshadowing the tragic outcome of their love.

In the scene of choral singing, Mingfeng's voice often stands out from the chorus, forming a stark contrast between the individual and the group, the weak and the powerful. For example, in the chorus "Dusk at Gao Mansion" at the end of the first act, the chorus team expresses the indifference of the feudal family with a heavy and oppressive voice, while Mingfeng's solo voice is sobbing and pleading, struggling to survive in the gaps of the chorus. This approach further intensifies the tragic color of her lonely struggle.

3.4. Regional characteristics and ethnic styles of musical language

As an original Sichuan opera, "Mingfeng" boasts a musical language that exhibits distinct regional characteristics and ethnic style. Composer Liu Zhenqiu has incorporated a wealth of Sichuan folk music elements into his creation, such as the backing technique of Sichuan Opera's high-pitched tunes, the melodic tones of Sichuan folk songs, and the unique rhythmic patterns of the Bashu region. Additionally, the musical composition of the opera draws inspiration from the vocal artistry of traditional Chinese opera, utilizing techniques like intonation, prolongation, and declamation, ensuring that Mingfeng's vocal passages not only embody the dramatic quality of Western opera arias but also retain the charm of Chinese folk music.

4. Stage presentation of Mingfeng's image: artistic expression through vision and action

4.1. Challenges and breakthroughs in performing arts

Mingfeng demands that actors possess both solid vocal skills, capable of mastering challenging arias, and profound dramatic acting abilities, accurately capturing the emotional transformation of the character from innocence to despair and determination. Wang Qian, a young soprano playing Mingfeng, faced a huge challenge. She successfully integrated vocal techniques with dramatic acting in the play, making Mingfeng's image both authentic and believable, while also being artistically captivating.

In terms of performance, Wang Qian focuses on portraying Mingfeng's inner world through delicate means such as eye expressions, gestures, and body movements. For instance, in the scene where Mingfeng seeks help from Juehui in Act 2, her hesitant mouth shape, trembling hands, and wandering gaze are all employed to depict Mingfeng's complex psychology of both longing for help and being unwilling to burden her lover. This performance method of "expressing emotions through voice, and combining voice and emotion" embodies the aesthetic pursuit of a high degree of unity between vocal music and drama in opera performance art [6].

4.2. Symbolic meaning and spatial construction of stage art

The stage art design of the opera "Mingfeng" carries profound symbolic significance. The scene design of the Gao residence is oppressive and enclosed, with tall gate walls and dim lighting creating a suffocating atmosphere of a feudal family, symbolizing the cage of fate that Mingfeng cannot escape. The stage space is also designed with multiple layers, such as the contrast between the foreground and background, and the staggered arrangement of high and low positions, which not only showcases the deep courtyard of the Gao residence but also hints at the hierarchical relationships and power structure among the characters.

The imagery of lake water permeates the entire play. Initially serving as a witness to love, it ultimately becomes the destination of death, thus symbolizing both beauty and destruction. The stage treatment of the scene where Mingfeng jumps into the lake is particularly striking. Through the perfect combination of lighting, sound effects, and performance, the end of Mingfeng's life is presented as a poignant and solemn ceremony. The blue lighting, the sound effects of waves, and Mingfeng's white figure together form a visually striking image.

4.3. The era characteristics of clothing styling and character personality

Mingfeng's costume design accurately reflects the identity characteristics of a servant girl in Sichuan during the early years of the Republic of China. The clothing is simple in material, concise in style, and elegant in color, which not only aligns with the character's social status but also accentuates her youthful and refined temperament. As the plot progresses, there are subtle changes in the color and texture of Mingfeng's clothing. The first act mainly features light colors, reflecting her youthful vitality; the second act gradually darkens, hinting at the deterioration of her fate; in the third act, Mingfeng wears a white long dress, symbolizing her inner despair and foreshadowing her ultimate destiny.

4.4. Overall grasp of directing art

Chief director Li Yuanhua once portrayed the role of "Second-Generation White- Haired Lady," boasting profound skills in national opera performance and extensive directorial experience. In terms of grasping the overall artistic style, Li Yuanhua emphasizes the fluidity and symbolism of dramatic conflicts, focuses on actors' performances being driven by inner emotions, and also values the mutual penetration of music and drama, resulting in a harmonious and unified artistic style throughout the entire play.

5. The aesthetic value and contemporary significance of Mingfeng's image

5.1. A paradigm of tragic beauty: The unity of social tragedy and character tragedy

The compelling aspect of Mingfeng's destruction lies in the fact that she is not a weakling who passively accepts adversity, but a fighter who maintains her dignity even in despair. Her drowning herself in a lake is not a sign of weakness, but rather an ultimate indictment of the feudal order through her life. This kind of tragedy, where "the valuable things in life are destroyed for others to see," produces a strong aesthetic impact, allowing the audience to experience emotional purification and intellectual sublimation amidst sympathy and grief [7].

5.2. The awakening of female consciousness: The spiritual journey from obedience to resistance

From a feminist perspective, Mingfeng's image embodies the initial awakening of female consciousness.

Despite being at the lowest rung of society, she dares to pursue love, dares to refuse the fate of being treated as a commodity for sale, and dares to defend her dignity by dying. Although her way of resistance is limited by the times, its spiritual core — the pursuit of personal independence and freedom in love — has a value that transcends the era.

Mingfeng's awakening of female consciousness underwent a process from spontaneity to self-awareness. Initially, her love for Juehui was more of an instinctive emotional stirring; when faced with the fate of being given to Feng Leshan, she began to realize her inhuman status under the feudal system; ultimately, she expressed her resolute resistance to this system by drowning herself in a lake. This spiritual journey demonstrates the difficulty and solemnity of the awakening of modern Chinese female consciousness. In contemporary society, the image of Mingfeng can still trigger deep reflection among audiences on the fate and rights of women. Although the feudal system has long since disappeared, issues such as women's status in society and their autonomy in love and marriage remain pressing contemporary issues worthy of attention. The image of Mingfeng reminds us that the liberation and realization of women's dignity is a long process that requires continuous effort.

5.3. Inheritance of regional culture: Opera expression of Bashu culture

As an original Sichuan opera, "Mingfeng" incorporates rich elements of Sichuan regional culture in its music and stage presentation. The vocal pieces of Mingfeng reflect the influence of Sichuan folk songs, and her language, movements, and demeanor also bear the characteristics of Ba-Shu culture. The integration of this regional culture endows Mingfeng's image with both universal humanistic brilliance and distinct ethnic and regional flavors.

The Sichuan region boasts a long-standing tradition of folk music, such as Chuanjiang Haozi, Sichuan Qingyin, and Sichuan Opera Gaoqiang, all of which constitute treasures in the Chinese national music treasure trove. The creative utilization of these folk music elements in the opera "Mingfeng" not only enriches the musical language of the work but also opens up new avenues for the inheritance and development of Sichuan regional culture. Through the elegant art form of opera, Bashu culture can reach a broader stage and be understood and appreciated by more audiences [8].

5.4. Inspiration for contemporary opera creation: Combination of classic adaptations and local original creations

The portrayal of Mingfeng in the opera "Mingfeng" provides valuable insights for contemporary Chinese opera creation. It demonstrates that adaptations of classic literary works do not necessarily have to adhere to the original narrative structure, but can be creatively reconstructed based on the characteristics of opera art. Elevating marginal characters from the original work to the leading roles in the opera not only expands the artistic space of the original work but also opens up new possibilities for opera character portrayal.

Meanwhile, the production model of the opera, which is rooted in the local culture and cultivates local actors, has also explored a feasible path for the development of local opera. During the creation process, the Sichuan Symphony Orchestra insisted on selecting key actors and vocalists from within Sichuan Province, discovering and nurturing local opera talents. This "localization" creative strategy not only reduces production costs but also enhances the regional identity of the work, providing experience for the sustainable development of local opera.

Moreover, the success of the opera "Mingfeng" also demonstrates that the creation of Chinese national opera must adhere to the unity of "nationality" and "modernity". On the one hand, it is necessary to deeply explore the rich resources of traditional Chinese music and opera, maintaining the cultural roots of national opera; on the other hand, it is necessary to learn from the creative techniques and stage technology of Western opera, enhancing the artistic level of national opera. Only through this bidirectional integration can Chinese national opera embark on a development path with its own characteristics.

6. Conclusion

The opera "Mingfeng" successfully transformed the literary characters created by Ba Jin into typical opera characters on stage, allowing the silent victim of the feudal family to speak with a voice that resonates deeply.

Just as Ba Jin had expected, Mingfeng finally sang on the opera stage. Her voice, spanning nearly a century, still touches the hearts of contemporary audiences. The opera "Mingfeng" is not only a tribute to Ba Jin's literary classics, but also a valuable exploration of the path of Chinese national opera creation. It tells us that adapting classic literary works requires courage and wisdom, respect for the spiritual core of the original, and creative transformation based on new artistic forms. Only in this way can classics gain new life in the new era, and art continue to develop through inheritance.

The image of Mingfeng will forever stand on the stage of Chinese national opera. Her tragedy will forever serve as a warning to people to cherish freedom and dignity, and her singing voice will forever echo in the hearts of those who pursue beauty and justice.

Disclosure statement

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Immersive Stage Art Empowering the Construction of a Music Ideological and Political Education Model in Universities in Southwest Border Regions

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Abstract: Red classic musical works are important teaching materials for ideological and political education in university music courses. However, actual teaching often overemphasizes skill training and does not dig deeply enough into the spiritual connotations of the works. Although students may sing the melody accurately and complete the performance, they do not necessarily form a deep understanding of and identification with the values carried by the works. Immersive stage art combines musical expression with character action and situational interaction, creating conditions for students to understand the spirit of works and form value judgments in artistic practice. Based on music teaching in universities in southwest border regions, this article takes red classics as the main material and immersive stage art as the carrier to construct an educational model linking work study, collaborative rehearsal, interactive performance, and reflective extension. It guides students to integrate their understanding of the historical background and spiritual connotations of works into vocal and stage expression, and then deepens their understanding through post-performance interpretation and practical extension, promoting the unity of professional ability cultivation and value identification cultivation.

Keywords: Immersive stage art; Universities in southwest border regions; Music ideological and political education; Sense of community for the Chinese nation

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1. Introduction

Red classic musical works are not only professional materials for students to learn vocal control, role performance, and stage cooperation, but also carry educational requirements for understanding history and experiencing home-country sentiment. Ideological and political education in university music courses

emphasizes integrating value guidance into professional learning and guiding students to deepen their ideological understanding in the process of understanding and expressing works. This requires students to understand characters' situations, musical emotions, and narrative threads while mastering singing and performance skills, so that artistic expression has a clear emotional and ideological basis. Immersive teaching, centered on scene construction and role immersion, can break through the limitations of traditional teaching and allow students to perceive cultural charm and deepen value identification through multisensory experience [1], providing an important pathway for integrating red classics into university music teaching. For universities in southwest border regions, this teaching process also needs to respond to specific cultural contexts: how to start from students' familiar local cultural experiences, help students understand the shared history carried by works, and deepen value understanding in musical expression and communication. Based on this, this article explores how to use immersive stage practice to provide value guidance through work study, collaborative rehearsal, interactive performance, and reflective extension, construct an educational model that fits the internal laws of music education, and explore practical paths for the deep integration of ideological and political education and professional music learning.

2. Educational logic of integrating immersive stage art into music ideological and political education in universities in Southwest Border Regions

2.1. Historical context gives musical expression a concrete value basis

Understanding the historical context in which a work is situated is the foundation for students to connect musical expression with the spirit of the work. Immersive teaching models can combine knowledge transmission with experiential learning, allowing students to perceive teaching content and teachers' instructional methods more intuitively and to deepen their understanding of knowledge points and methodology through experience [2]. Immersive stage art can use characters, scenes, and interactive relationships to help students understand characters' situations and emotions while participating in the narrative of works. This understanding further provides a basis for students' singing and performance: when students understand why a character speaks, to whom the character speaks, and what emotions the character holds, they can grasp what tempo, dynamics, tone, and phrasing are meant to express on the basis of the score's requirements. For example, the same impassioned melody may express firm conviction, or it may express indignation or encouragement of companions; the specific meaning needs to be discerned in light of the character's situation and narrative relationships. Historical context thus helps students clarify the emotional basis of musical expression, enabling singing and performance to convey the spiritual connotations of works. Local cultural experience can become an entry point for understanding works. When characters' fates are connected with themes such as jointly guarding the homeland and assuming national responsibility, students have a basis for further understanding the relationship between home and country.

2.2. Role experience brings emotional feeling into value understanding

Guiding students to understand the values contained in works is an important goal of ideological and political education in music courses. Immersive stage teaching requires students to express characters' actions and choices in specific situations, prompting their feelings about works to develop further into an understanding of characters' positions and spiritual pursuits. Students therefore need to start from characters' situations and pay attention to what characters knew at the time, what difficulties they faced, and why they still took

certain actions. This way of understanding works from characters' standpoints is consistent with the first-person participation, situational perception, and interactive experience emphasized in immersive ideological and political teaching [3]. When students understand why characters hesitate or persist, they can find a basis for pauses, accents, and emotional handling in singing, and can more easily explain why they themselves are moved. Role experience provides a perceptual foundation for this understanding, while reflection on characters' choices and reasons helps students move from feeling characters' emotions to understanding the value stance behind their actions.

2.3. Collaborative creation provides a perceivable learning experience for the sense of community

Stage creation requires students to listen, coordinate, and assume responsibilities in shared tasks, which provides firsthand experience for understanding the relationship between the individual and the collective. The volume of one vocal part, responses between roles, and timing of scene transitions are all affected by other participants; individual performance can fully present a work only when coordinated with overall expression. Students can thus experience that cooperation includes understanding others' needs and fulfilling one's own responsibilities. For students from different cultural backgrounds, familiar musical styles, language habits, and expressive experiences can become materials for mutual understanding, and participation in joint creative performance connects these differences with the same artistic task. At the same time, when character relationships in red classics reveal a shared fate, students' understanding of works can be linked to the historical understanding that people of all ethnic groups jointly guard their homeland. Therefore, the educational significance of collaborative creation lies in enabling students to understand shared responsibility from concrete collaborative experience and to recognize the broader historical and cultural connotations of this responsibility in the study of works.

3. Construction of the educational model of immersive stage art empowering music ideological and political education

The above educational relationships need to be realized in a continuous learning process. With red classics as the main material, work study provides a historical and musical basis for rehearsal; collaborative rehearsal transforms understanding into artistic expression; interactive performance enables students to communicate with audiences about artistic expression; and post-performance reflection helps students explain their experience and extend practice. The four links all revolve around the value and meaning of works; materials or outcomes formed in the previous link are passed to the next link for discussion and adjustment, forming a closed educational loop.

3.1. Pre-class study: Establishing situational understanding through works and historical materials

Pre-class study aims to help students understand characters and their historical situations in works and prepare for subsequent rehearsal and emotional expression. Teachers can select work excerpts suitable for class hour arrangements, taking into account musical training value, narrative completeness, and students' understanding base, and provide scores, lyrics, creative background, and related historical materials, guiding students to distinguish historical facts from artistic treatment. In light of the teaching realities of universities

in southwest border regions, verified materials from local memorial venues, oral history compilation results, or local music materials can also be selected to help students understand shared history from familiar local experience. For example, around the theme of jointly guarding the homeland, responsibility and commitment in classic works and local historical materials can be compared, while differences in time, characters, and forms of expression between the two types of materials should be explained to avoid simply equating different situations. Such connections help students understand shared history from familiar local experience while preserving the respective meanings of different materials. After study, students can explain in score annotations or study notes the characters' situations, key choices, and preliminary reasons for musical handling, and point out what they still cannot understand. At the beginning of class, teachers use these explanations to judge whether students understand the historical background or have not yet understood character motivations, so as to supplement relevant materials in a targeted manner. Study thus directly serves rehearsal, and students' preliminary judgments about emotion, tone, and expressive targets have a basis that can continue to be tested.

3.2. In-class rehearsal: Connecting professional training and value analysis through role experience

Work study provides a basis for understanding, while rehearsal requires students to transform this understanding into audible and visible artistic expression. Teachers can organize students to discuss why characters act in certain ways around key excerpts that embody character choices, and then compare whether different singing and performance approaches can convey this understanding. Taking an excerpt of mutual support in hardship as an example, students first analyze why characters choose to help others and what responsibility this choice embodies, and then combine lyrics, phrases, and character relationships to judge whether increasing volume or restrained expression can convey firmness after enduring pressure. Discussion should be implemented in specific breathing, tone, timbre, and movement; students both explain their reasons and use actual singing to test whether such handling is valid. Teachers then point out the difference between technical problems and understanding problems, avoiding interpreting insufficient vocal control as emotional insincerity and avoiding replacing professional requirements with correct themes. In collaborative rehearsal, students assume tasks in roles, vocal parts, or stage positions and coordinate responses, volume, and transition timing. To test whether these coordinations accurately express character relationships, each group can designate one member to record key excerpts before and after adjustments, and group members separately record what they adjusted and why. Then, group members compare the video and notes and discuss whether different handling improved coordination and whether it conformed to characters' situations and emotions. Teachers comment in light of scores and narrative content, helping students distinguish technical deviations from problems in character understanding. Students then continue to revise and explain reasons for adopting suggestions or retaining original handling, providing a clear expressive basis for stage performance.

3.3. Stage performance: Deepening shared participation through situational interaction

Stage performance presents the character understanding formed in rehearsal to the audience, and students can test whether their expression is clear through post-performance exchange. Teachers can organize mature excerpts into small thematic performances, arranging scenes, actor positions, and interactions according to the narrative of works to help the audience understand characters' environments and relationships. Sound,

lighting, and projection should coordinate with scene arrangements to help the audience hear singing clearly and recognize situations, avoiding device changes that distract attention from music. Teachers assign performance, guided appreciation, and organizational tasks according to students' singing ability and rehearsal conditions, and arrange appropriate rotation. Students undertaking guided appreciation briefly introduce characters' situations with historical materials before the performance and raise a question about character choices, guiding the audience to focus on why characters act as they do. To maintain the integrity of the musical narrative, related questions are left for exchange after the excerpt ends. The audience can explain how they understand characters or raise questions about specific vocal or movement handling; actors explain reasons in light of lyrics, historical materials, and reflections during rehearsal, enabling both sides to discuss around works. Teachers are responsible for preserving key performance and exchange excerpts and recording the audience's main questions and actors' responses. After the performance, students compare these materials with rehearsal notes, distinguish whether the audience did not understand their expression or understood it and then offered different views, and then check whether background introduction and performance handling need adjustment, thereby determining the focus of subsequent reflection and revision.

3.4. Post-class reflection: Connecting value understanding and practical expression through work interpretation

Post-class reflection is an important link in promoting the internalization of teaching goals and helps students connect stage feelings with daily life and learning. Teachers can organize students to review pre-class annotations, rehearsal videos, and performance exchange records, select one place where understanding changed or remains doubtful, and explain how they initially understood it, which materials influenced their judgment, and why they now retain or adjust their original interpretation. Reflection need not repeat the background of works, nor does it require students to reach identical emotional conclusions. Teachers supplement materials in response to questions in students' explanations and organize discussion to help students understand responsibility and conviction in character choices in light of historical conditions, and then connect with cooperative experiences in rehearsal to think about the responsibilities individuals should assume in collective learning. In this way, students can explain why they were moved and how they understand responsibility and conviction in works in light of specific plots and character choices, and further consider the implications of these understandings for their own learning and life. Teachers supplement materials according to questions in students' explanations and then arrange appropriate practical extension, such as having students prepare work-guided appreciation for campus performances or introduce the same excerpt to different audiences in community music services. Facing new listeners, students need to reselect key points of explanation and respond to their questions, which also provides opportunities to independently apply what they have learned. Guided appreciation content should be organized by students themselves based on materials; teachers' help focuses on verifying facts and pointing out understanding gaps, so that subsequent tasks can present students' own judgments. After practice, revised guided appreciation texts, audience questions, and student responses can be retained to judge whether students can explain works without original prompts. Teachers then decide what background to supplement and what tasks to adjust in the next round of teaching, so that reflection both deepens personal understanding and actually affects subsequent teaching.

4. Implementation guarantees for the immersive stage music ideological and political education model

4.1. Maintaining regular implementation through course teams and existing venues

For immersive stage art to continuously serve ideological and political education in music courses, work, study, rehearsal, and performance need to be incorporated into course arrangements, and the division of labor among teachers needs to be clarified. Music teachers are responsible for work analysis, professional training, and stage expression; ideological and political or history teachers participate in historical material verification and value issue discussion; both sides prepare lessons together around problems students encounter in work learning. Schools can coordinate study and exchange time in existing courses and incorporate material screening, joint lesson preparation, and post-performance review into regular teaching research arrangements. Course teams can gradually accumulate teaching materials using existing literature or public materials, verify sources, explain applicable themes, and record students' questions during use and corresponding revisions, making it easier for subsequent teachers to continue using them. Teaching can start with small excerpt rehearsals, giving priority to existing rehearsal venues, and adding necessary sound and video support according to the expressive needs of works. Each class should focus on solving a limited number of musical and character problems, and extracurricular tasks should also be clearly scoped, avoiding occupying time for work study and professional training in order to complete a full performance. Through reasonable arrangements of courses, personnel, and venues, course teams can continuously update materials and improve teaching within an acceptable workload, providing support for the regular development of immersive stage practice.

4.2. Improving evaluation and teaching feedback through multi-source process materials

Whether the model plays an educational role requires a matching evaluation system to test teaching outcomes. The evaluation system should include three dimensions: professional performance, work understanding, and practical participation. Professional performance examines vocal control, role performance, and stage coordination; work understanding focuses on whether students can explain character choices and their responsibility and conviction based on historical materials and texts; practical participation examines task assumption, cooperative exchange, and work interpretation. Evaluation methods should focus on process evaluation, combined with final performance and work interpretation for comprehensive judgment. Teachers can collect pre-class annotations, rehearsal videos, revision explanations, and post-performance reflections in stages to compare changes in students' understanding and expression. Problems that repeatedly appear in evaluation should also become a basis for course teams to adjust teaching. For example, for deviations in historical understanding, check whether study materials and background explanations are sufficient; for disconnection between understanding and performance, adjust the connection between character analysis and professional training; for cooperation difficulties, check task division and class hour arrangements, etc. After adjustment, observe whether problems are resolved in light of the next round of learning materials, so that evaluation continuously serves student learning and teaching improvement.

5. Conclusion

Immersive stage art provides a learning approach for music ideological and political education that connects work understanding, emotional experience, and practical expression. For universities in southwest border

regions, local cultural experience can become an entry point for students to understand works. On this basis, teachers guide students to recognize the connection between local experience and shared history and further understand the spiritual connotations of works. This article links work study, collaborative rehearsal, performance exchange, and post-class reflection, helping students deepen their understanding of character choices and value pursuits while improving musical expression ability, so that red classics become both materials for professional training and important carriers of value education.

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Watershed, Immigration, and Vocal Music: Field Research on the Flow of Yuediao Theatrical Troupes and Localization of Vocal Music in the Middle Reaches of the Han River

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Abstract: The middle reaches of the Han River, as a transitional zone for the integration of southern and northern opera cultures, are the core field for the southern transmission and localization evolution of the Central Plains Yuediao. The existing research on Yuediao mainly focuses on the origin of opera genres and singing techniques, lacking systematic research on the correlation between watershed geography, immigration history, and vocal changes. This article takes Xiangyang, Laohekou, Gucheng and other areas in the middle reaches of the Han River as the research scope. Based on first-hand field research data, it explores the core driving forces of the flow of Yuediao theatrical troupes and the evolution mechanism of localized singing from three dimensions: watershed space, immigrant migration, and local customs. Research has shown that the Han River system has built a spatial corridor for the dissemination of traditional Chinese opera, Ming and Qing immigrants have provided a carrier for cultural heritage, and local customs have shaped the survival ecology of traditional Chinese opera. Together, these three factors have promoted the comprehensive regional reconstruction of the Central Plains Yuediao from the flow of troupes, accompaniment system, and aesthetic core to dialect phonetics, forming a unique Xianghe Yuediao vocal system.

Keywords: Middle reaches of the Han River; Watershed space; Migration of immigrants; Yuediao theatrical troupes; Localization of singing style

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1. Introduction

The middle reaches of the Han River cover core areas such as Xiangyang, Laohekou, and Gucheng. It is a transitional zone connecting the Central Plains opera culture with the Jingchu and Qinba opera cultures. Its special watershed location makes it an important venue for the southern transmission of northern opera and

the iteration of local opera. Yuediao originated from the Central Plains region and gradually spread to the middle reaches of the Han River basin through population mobility and commercial shipping during the Ming and Qing dynasties. After hundreds of years of regional adaptation and cultural integration, it has formed a distinctive form of Xianghe Yuediao that is different from Henan Yuediao. The current academic research on Yuediao mainly focuses on the tracing of theatrical genres, singing techniques, and compilation of plays, with relatively little systematic correlation between watershed geography, immigration history, and vocal changes. It neglects the underlying driving role of geographic space and population migration in the localization of traditional Chinese opera. This article is based on first-hand field research data, breaking away from a single perspective of traditional Chinese opera art research, and combining the perspectives of human geography and folk culture to analyze the deep logic of the environment, immigration activities, and the flow of Yuediao theatrical troupes in the middle reaches of the Han River Basin, as well as the localization of vocal styles. It explores the unique laws of regional opera evolution and helps to explore and revitalize the cultural value of traditional opera in the region.

2. Geographical and cultural foundation of the middle reaches of the Han River and the reasons for the mobility of the Yuediao theatrical troupes

2.1. Watershed water system: spatial carrier for cross-regional flow of Yuediao theatrical troupes

The middle reaches of the Han River have a crisscrossing water system and accessible waterways. Since ancient times, it has been a core corridor for regional trade, population circulation, and cultural dissemination, providing natural geographical support for the cross-regional flow and global dissemination of the Yuediao theatrical troupes. The main stream of the Han River runs through core areas such as Laohekou, Xiangyang, and Gucheng, and its tributaries are densely distributed in towns and villages, forming a water-land transportation network. Compared with land transportation blocked by mountains, the convenience of water transportation greatly reduces the touring and mobility costs of opera troupes. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, commerce flourished in the middle reaches of the Han River, with numerous docks and towns along the coast. Business and commerce gathered, and the market was bustling, which gave rise to a strong demand for folk opera appreciation. Various theater troupes relied on waterways to tour along the river and land, forming a fixed mobile performance route. The Yuediao theatrical troupes initially entered northwest Hubei from southwest Henan along the Han River waterway, with Matou Town as its core foothold, gradually radiating and spreading to surrounding villages, breaking down spatial barriers to regional cultural dissemination. The spatial pattern of the watershed belt presents the characteristics of gathering along the riverbank and infiltrating into inland rural areas for the dissemination of Yuediao. Coastal towns have become the core nodes for the landing and rooting of Yuediao, while remote villages have become the extension areas for the regular tour of the troupe. This flow pattern, formed by relying on the water system, lays the foundation for the distribution pattern of Yuediao in the middle reaches of the Han River, and also provides a wide range of communication audiences and regional scenes for the subsequent localization and integration of singing styles.

2.2. Migration of immigrants: The mass media of cross-disciplinary landing and rooting in China

The large-scale population migration during the Ming and Qing dynasties was the core cultural driving

force for the introduction of Yuediao from the Central Plains to the middle reaches of the Han River and its implementation and survival. The immigrant group became the core carrier for the dissemination, inheritance, and transformation of traditional Chinese opera. In history, the middle reaches of the Han River, due to its vast territory, sparse population, and advantageous location, have repeatedly accepted immigrants from the Central Plains, Qin and Jin regions, especially the large-scale influx of immigrants from Henan into Xiangyang and Laohekou areas. This not only brought the production and lifestyle of the Central Plains region, but also carried the original Vietnamese opera culture and folk aesthetic habits. The village communities formed by the settlement of immigrant groups have formed a stable audience circle for traditional Chinese opera. Folk activities such as worshipping gods, weddings and funerals, festivals, and market fairs all rely on traditional Chinese opera performances as important carriers, providing a living environment for the long-term residency and performance of the Yuediao troupes. Unlike the flow of traditional Chinese opera brought about by short-term commerce, the settled lifestyle of immigrants has achieved the normalization and inheritance of Yuediao. The original Yuediao singing style, plays, and performance forms have been passed down from generation to generation in the immigrant community. At the same time, the long-term coexistence and cultural integration between immigrants and local indigenous residents have enabled the Central Plains Yuediao to no longer be limited to immigrant circles, gradually integrating into the local folk cultural system, achieving initial cultural adaptation in crowd interaction, and accumulating a mass foundation and cultural conditions for the subsequent localization transformation of singing styles [1].

2.3. Local folk customs: Cultural support for the survival and development of Yuediao theatrical troupes

The unique Jingchu local folk culture in the middle reaches of the Han River has built a cultural ecology for the long-term existence and continuous flow of the Yuediao theatrical troupes, promoting the deep integration of foreign theatrical genres into local social life [2]. The folk customs in the northwest region of Hubei combine the simplicity and richness of Central Plains folk customs with the agility and gentleness of Jingchu folk customs. Folk activities such as temple fairs, festivals, and clan celebrations are flourishing, and opera performances are an indispensable core content in various folk scenes. The local folk have always advocated for rituals, entertainment, gods, singing, dancing, and praying for blessings. The demand for watching traditional Chinese opera is strong, forming a local cultural atmosphere of “Yuediao in every village”. The strong demand from the folk has prompted Yuediao troupes to continuously optimize their mobile tour modes and carry out regular performances in rural areas. In the long-term process of adapting to local customs, Yuediao theatrical troupes actively adjust the content and form of performances to fit the local folk scenes, adapt to the different performance needs of small rural festivals and large temple fairs, and gradually break free from the constraints of traditional Chinese opera in the Central Plains. At the same time, the support of local clans and gentry for folk opera, as well as the improvement of the apprenticeship system for folk opera, has led to a continuous increase in the number of Yuediao troupes and an increasingly stable inheritance system. They have gradually transformed from migrant troupes to resident troupes, completing the core transformation from “transit performances” to “rooting in the countryside”.

3. The localization generation of Yuediao singing in the middle reaches of the Han River from the perspective of cultural integration

3.1. Reconstruction of vocal base: The transition of sound quality from Zhongyuan Bangzi to Xianghe Yuediao

The localization of Yuediao singing in the middle reaches of the Han River is first reflected in the regional reconstruction of the vocal base, realizing the transformation from the high-pitched and vigorous Bangzi tune of the Central Plains to the gentle and long-lasting characteristic vocal tune of Xianghe. The original Yuediao of the Central Plains is based on the northern dialect, with a high-pitched and vigorous singing style, a strong rhythm, a regular and tense style, and is suitable for the aesthetic of the open northern region. After being introduced into the middle reaches of the Han River, influenced by local hydrology, climate, dialect phonetics, and folk music, there was a systematic improvement in vocal tone and vocal techniques. The dialect of the middle reaches of the Han River belongs to the southwestern Mandarin Hubei region, with a soft and gentle tone, without the jerky and firm characteristics of northern dialects, directly changing the pronunciation, rhyme and line style of singing. On the basis of inheriting the original Yuediao style framework, local artists weaken sharp high notes and firm jerks, optimize the vocal techniques of combining true and false sounds, and make the singing style have the dual characteristics of high-pitched transparency and lingering elegance. At the same time, incorporating the melodic elements of mountain songs, flower drum plays, and Xiangyang tunes from the Han River Basin, elongating the rhythm of the tail tune, and forming a melodious and soothing vocal feature with high tail notes, gradually shaping the Xianghe Yuediao vocal system that is different from Henan Yuediao, and constructing a unique Yuediao timbre base for the middle reaches of the Han River.

3.2. Accompaniment system adaptation: Regional instruments empower singing with local charm

The regional transformation of the accompaniment system in traditional Chinese opera is an important carrier for the localization and implementation of Yuediao singing. The adjustment of instrument configuration and performance techniques further strengthens the regional aesthetic characteristics of Han River Yuediao. The Central Plains Yue style accompaniment is centered around Bangzi and Banhu, with a strong rhythm and heavy tone, highlighting the tough texture of the cavity. After being introduced to the middle reaches of the Han River, Yuediao troupe artists combined local folk instrumental performance traditions to reconstruct the Yuediao accompaniment system. On the basis of retaining the core main instrument of the four-stringed instrument, they added commonly used local folk instruments such as Yueqin, bamboo flute, sheng, etc., weakening the strong rhythmic percussion of Bangzi and adding a soft and layered feeling to the instrumental accompaniment [4]. In terms of performance techniques, we abandon the original rapid and compact accompaniment rhythm and adapt to the local soothing and gentle singing rhythm, incorporating the sliding and vibrato performance techniques of Jingchu folk music to deeply match the accompaniment melody with the localized singing style. At the same time, combined with the unique playing style of folk gongs and drums in the Han River Basin, the rhythm arrangement of opera percussion music is optimized to meet the atmosphere requirements of local folk performance scenes. The localization and adaptation of the accompaniment system allows Yuediao singing to break free from the rigid characteristics of northern opera, forming a unique singing style that combines rigidity and softness, and conforms to the aesthetic and folk atmosphere of the Han River region.

3.3. Aesthetic core iteration: Regional culture shapes vocal emotional expression

The deep infiltration of regional culture promotes the localization and iteration of the aesthetic core of Yuediao singing, achieving a transition from northern narrative aesthetics to Han River local aesthetics. The singing style of Zhongyuan Yuediao focuses on the narrative of family and country, loyalty and righteousness, with strong and straightforward emotional expression, full of tension, and in line with the bold and simple humanistic temperament of the northern region. The middle reaches of the Han River have the regional characteristics of warm mountains and rivers, blending north and south. Local culture advocates a gentle, implicit, and simple realistic aesthetic style, while folk opera focuses more on the narrative expression of common life, local customs, and joys and sorrows. In the long-term localization development, the Han River Yuediao gradually weakened the grand and tragic emotional expression, optimized the melody rhythm and singing style, and adapted to the narrative of local life plays. Artists finely adjust the tone, speed, pitch fluctuations, and intensity of breath to delicately depict the everyday emotions of ordinary characters, such as endurance, tenderness, joy, and melancholy. They abandon the emotional expression of the original singing style, which is open and close, and strong and outward, and use a warm, introverted, delicate, realistic, and soothing natural singing style that conforms to the emotional cognition and aesthetic habits of local people [3]. For example, in rural-themed plays, the singing style is gentle and rounded, the emotional expression is subtle and sincere, without excessive exaggeration of tension, and is more in line with the simple texture of rural life; In folk sacrificial plays, the singing style is calm, solemn, melodious, and soothing, which is suitable for the folk core of praying for blessings, entertaining gods, and maintaining harmony with neighbors. At the same time, combining with the aesthetic preferences of local people, simplifying some complex formulaic singing styles, enhancing the popularity and transmission of singing styles, and deeply adapting Yuediao singing styles to the local cultural context of the Han River Basin, completing the transformation from foreign opera vocal styles to local folk vocal styles.

3.4. Integration of dialect phonology: Regional reshaping of pronunciation and rhythm

Dialects are the core underlying logic of localizing vocal arts. The phonological system of Southwest Mandarin in the middle reaches of the Han River has reshaped the pronunciation, rhyme, and intonation of Yuediao, becoming the most intuitive artistic feature that distinguishes it from Central Plains Yuediao [4]. The Central Plains Yuediao relies on the Central Plains Mandarin system, with a strong tone and distinct four-tone fluctuations. The pronunciation is firm and powerful, and the lines are mostly based on the tone of each character, with a regular and rigid rhythm. The dialects in core areas such as Xiangyang, Laohekou, and Gucheng in the middle reaches of the Han River belong to the Southwest Mandarin Hubei region, which has essential phonetic differences from the Central Plains Mandarin, providing a core phonetic foundation for the localization and reconstruction of Yue style singing. The overall tone of the local dialect is gentle and smooth, with gentle fluctuations in tone, without the rigid falling tone, hard bending, and strong jerking of northern dialects. The yin and yang tones are gentle and soft, with natural and smooth transitions between rising and falling tones. The pronunciation is rounded and relaxed, with weak spout strength. The spoken rhythm is gentle and relaxed, with a strong sense of daily life. At the same time, the local dialect retains a large number of Jingchu local spoken vocabulary, supporting words, and unique oral intonation and rhythm, forming an independent phonetic system that is different from Central Plains Mandarin. This phonetic difference directly promotes the comprehensive transformation of cross-tone pronunciation, rhyme, line tone, and supporting tone. In the long-term practice of local singing and intergenerational inheritance, Han River Yuediao artists

have gradually abandoned the rigid pronunciation and rigid rhyme patterns of Central Plains Yuediao, and fully adapted to the pronunciation habits of Southwest Mandarin and the Hubei region to reshape the vocal system. In terms of pronunciation processing, weaken the strong nozzle force and tight head force of the northern singing style, soften the sharp edges of the character sound, optimize the connection processing of the beginning, belly, and end of the character, make the character sound full, round, and transition naturally, and eliminate the rigid and abrupt auditory feeling; In terms of rhyme processing, we abandon the concise and straightforward short rhyme and direct contraction mode of the Central Plains Yuediao, adapt to the soothing and long oral rhythm of local dialects, extend the rhyme and drag, and make the residual rhyme of the lines long and coherent [5]. At the same time, the artist cleverly integrates the natural intonation and light-to-heavy rhythm of local daily spoken language into the singing melody, breaking the rigid phonological framework of native overtones. Based on the rhythm of dialect spoken language, the rhythm of supporting words, dragging, and pausing is fine-tuned, making the singing melody conform to the language habits and auditory cognition of local people. And the deep integration of dialect phonetics has enabled Han River Yuediao to break free from the phonetic barriers of foreign theatrical genres, achieving a deep adaptation between singing style and regional language and culture, forming a down-to-earth and localized style, greatly enhancing the dissemination and recognition of the theatrical genre in the local community.

4. Summary

This study confirms that the Han River system corridor provides natural spatial support for cross regional flow and global dissemination, and constructs a communication pattern of gathering along the river and spreading to rural areas; The settlement style migration of immigrants from the Central Plains during the Ming and Qing dynasties provided a core population carrier for the survival and intergenerational inheritance of Yuediao, promoting the integration of foreign opera into local community life; The local folk culture that blends north and south in the middle reaches of the Han River provides a stable cultural ecology for the transformation and development of the Yuediao theatrical troupes, as well as artistic improvement, and realizes the identity transformation from transit tours to local roots. Under the joint action of multiple factors, the middle reaches of the Han River Yuediao has completed a comprehensive localization reconstruction. Through reshaping the foundation of the vocal system, optimizing the accompaniment system, iterating the aesthetic core, and integrating dialect phonetics, it has departed from the artistic paradigm of Central Plains Yuediao and formed a Xianghe Yuediao vocal system that combines both northern and southern characteristics and is in line with the characteristics of the Han River region. This article breaks through the single research perspective of traditional Chinese opera art, constructs a localization research framework of “space population culture”, enriches the research results of basin opera and immigrant opera, and provides new research ideas for interpreting the internal logic of the integration of North-South opera culture.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Culture of the Body, Wordless Utterance: The "Activation" of Traditional Chinese Culture in Dance

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Abstract: China's excellent traditional culture is the spiritual root of the Chinese nation. It carries national values, aesthetic ideals and collective memory. Dance is a performing art based on the human body. So dance has become an important carrier of traditional culture. It inherits, transforms and activates traditional culture through body language. The so-called "activation" is not a simple copy of traditional cultural symbols. It is not a static display either. It is a way to take apart traditional resources and build them again in today's art context. In this way, traditional resources get new meaning in our time. This article starts with body culture. It analyzes three dimensions: movement form, dynamic image and spiritual core. It shows how dance awakens traditional culture through the body. It also explores how traditional culture changes in today's dance creation.

Keywords: Body culture; Traditional culture; Dance art; Activation; Body narrative

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1. Introduction

Dance uses human movements to express. The body is the material of dance creation. It is also the way culture is passed on. Susanne K.Langer said that dance is an "emotional language of body movements" [1]. Body movements are not only physical movements. They also show cultural ideas from outside. The "activation" in this article is not simple restoration or copying. Words cannot fully express traditional spirit. Dance can turn still cultural resources into living body language. This is how culture is activated.

Today, research on traditional culture and dance mostly looks at case studies, classical dance history, and the protection of non-heritage dance. From the "activation" point of view, there is still room to study how dance changes traditional culture today through body form, image creation and spiritual reading. So this article takes "body culture, silent speech" as its main view. It uses the four layers of dance: shape, spirit, rhythm and soul. It discusses movement form, dynamic image, shape and spiritual core. It explores the

practical way for dance to activate traditional culture.

2. Movement form of dance: the body translation of traditional philosophy

Traditional Chinese philosophy values “circle”. The idea of the circle goes through the Chinese view of the universe, life, and beauty. Zhou Yi says, “heaven is strong, and the way of heaven is round”. Old Chinese people believed that everything in the universe moves in circles and starts again. “Round” means perfection, harmony, and going back. The Confucian idea of moderation and the Taoist idea of the round universe both push this beauty. This idea did not stay in books. It settled in the body beauty of the Chinese nation. It can be seen in the movements of classical dance and folk dance. Dance uses body movement to turn the abstract idea of “circle” into visible action. In this way, traditional philosophy is activated.

2.1. The movement route of “three circles” in Chinese classical dance

After the body rhythm system of Chinese classical dance was built, the traditional “circle” idea was summed up in the “three circles” rule. They are the flat circle, the standing circle and the eight-character circle [2]. This rule became the core movement rule of classical dance. It shows the Confucian idea of moderation at the level of the body.

The flat circle is mostly used around the waist and shoulders at the same level. It looks like turning the waist between clouds. The standing circle moves in vertical space. It looks like a wheel. The eight-character circle moves like the number 8 lying down. It looks like a wind wheel or a fire wheel. The three circles do not stand alone. They work together and run through the whole classical dance method. The circle step is also a basic step. It keeps moving in circles. The dancer keeps circling in the stage space. In this way, the space also becomes round at the level of movement design.

This body movement logic is the physical form of the “round” idea in traditional culture. Confucian moderation opposes extremes, straightness and sharpness. It values subtlety, harmony and roundabout ways. Dancers do not need straight lines. Body arcs and leaning postures can show these unclear traditional ideas on stage. When the limbs join together, the audience can feel the beauty of the traditional nation. The philosophy in the old books comes out of the text and becomes a visible body culture.

2.2. The body law of “rounding” in folk dance

“Round” is also common in the folk dance of all Chinese ethnic groups. It comes from what working people do in daily life. In the Han Jiaozhou paddy song dance, the movement twists the waist and turns. The body keeps circling. The wrist keeps winding like a flower. The fan keeps moving in circles. In Mongolian dance, the arms move softly and roundly. It shows the sun and the moon turning. It also shows wind blowing grass and waves seen by nomads. In Tibetan dance, the knees keep bending and stretching. This forms a cycle. This rhythm carries the idea of life and rebirth in Tibetan culture. The circle in folk dance does not come from literati philosophy. It comes from daily life and folk belief. The circle dance that begins in a sacrificial ceremony shows respect for the cycle of heaven and earth. The work cycle slowly becomes a ring rhythm of the body. Folk dance activates the “round” culture rooted in folk life. The body is passed on from generation to generation. In this way, the traditional beauty hidden in folk habits keeps growing.

3. Dynamic images of dance movements: stage rebirth of traditional visual and artistic resources

A dynamic image is an artistic feeling built through body poses, stage pictures, and costumes. Dance uses the body as its medium. It takes visual images out and turns still images into living stage performances. In this way, old images become living body art. This is what I mean by "dancing the shape". It wakes old visual symbols on the stage.

3.1. Posture modeling and stage composition: from static cultural relics to living bodies

Dunhuang art is a bright part of China's traditional cultural treasures. In the Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang, tens of thousands of murals and colored sculptures have been preserved. They show the social life, religious beliefs, and the beauty of clothing in the Middle Ages. They are very precious image records. To activate Dunhuang culture, dance must turn the still images on the murals into flowing human performance.

In 1954, Mr. Dai Ailian created the dance "Flying in the Sky". It brought Dunhuang mural images on stage for the first time. The work takes out the elegant pose of the fairy in the mural. Long sleeves help show the flying image in the mural. This was the first stage change of the grotto images. In 1979, the big ethnic dance drama "Silk Road Flower Rain" reached the peak of Dunhuang dance creation. The drama dug deeply into mural materials. It brought back the classic dance pose "rebound lute". It created the unique "three bends" pose of Dunhuang art. The dance moves of playing the rebounding lute have a strong sense of beauty in the mural. The drama did not copy a single shape. It joined the still moments of the mural into a flowing dance. The characters in the mural walked out of the grotto. They acted and told stories on stage [3].

After "Silk Road Flower Rain", Mr. Gao Jinrong sorted out the poses and movements in the Dunhuang murals. He used the old materials of Western music and dance. He built a teaching system for Dunhuang dance. He put Dunhuang dance into the Chinese classical dance school. Since then, Dunhuang is not only a mural in the grotto. It has training materials, theories and stage works. It enters the classroom and the theater. It enters the public view.

Many other dance works also use poses from old paintings and sculptures. The creator does not copy the still shape. The creator looks for the culture behind the shape. The creator turns the still moment into a real action. In this way, the old cultural image is expressed.

3.2. Clothing props: Expand the cultural story of the body

Dance does not use only the human body. Costumes and props extend the dancer's body. They become important carriers of traditional culture. Old costumes and objects carry deep cultural meaning. When they meet the dancing body, they become part of the body story.

The long silk sleeves in Dunhuang dance come from the flying ribbons in the murals. The long silk leaves the body. They fly in the air with the dancer's movement. It shows the lucky clouds and flying images in the murals. The water sleeves and swords come from Chinese opera. The fans, handkerchiefs, and drums in folk dance are also old objects incorporated into dance. The props carry traditional cultural symbols. They work with the body movements to build cultural images.

The use of props cares about both spirit and form. It should not just pile up old symbols. The props should become part of the body's cultural expression [4].

3.3. Form norms of dance: absorption and reconstruction of traditional arts of martial arts and Chinese opera

Martial arts come from the traditional Chinese philosophy of life. They focus on training the body and the mind. Chinese opera puts singing, dance and acting together. It keeps many old dance forms. So it is called the "living fossil" of ancient dance. Both have mature body training systems and clear aesthetic ideas. After the People's Republic of China was founded, the development of the Chinese classical dance subject took a lot from martial arts and Chinese opera. It chose and rebuilt the traditional body culture. In this way, martial arts and Chinese opera culture were activated in our time. This subject is called "dance rhyme".

3.4. The absorption and spiritual translation of martial arts culture by dance

Martial arts are a body movement system of the Chinese nation. Martial arts have skills. They also carry traditional philosophical ideas. Martial arts care about the inside and the outside. They care about form and spirit. So martial arts and dance have much in common. Both use the human body as the carrier. Both care about the movement of the body, breath, and strength. But their aims are different. Martial arts aim at attack and defense. Dance aims at beauty. When dance activates martial arts culture, it does not copy the skills. It takes away the fighting function. It keeps the body skills and the ideas. Then it turns them into the body language of dance.

Chinese classical dance uses a lot of martial arts skills. Skills like turning over, spinning and sweeping legs come from martial arts flipping. For training with props, the martial arts sword becomes the classical sword dance. It keeps the charm of swordsmanship. It drops the fighting function. It strengthens the lyrical meaning. The step method takes ideas from martial arts to make the footwork of classical dance richer. The body method takes the martial arts idea "the waist is the axis." All movements start from the waist. The body drives the limbs.

Classical dance also learns the ideas of martial arts. It takes the theory of "three sections and six in one" and builds its own body beauty. The "three sections" divide the limbs into top joints, middle joints and root joints. The "six sections" divide them into the inner three and the outer three. The inner three are the heart and the mind, the mind and the breath, the breath and the strength. The outer three are the hands and feet, the elbows and knees, the shoulders and hips. This theory first served martial arts and techniques. It cares about the unity of body and mind. Classical dance takes this theory and turns it into training rules for the body and the mind. Dancers have to keep the mind, the breath, and the body together. They have to bring the body and the mind into one.

After this change, the strong spirit of martial arts comes into dance. The fine beauty of traditional dance also comes in. Together, they make the rhythmic beauty of classical dance.

3.5. The second awakening of dance to Chinese opera culture

Chinese opera came from the old songs and dances of early times. After thousands of years, many old dance elements are still kept in it. The work and the body in Chinese opera are the living remains of ancient dance after long change. But Chinese opera puts singing, reading, acting and fighting together. Its dance body serves the story. It depends on the script and the singing. It is not an independent dance art. In the 1950s, Mr. Ouyang Yuqian said that classical dance should learn from Chinese opera. Then classical dance began to look for resources in Chinese opera.

When dance activates Chinese opera culture, it revives old resources for the second time. Chinese opera dance is the first inheritance of ancient dance. The new Chinese classical dance subject takes away the singing and the reading of Chinese opera. It takes the core of the Chinese opera body. It refines and simplifies it. It rebuilds it. It sets up its own training and performance system. This system is the body rhyme school. It keeps the beauty that Chinese opera cares about: form and spirit, round flow, real and empty. Many classical dance movements come from the Chinese opera body. Examples are cloud hand, swallow crossing the forest and turning waist between clouds.

However, the body rhythm of classical dance does not copy the Chinese opera body directly. The Chinese opera body serves the characters. Its program is very strong. Classical dance takes away these limits. It changes the way of movement. It makes the dance more lyrical. It turns the Chinese opera program into a common dance body language. The body wisdom in Chinese opera leaves the opera stage. It stays alive in independent dance art. It first belonged to the body beauty of Chinese opera. In dance, it gets a new space to grow. In this way, Chinese opera body culture is activated in our time.

4. Spiritual interpretation of dance: national symbols continue in our time

The activation of traditional culture is not only about old objects and old skills. It also includes spiritual symbols. These symbols have settled in the collective memory of the nation. They have gone beyond the material things. They stand for the national spirit. This is the “soul dance”. Dance reads the national spirit behind the symbols with the body. In this way, the soul of the national culture still speaks in our time.

The Yellow River is a typical spiritual symbol of the Chinese nation. As the mother river, it carries the collective memory of the nation. It stands for the endless and strong national character. Long ago, it became a cultural symbol. It is not only a river on the map. Many kinds of dances have been created about the Yellow River. Each one shows the same image in its own body language. The classical dance “Yellow River” uses the strong body language of classical dance. The folk dance “Oriental Red” uses the simple and warm body language of folk dance. The modern ballet “Yellow River Soul” uses Western ballet skills and brings in the spirit of the Chinese nation. The modern dance “We Saw the River Bank” looks at the people and the ethnic history with modern body language. At the 11th Lotus Award, there was also a street dance “Yellow River”. It used the street dance language that young people know well to show the spirit of the Yellow River.

Different dances use different body language. They all point to the strong national spirit behind the Yellow River. With different body expressions at different times, this old national spirit stays deep in the hearts of today’s audience.

Other symbols and spirits, such as the five-star red flag and patriotism, also often appear in dance works. Dance does not use words to teach. It uses the body and the power of the group. It turns the spirit of the country into a feeling that the audience can feel. This spiritual activation does not mean repeating old movements. It means finding the national values behind the old symbols. Then it shows them with the life experience of today. In this way, the national spirit stays alive in the new era.

5. Conclusion

The body holds culture. Silent body movements carry the beauty, the philosophy, and the spirit that a nation has gathered for many years. To activate traditional culture in dance is to translate culture with the body. It

keeps the spiritual symbols in the national memory. It tells the story of the new era with the body [5].

"Activation" does not keep traditional culture in the past. It gives old culture new life today. Dance uses the body to build a bridge between the old and the new. In this way, old and distant traditional culture can come out of the museum and the old books. It can go on the stage. It can reach the people. In today's dance creation, we should keep using the body as a special cultural carrier. We should keep looking for China's fine traditional cultural resources. We should use the body to speak of the national culture. We should move national dance art forward. We should build solid national cultural confidence.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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The Challenges and Paths of Home-School-Society Collaborative Governance for High School Students' Physical Health in the Context of the New College Entrance Examination System

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Abstract: Under the new college entrance examination system, there have been numerous fragmented problems in the governance of students' physical health, such as unclear rights and responsibilities of the main entities, disconnection in the content of cultivation, and poor coordination in the field connection. Factors like family cognitive biases, imperfect school cultivation mechanisms, and insufficient community resource supply all jointly restrict the actual effectiveness of physical health cultivation. Relevant governance work needs to clearly define the boundaries of rights and responsibilities for the three types of entities (family, school, and community), establish a fixed information exchange and consultation mechanism, adapt the content of physical health cultivation to the academic rhythms of students in different grades, coordinate various types of public resources such as venues and human resources for the three types of entities to build a supporting system, comprehensively cover the three exercise scenarios of home, campus, and community, and reduce the loss of efficiency during the coordination process.

Keywords: New college entrance examination; Physical health of high school students; Collaborative governance of home, school and society; Physical fitness cultivation

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1. Introduction

The inclusion of physical health in the comprehensive evaluation system and academic proficiency examination of the new college entrance examination marks a shift in the cultivation of high school students' physical fitness from a single campus education task to a systematic governance effort involving multiple entities. In the past, the governance of high school students' physical health was mostly centered around schools, with insufficient participation from families and communities. Problems such as unclear boundaries

of rights and responsibilities among different entities, disjointed cultivation content, and poor information transmission have persisted for a long time, making it difficult to meet the requirements of physical fitness cultivation under the new college entrance examination evaluation system. A systematic review of the core dimensions and efficacy-influencing mechanisms of the home-school-community collaborative governance of high school students' physical health is conducted. The scope of rights and responsibilities of different entities and the cultivation direction are clarified, and optimized practical paths adapted to the academic rhythms of different grades are proposed. This can not only fill the gaps in current research on related governance systems but also provide a reference practical framework for regions to implement the new college entrance examination requirements for physical health assessment and effectively improve the physical health of high school students.

2. Core components of home-school-society collaborative governance for high school students' physical health in the context of the new college entrance examination

2.1. Division of responsibilities and authorities in collaborative governance

The reform direction of the new college entrance examination to incorporate physical health into the comprehensive evaluation system of students has raised higher requirements for the collaborative governance of students' physical health. Clearly defining the boundaries of responsibilities for different entities is the core prerequisite for resolving the fragmentation issues in past governance [1]. The family, as one of the core domains of students' growth, bears the responsibility of guiding students' daily physical behavior and habits. It actively provides the school with relevant information about students' innate physical conditions and their current physical states at different stages, and cooperates with the school to supervise students' completion of home exercise tasks. Considering the reality that the campus is the public scene where students spend the most time each day, the school assumes the core organizational responsibility for cultivating students' physical health during their time at school. It implements the basic tasks of offering full and complete physical education courses and conducting regular physical health monitoring, and actively shares the phased goals of students' physical health improvement with the family and the community. By leveraging the coverage attributes of community public services, the community assumes the responsibility of providing the supply of extracurricular physical health resources. It conducts regular maintenance of sports venues and supporting facilities open to high school students, providing suitable spaces and basic services for students to engage in extracurricular physical exercises [2].

2.2. Goal setting orientation for collaborative governance

The goal setting for the collaborative governance of students' physical health among schools, families, and society should be based on both the actual needs of students' growth and the policy orientation. From the perspective of students' physiological growth patterns, the core content of daily physical fitness improvement is the fundamental basis. Focusing on the steady improvement of core physical fitness indicators such as students' cardiopulmonary function, muscle strength, and body flexibility, the three parties (schools, families, and society) carry out corresponding cultivation and guidance work based on the physical exercise requirements in different scenarios, helping students gradually improve their weak physical fitness and insufficient athletic ability [3]. In line with the assessment requirements of the new college entrance

examination, achieving the physical education test standards is a phased explicit goal. It mainly focuses on the assessment content of the physical education subject in the academic level examination and the relevant scoring standards for physical health in the comprehensive evaluation system. The three parties simultaneously cultivate the direction and assessment requirements to enable students to gradually meet the various indicator requirements of the examination during their daily exercise, avoiding the unreasonable phenomenon of last-minute training before the exam. Based on the long-term needs of students' lifelong development, the cultivation of healthy habits is a latent long-term goal. It focuses on aspects such as the frequency of exercise, exercise methods, and exercise safety for guidance, helping students form long-term stable autonomous exercise habits and laying a solid foundation for their subsequent learning, life, and career development stages' health status.

3. The efficacy impact mechanism of home-school-society collaborative governance for high school students' physical health in the context of the new college entrance examination

3.1. Efficacy impact elements at the family level

The family serves as the fundamental domain for cultivating students' physical fitness, and its own characteristics have a direct impact on the implementation effect of collaborative governance. The orientation of family health concepts will directly affect students' emphasis on physical exercise. Families that prioritize academic performance will actively reduce students' spare-time exercise time and have difficulty cooperating with the home-based exercise guidance carried out by the school [4]. From the perspective of material support, family support for physical activities is an important prerequisite for students to carry out daily home-based exercises. Families with suitable exercise equipment and sufficient activity space can provide a more convenient environment for students to complete their daily exercise tasks and also lower the threshold for students to participate in exercise. From the perspective of behavioral demonstration, the willingness of parents to participate and accompany will have a subtle influence on the formation of students' exercise habits. Parents who are willing to actively participate in physical exercise can set a positive behavioral example for students and promptly guide students to correct their incorrect movements and bad habits during exercise [5].

3.2. Elements of school-level efficiency impact

As the core hub connecting families and communities, the daily operations of schools directly affect the actual efficiency of home-school-community collaborative governance. From the perspective of physical education curriculum design, schools regard the full implementation of various types of physical education courses as a basic nurturing platform. The richness of the course content and its compatibility with home and community exercise scenarios will directly influence the continuity of students' exercise in different fields, and also make the supporting guidance work of families and communities more comparable and standardized. Further observation reveals that the completeness of the physical fitness monitoring mechanism will have a direct impact on the rhythm of collaborative promotion. Schools regularly conduct physical fitness monitoring work and simultaneously provide the monitoring results to families and connect them with the community. This can enable all parties to promptly adjust personalized exercise guidance plans for students, reducing the efficiency loss caused by inconsistent training directions. From the perspective of information

transmission requirements for collaborative governance, the rationality of the frequency of home-school collaboration will also affect the effectiveness of collaborative implementation. Schools' fixed communication work with families related to physical education cultivation can timely grasp the actual status of students' home-based exercise, and also synchronize the information on available sports resources from the community to families in need, breaking through the information transmission barriers between different fields.

3.3. Elements of effectiveness at the community level

As an off-campus public space that connects the school and the family, the matching degree of public services provided by the community will directly affect the actual effectiveness of the collaborative governance between the school, the family, and the community. From the perspective of sports venue supply, the quality of the regular maintenance and operation of sports venues and supporting facilities that are open to high school students by the community directly determines the accessibility of students' independent exercise outside the school and can also provide stable support for the implementation of extracurricular exercise tasks assigned by the school. Further observation reveals that the richness of public sports activities organized by the community for the youth group will directly affect students' willingness to participate in extracurricular exercise and can also provide a public activity carrier for the collaborative cultivation work of different families. In combination with the implementation needs of off-campus physical fitness guidance, the popularity of physical health-related publicity and guidance carried out by the community for residents will directly reverse the incorrect concept of some families prioritizing academic performance over physical fitness cultivation, and can also create an appropriate social cognitive atmosphere for the collaborative promotion of the three parties (school, family, and community), reducing the loss of effectiveness caused by cognitive deviations among different entities.

4. Optimization practice pathways for home-school-society collaborative governance of students' physical health in the context of the new college entrance examination

4.1. Clarify the responsibilities of the parties, and build a collaborative interaction linkage

Clarifying the boundaries of responsibilities for the three types of parties is the core prerequisite for resolving the fragmentation problem of past governance. The family assumes the responsibility of guiding students' daily physical behavior habits, actively providing the school with relevant information about students' innate physical conditions and their current physical status, cooperating with the school to supervise students' completion of home exercise tasks, not arbitrarily reducing students' after-school exercise time, and actively providing suitable home exercise support conditions for students. The school assumes the core organizational responsibility for students' physical development during school hours, implementing the basic tasks of offering full courses of physical education and conducting regular physical fitness monitoring, actively providing the family and the community with the phased goals of students' physical fitness improvement, not arbitrarily squeezing out the teaching time of physical education courses. The community assumes the responsibility of providing resources for physical health outside the school, conducting regular maintenance of sports venues and supporting facilities open to high school students, providing suitable spaces and basic services for students to engage in outdoor sports exercises, not arbitrarily restricting the access rights of

high school students to public sports venues. Based on the information transmission needs of collaborative governance, establish a fixed online information exchange platform, have school staff responsible for the daily operation and maintenance of the platform, update the information in the platform regularly, including students' physical fitness monitoring results at school, core contents of physical education courses, home exercise guidance plans, and relevant information about the community's open sports resources. Families can provide feedback on the actual status of students' home exercise and related demands in the platform, and the community can update the organization arrangements of public sports activities and adjustments of venue maintenance notifications in the platform, breaking down the information transmission barriers among the three parties, reducing the loss of efficiency caused by information asymmetry. From the perspective of promoting long-term collaboration, hold two tripartite collaborative meetings every semester, with the participants consisting of the school's physical education research leaders, parent representatives, and community public service leaders. The meeting focuses on discussing the common problems existing in the current stage of students' physical fitness cultivation, jointly adjusting the physical fitness cultivation guidance plans in different scenarios, and negotiating the direction of subsequent stage's collaborative promotion, not arbitrarily changing the meeting time and core topics, ensuring that the demands of the three parties can all be fully reflected, providing a stable mechanism support for the long-term implementation of collaborative governance.

4.2. Adapt to the college entrance examination scenario and optimize the content of physical fitness training

The new college entrance examination incorporates physical fitness into the comprehensive evaluation and the physical education academic level examination. Based on the academic scheduling rhythm and physical growth pattern of high school students at different grades, the content of physical fitness training is designed in a stratified manner, taking into account both the daily physical fitness improvement and the uniformity of examination requirements. For students who have just entered the high school stage, the academic pressure has not yet reached its peak. The basic physical fitness ability training is designed as the core content, and the training content focuses on general qualities such as endurance, strength, and flexibility. The exercise intensity is controlled within a medium range, and the action norms of basic sports examination projects are also integrated into the training to help students lay a solid foundation for physical fitness in daily exercises and familiarize themselves with the action requirements of related examination projects in advance, avoiding the physical burden caused by concentrated exam preparation later. Considering the actual situation where the academic tasks of the second year of high school gradually increase and the available free exercise time for students is somewhat compressed, the content of physical fitness training and the core examination projects are deeply integrated. The proportion of non-essential general quality training is reduced, and targeted fragmented training plans that match the examination content are set. The exercise intensity is adjusted dynamically according to the individual physical condition of students, and it will not occupy too much of their after-school time. It can also ensure that students' physical fitness remains stable and steadily meets the requirements of various physical education abilities. In response to the actual situation where the academic pressure of the senior year of high school reaches its peak and the preparation time is tight, the content of physical fitness training is adjusted to a low-intensity, highly adapted relaxation training mode combined with the consolidation training of examination projects. Daily training mainly focuses on relieving shoulder and neck fatigue and maintaining basic movement abilities. In the two months before the sports examination,

the duration of corresponding project consolidation training is appropriately increased. The exercise intensity is controlled within the range that does not affect the study of daily cultural courses, avoiding injuries or excessive fatigue caused by exercise that may delay the progress of studies. The school is responsible for uniformly outputting the training content guidelines for different grades, clearly defining the training priorities and intensity requirements at different stages. The family follows the guidance content to supervise students to complete the training tasks in the home stage, flexibly adjusting the training time according to the student's daily study rhythm, and will not arbitrarily interrupt the regular training arrangement of the student. The community relies on public sports venues to provide spatial support for students to conduct corresponding training outside the school, and provides corresponding sports facilities according to the needs of different stages of training content, to provide convenient conditions for students to complete the training tasks outside the school.

4.3. Integrate public resources and improve the collaborative support system

By coordinating and integrating various available resources of the three types of entities, a more solid implementation support can be provided for the cultivation of students' physical health. From the perspective of resource coordination for venues, the relevant entities uniformly sort and register the idle sports equipment at home, the specialized sports venues of the school, and the public sports spaces in the community. Relying on the already established online information exchange platforms, they update the opening hours and usage rules of various venues and equipment. Students and parents can independently make appointments for the corresponding resources based on their own exercise needs, reducing the contradiction of incompatible empty and usage demands among different venues. Further observation reveals that the integration of human resources provides professional guidance support for physical health cultivation in different scenarios. Schools schedule the extracurricular guidance time of in-service physical education teachers uniformly and regularly conduct explanations on movement norms and exercise plan answers in community public venues and online platforms. They also recruit parents and community residents with relevant sports qualifications to join the volunteer guidance team to provide targeted exercise guidance assistance for students with different needs. In line with the actual guarantee requirements for students' sports safety, differentiated complementary services further reduce the threshold for students to participate in sports activities. Schools formulate exclusive exercise adjustment plans for students with congenital physical defects or chronic diseases, families monitor the physical condition during daily exercise, and the community equips basic emergency drugs and first aid equipment in public sports venues to provide basic safety guarantees for students to carry out various sports activities. The relevant entities also regularly collect usage feedback on various resources and make dynamic adjustments to the structure of resource supply, giving priority to ensuring the supply of resources for frequently used sports projects and gradually eliminating idle resources with extremely low utilization rates, thereby improving overall resource utilization efficiency. Based on the support system formed by resource integration, the implementation obstacles of physical health cultivation in different scenarios will be greatly reduced, the accessibility of students to various sports activities will be significantly improved, and it will also provide stable resource support for the long-term promotion of the collaborative governance of home, school, and community.

5. Conclusion

The cultivation of students' physical health throughout their entire growth period is an important task. The reform of the new college entrance examination evaluation system provides an important policy opportunity for the iteration of governance models. The implementation of the collaborative governance model involving families, schools, and society requires three types of entities to form a stable linkage mechanism based on clear boundaries of rights and responsibilities. This mechanism should not only adapt the academic rhythm and physical growth patterns of students at different stages to adjust the cultivation content, while also taking into account multiple goals such as improving physical fitness, meeting examination standards, and developing healthy habits, but also break through information barriers, coordinate various public resources, and reduce the loss of cultivation connections between different fields. This governance model not only helps students adapt to the physical fitness assessment requirements of the new college entrance examination, but also guides students to form long-term and stable autonomous exercise habits, laying a foundation for their lifelong healthy development, and also provides new ideas for the optimization of physical health cultivation work in the basic education stage.

Disclosure statement

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Vegetal Witnessing and Historical Narrative in *Silent Friend*

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Abstract: A century passes through the botanical garden in Ildikó Enyedi's *Silent Friend* (2025), but no character remembers all three periods. The ginkgo seems to provide that missing continuity. Yet its position as a witness depends on the film, not on evidence that a tree can recall human events. Reading the stories of Grete, Hannes, and Professor Wong alongside the garden's changing rules and the film's contrasting photographic formats, this essay examines how historical connections are made without a shared human narrator. Ricoeur's account of testimony, work on cultural memory, and Marder's thinking about vegetal life help distinguish persistence from remembrance. The argument is that Enyedi gives the ginkgo a place in historical narration while withholding the voice and knowledge a conventional witness would possess. Its silence changes how the human stories are viewed; it does not resolve what plant experience is.

Keywords: Vegetal witnessing; Historical narrative; Cultural memory; Botanical garden; Film narration

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1. Introduction

Three different ginkgo trees played the single, century-old tree in *Silent Friend*. Enyedi and her crew looked for specimens with a distinctive low, almost horizontal branch, then relied on the resemblance to make their separate bodies appear continuous [1]. This detail could pass unnoticed by anyone watching the film. For a study of its historical narration, however, it is revealing. The endurance on screen is something cinema has patiently assembled.

Enyedi places her three stories in the botanical garden of the University of Marburg. In 1908, Grete, represented as the university's first woman student, uses photography to pursue an interest in plants. The student Hannes encounters a geranium through Gundula's experiments in 1972; his curiosity grows in ways he hardly anticipates. In 2020, COVID-19 interrupts the work of Professor Wong, a neuroscientist from Hong Kong, and leaves him spending time with the old ginkgo [2]. They do not know one another. Neither has access to the other's life, and their encounters with plants differ considerably.

The festival synopsis presents the tree as a witness to human change. That is an attractive description, though it carries a problem: surviving an event is not the same as remembering it. The ginkgo offers neither an account of Grete's difficulties nor an explanation of Wong's experiment.

Rather than attribute a hidden archive to the tree, I read its witnessing as a relation constructed between the recurring garden and the spectator. We recognize what the characters cannot: the ground beneath their feet has hosted other lives and other ideas about nature. How the film grants us this knowledge, without pretending to grant the tree a human consciousness, is the question pursued here.

2. A garden that keeps no records

To call someone a witness ordinarily implies more than physical presence. Ricoeur [3], discussing testimony in the relation between memory and history, considers the movement from a person's recollection to a claim that others may examine. A witness can tell a story, be questioned about it, or encounter competing accounts. The ginkgo cannot enter that exchange. Nothing in its visible age allows an observer to recover, unaided, what a woman thought in 1908 or why a visiting scientist acted as he did in 2020. What the tree contributes is a living continuity against which cinematic accounts of those years can be placed.

The botanical garden itself is hardly untouched nature. Someone has planted, fenced, maintained, and named what grows there. Plants keep growing in ways that do not always answer to those decisions, but the arrangement of the grounds is also a social arrangement.

Enyedi's account of the production includes a small, telling contrast. For the 1908 scenes, the grass is protected by low fences. Students in the 1970s, by contrast, are at ease sitting across the lawns [4]. It is easy to miss the change while following the characters. Once noticed, it gives history a material scale: a boundary once respected almost automatically has ceased to organize ordinary movements. The shifts in dress and hairstyle reinforce the difference, yet the garden remains recognizable enough for us to compare one use of space with another. Continuity and change are registered together, rather than assigned to separate historical illustrations.

Assmann [5] treats places and images as important supports for cultural remembering. The garden can function in this way for spectators, particularly because we repeatedly return to it after moving through time. Still, it would be misleading to identify it with an archive. Gardens preserve some things by removing others; their apparent stability comes from constant work, and living growth is not a reliable record of why people behaved as they did.

This limitation matters. The earlier inhabitants have disappeared. Their concerns survive only through the film's reconstruction, which necessarily selects details and leaves others outside the frame. The tree does not repair those omissions. Indeed, its continued presence makes the missing human voices more apparent.

3. Three historical ways of looking

Grete's work with a camera in 1908 is bound up with the question of who may produce knowledge. She wishes to look closely at plants, but the university around her treats a woman's scientific ambition as an exception. This is more than a backdrop to the plot. The institution is willing to classify and display forms of life while imposing restrictions on a person who hopes to study them. Her photography unsettles that division. As Garner [6] notes, the close photograph can attend to an individual specimen differently from an

illustration organized to show a general type. A camera does not free Grete from the social rules she faces; it offers her a practical way of developing an observation of her own. The film's interest is not merely that an image gets made, but that a particular observer insists on making it.

Yet the photograph is no transparent access to a plant. Distance, framing, and the choice of what deserves attention have already shaped the record. Grete can show features that a conventional illustration might overlook without capturing the experience, if any, of being the photographed organism.

The 1972 story starts in a looser register. Hannes is drawn into Gundula's attempt to investigate whether plants respond to the world around them; before long, the geranium holds his attention for reasons that seem to exceed the assignment. Instead of an ancient tree bearing the weight of history, there is an everyday plant that requires regular care. Hannes's awkwardness makes the encounter persuasive. The less dramatic the geranium appears, the more conspicuous his changed conduct becomes. Garner emphasizes the film's interest in the uncertain possibilities of communication across living forms. What we can safely say is narrower: Hannes comes to regard a plant as something worth waiting for, rather than a piece of the room's furnishings.

Enyedi links the early 1970s to experiments with perception and with inherited ideas about humanity's place in nature. The crowded, accessible lawn belongs to that atmosphere, though the freedom to experiment is not proof of success. A participant hoping to receive an answer may interpret any irregularity as a reply. The film allows this uncertainty to remain close to the pleasure of trying. Its interest is as much in the human willingness to attend as in the possibility that the geranium attends in return.

By 2020, the language has changed again. Wong brings scientific equipment to his investigation of the ginkgo after the pandemic disrupts his work on infant cognition. The situation gives his inquiry an emotional urgency absent from a laboratory description. He is far from home; the nearly deserted university no longer provides the ordinary social exchanges that accompany research. A signal registered by an instrument may be worth investigating, but it cannot be translated automatically into the familiar terms of friendship, intention, or feeling. His experiment sits at that uncomfortable point between a measurable response and the meaning a lonely observer wishes it could carry.

The caretaker's suspicion of Wong adds another constraint. As Garner observes, mistrust complicates their dealings; the professor cannot treat the garden as if it were his private laboratory. He needs another person to permit, or at least understand, what he is doing. The wish to cross a boundary between species is thus entangled with a much more familiar difficulty of communicating across human differences.

There is no simple ascent from Grete's camera through Hannes's geranium to Wong's apparatus. Each has a different means of attending to plants, and each confronts particular forms of resistance. What changes across the century is not the arrival of a final explanation. It is the range of questions people feel entitled, or compelled, to ask.

4. Editing a century

The historical periods are distinguished by their photographic textures: black-and-white 35 mm for 1908, color 16 mm for 1972, and digital cinematography for 2020. These are contemporary choices about representing earlier years, not surviving images from those years. The grain of film may encourage us to feel close to the past, but its texture has been deliberately made to do so. That distinction is essential in a work so concerned with observation.

The stories also depend on how they are placed beside one another. Bordwell [7] describes film narration in terms of the cues through which viewers construct relations and events. No protagonist in *Silent Friend* could supply a remembered account joining 1908, 1972, and 2020. Enyedi instead wrote the timelines separately, then allowed their echoes and differences to meet in the editing [8]. The result is deliberately incomplete. One story does not conclude by explaining another; an old corner of the garden simply returns, now occupied by people who have no knowledge of those previously seen there. We carry the earlier image forward. For a moment we see more of the place's human history than any of its present inhabitants can see.

That privilege belongs to the spectator, not to an imagined memory inside the ginkgo. Editing can move between decades almost instantly; the growth of a tree cannot. The film invites us to feel the discrepancy without trying to overcome it.

Marder [9] argues for understanding vegetal existence on its own terms rather than reducing plants to useful objects. In *Silent Friend*, the ginkgo's longer duration puts human commitments into a different proportion. Careers and private preoccupations fill a person's days, whereas the tree persists through changes in what the university considers normal. Yet viewers never experience those years as a tree would. We receive a few carefully chosen intervals, with enormous stretches left unshown. The production's three ginkgos make the paradox almost tangible: cinema produces a sense of continuous vegetal time from several distinct organisms.

Erll's [10] account of memory as culturally mediated is helpful here. Repeated locations, changes in image quality, and the spectator's own recollection organize the film's past into a meaningful pattern. The garden gives comparison a place to begin, not a standpoint from which everything can finally be known. Historical distance remains visible in the differences between the stories, and in what each leaves unsaid.

5. The silence that matters

Enyedi could have supplied a voice for the ginkgo, or imagined a sequence revealing the world as the tree experiences it. She chose not to. In her statement for the Venice Film Festival, she refuses to present a tree's inner perspective as something a human filmmaker can know. That decision is central to the film's modesty. The camera may linger on a plant, but looking closely is not the same as speaking for it.

Nagel's [11] discussion of the difficulty of grasping another creature's subjective experience offers a useful comparison, with one important qualification. His argument concerns an animal and begins from a discussion of conscious experience. Whether plants have anything comparable remains disputed; the essay about bats cannot establish an inner life for a ginkgo. Used carefully, however, the analogy marks a limit in Wong's work and in the film itself. Equipment may reveal responses, and attentive observation may reshape a person's conduct. Neither finding warrants the confident claim that the observer has arrived inside the plant's world. Enyedi's restraint leaves room for curiosity without manufacturing an answer.

There is also an ethical difference between granting the tree significance and making it serve as a spokesperson for the three human stories. A talking tree might tidy up the century with a judgment about progress, isolation, or human error. This one does not. The viewer must live with the absence of that verdict.

Vegetal witnessing, in this reading, names a limited but consequential role. A living organism outlasts successive visitors; the garden's customs alter around it; and cinema brings those otherwise separate moments into contact. The ginkgo cannot authenticate the film's account of the past. What it can do, by remaining silent within that account, is keep us from treating the human view as the only possible measure of time.

6. Conclusion

The three stories in *Silent Friend* are connected without a family history, a common narrator, or an eyewitness who can speak for the century. Grete's photographs, Hannes's attention to a geranium, and Wong's investigation of the ginkgo each belong to a different moment in the history of looking at plants. The botanical garden supplies a setting whose rules and occupants change, while the film's images allow viewers to compare what none of the characters can remember together. Even the central tree's apparent continuity is the outcome of casting and editing rather than the record of a single filmed organism.

Calling the ginkgo a witness remains worthwhile if the word is not pushed too far. The film gives its enduring presence historical force, but does not turn that presence into testimony. The distance between those two things—between staying and remembering—is where its most thoughtful account of human and vegetal life takes shape.

Disclosure statement

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The Reconstruction of Body Space and the Emergence of Female Subjectivity in The Color Purple

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Abstract: Published in 1982, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* is widely regarded as a landmark work in black feminist literature. This novel explores the struggle of Black women under the triple oppression of race, gender and class. Through vivid character images and highly infectious narratives, Walker showcases their efforts to survive, resist oppression and regain their self-identity. This article employs spatial theory to examine the process of Black women from the violated private space to the subjective space of self-reconstruction. The research focus lies in the awakening, liberation and reconstruction of the body space. Celie's early life reflected the spatial oppression faced by Black women. Her physical autonomy and emotional well-being have been repeatedly violated, plunging her into silence and self-denial. However, Walker does not simply portray women as victims of oppression. Instead, she demonstrates how they gradually gain control over their lives and rebuild their inner worlds again. It is Celie's transformation that also highlights the connection between personal growth and social independence. As she develops her sense of self, she begins to challenge the restrictions that are imposed on her. Walker further emphasizes the importance of economic independence and professional development in women's pursuit of autonomy. Through her work and financial self-sufficiency, Celie gains magnified control over her life. She also rebuilds her relationships with people around her and develops a stronger sense of belonging within her community. All these changes explain one thing: Celie's body space has been reshaped. Those resonant characters, unique narrative forms, and a powerful feminist perspective make Walker's exploration of women's resistance in body politics and the process of self-reconstruction in body space more vivid. *The Color Purple* showcases the process from collapse to reconstruction of black women in the dimension of body space, and it has thus become a classic.

Keywords: *The Color Purple*; Spatial theory; Feminism; Body as space

Online publication: June 30, 2026

1. Introduction

The Color Purple is one of the most significant works by African American author Alice Walker. The

novel follows a Black girl named Celie, suffering physical and psychological abuse from her father during childhood. These experiences shape her into a submissive and passive woman. However, her life begins to change when her relationships with other women change, including Shug, Sophia, and her sister Nettie. Their support helps Celie challenge patriarchal authority and overcome years of oppression. Through this process, she gradually gains control over her body and spirit again and begins to reconstruct her body space. Current scholarly research on *The Color Purple* primarily emphasizes feminism, trauma studies, coming-of-age narratives, narratology, and postcolonialism [1]. However, the application of spatial criticism theory to this novel remains underdeveloped.

2. Body as an important space

"Spatial criticism", which is a term that emerged from the "spatial turn" in 20th-century humanities and social sciences, emphasizes the special concept that space is not a neutral vessel in nature but a structure continuously shaped and encoded by power relations. In the development of spatial criticism, Henry Lefebvre is undoubtedly the most significant person and his "body as space" became a key concept. He argued that "each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space [2]."

With this theoretical frame, the body is directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it [3]. As Henri Lefebvre argues, the body is simultaneously subjected to social discipline and capable of producing space, functioning as a creative source through which space is appropriated, lived, and transformed [2]. There is no doubt that Foucault's discussion of "disciplining the body" in Discipline and Punish further reveals the close connection between the body and political structures. "Women are defined as objects, as mere bodies, and… regarded as such by others, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention… the objectifying regard… can account for the spatial modality [4]." Feminist spatial theory further stresses that, for women, the body is not just a biological entity, but a "possessed space" continually defined by multiple essences, including violence, gender norms, domestic institutions, and the social gaze. For Black women, the body is not only disciplined by patriarchy but shaped by racism into a "possessed space." Within this theoretical framework, through Celie's process of losing, gaining, and reconstructing control over her body space, Alice Walker illustrates the dual oppression Black women endure from both gender and racial discrimination, while simultaneously constructing an idealized path of self-rescue for Celie as a representative figure of oppressed Black women. Celie's body space thus becomes the intersection of multiple forms of oppression; examining her subjectivity through this lens is not only methodologically feasible but also allows a deeper articulation of the novel's internal logic and political significance.

3. Disempowerment of body space

Celie's loss of control over her body space is first and most acutely manifested in her loss of sexual autonomy. At the age of fourteen, she repeatedly suffers abuse at the hands of her stepfather, "then he push his thing inside my pussy. When that hurt, I cry. He started to choke me, saying You better shut up and get used to it." "I'm big. I can't move fast enough[5]." Even her own visual agency is controlled by others, "He beat me today cause he say I winked at a boy in church. I may have got somethin in my eye, but I didn't wink.[5]" This situation persists until Celie turns twenty, when, under her father's arrangement, she marries Mr. ___. Even after marriage, Celie still lacks the right to decide whether to engage in sexual activity, and she

merely endures it submissively, “I lay there thinking about Nettie while he on top of me, wonder if she safe. [5]” Celie’s prolonged loss of sexual autonomy --- her inability to refuse her stepfather’s violent intrusions and her lack of agency over Mr. ___’s possession of her body -- represents a fundamental collapse of the boundaries of her body space, as sexual consent is a crucial component of bodily sovereignty.

As Judith Butler observes [6], violent discipline shapes women’s bodies into compliant and governable forms; in Celie’s case, this discipline reaches an extreme through coercive possession, leading her to internalize the view of her body as an extension of another’s property. The body serves as a surface upon which culture and power inscribe their meanings [7]. The body is not only inscribed, marked, engraved by social pressures external to it but is the product, the direct effect, of the very social constitution of nature itself. Sexual violence is the most destructive mode of inscription, marking Celie’s body with shame, silence, and lack of sovereignty, rendering her unable to perceive herself as a subject. As Althusser notes, “the soul can only think insofar as it is affected by the movements and impressions of the body; the soul not only accompanies the body, it resides within it, and the integration of soul and body precedes any distinction [8].” Consequently, Celie’s soul was subjugated by her stepfather; she succumbed to patriarchal authority and was even stripped of the ability to resist. Thus, in the first half of the novel, the loss of sexual autonomy is not only the most striking manifestation of Celie’s loss of control over her own bodily space, but also the fundamental reason for her inability to assert her own agency.

Celie’s loss of bodily autonomy is also reflected in the fact that the labor she performs within a space controlled by patriarchy does not belong to her. Marxist feminism argues that when a person is deprived of the right to enjoy the fruits of her own labor, this effectively means that her bodily space does not belong to her. Their bodies have become places of dispossession, dedicated to domestic labor. Celie shoulders every aspect of maintaining the household--cooking, cleaning, caring for the children, and upholding her husband’s social image. Yet this labor neither constitutes her sense of identity nor brings her any tangible rewards. As Silvia Federici observes, “The unpaid labor of women has been the pillar of capitalist accumulation. [9]” Women’s bodies undertake the labor necessary for social reproduction, but such labor has long been uncompensated and appropriated by patriarchal structures. In Celie’s case, this dynamic is particularly pronounced: her work is regarded merely as a natural extension of male life order, constructing her body as a “serving body” rather than as an autonomous producer. Simone de Beauvoir’s notion of women being fashioned as “the Other of the Other” [10] is likewise confirmed in Celie -- her existence is defined by service to others, with both body and labor divorced from subjectivity. The expropriation of labor thus constitutes another crucial dimension of Celie’s loss of control over body space: she cannot decide who may touch her body, nor can she determine the ownership of her bodily labor’s products.

With both sexual and labor rights over her body space expropriated, Celie’s linguistic space is also erased. Her only outlet for expression is the letters she writes to God. From her conversations with Shug, it is evident that, at the time of her loss of bodily autonomy, Celie’s image of God is that of a distant, indifferent white male. He “doesn’t seem to listen to your prayers,” “just sit up there glorying in being deaf.” This imagined figure reveals the double exclusion embedded in the discursive structure of Black women: as a Black person, she is unheard by white culture; as a woman, she is unheard by patriarchy. Her voice is denied, and silence is consequently constructed as a necessary mode of survival for Black women. As Spivak notes, “subaltern cannot speak [11]”; Celie’s letters become a monologue that can only be received in silence, rather than a voice that enters the public discourse. Writing to “God” thus manifests a forcibly internalized

discursive space: she can only address an authority that does not respond, which most clearly illustrates how the expropriation of her body space compresses her linguistic space.

4. The awakening and reconstruction of body space and subjectivity

Celie's body space begins to undergo transformation, primarily due to the emergence of Shug Avery. Even before Shug physically appears before her, she exists as a symbol of awakening within Celie's consciousness. It is precisely the presence of this nascent consciousness that makes subsequent awakening possible. When Celie first hears the name Shug Avery from Mr. ___ and sees her photograph, she believes Shug is "the most beautiful woman I ever saw. She more pretty than my mama. She bout ten thousand times more prettier than me. I see her there in furs. Her face rouge. Her hair like somethin tail." During sexual encounters with Mr. ___, although Celie does not desire such acts, she refrains from resistance because she thinks that "I know what he doing to me he done to Shug Avery and maybe she like it" Celie "put my arm around him." Celie's curiosity about Shug stems from her admiration for Shug's rebellious nature. In this sense, Shug appeared as a symbol even before she physically entered the story, representing a form of female existence that transcends patriarchal norms. When this projection came to fruition as she finally entered Celie's life, Celie begins to reclaim control over her body, her desires, and her voice through real-life interactions, thereby achieving her latent awakening.

The awakening of Celie's body space was not something deeply hidden in her heart and innate, but was catalyzed by others. In the novel, the three female characters around Celie build an "awakening matrix" for her, making her awakening possible. First up is Shug. Shug is both a lover and a mentor, guiding her from the silence of her body to self-awareness of it. Celie's sister, Nettie, conveys information about the outside world to Celie through letters. This information made Celie realize for the first time that there were other physical worlds beyond the patriarchal space and that there were other possibilities in life. The confrontation between Sofia and her husband Harpo provides a practical model for Celie's physical resistance. The words, deeds and experiences of the three of them constantly reminded Celie, "You must fight them." Celie thus realized that female obedience is not a predestined fate, and physical obedience is not a matter of course. Celie's experience coincides with that of feminist spatial theory, that is, the liberation of the body is often achieved through "the subject model borrowed from others", and in this process, the mutual gazing, imitation and dependence among women are the key mechanisms for the generation of subjectivity. It is precisely these factors that have provided Celie's physical awakening with emotional support, behavioral motivation, and practical examples. The interwoven influences of Shug, Sofia, and Nettie have truly affected this compliant black woman. All these factors made it possible for her to imagine and try another way of physical existence in such a repressive situation.

Apart from the most crucial factor of friendship among women, there are also some other objects that constantly inspire Celie's awareness of her own body space. Among all the objects, the razor is the most important and shows the most obvious change. The razor represents Celie's own interest - cutting others' hair -- and also marks her personal space. In the image of the razor, she confirmed her own value and was able to establish an equal and fulfilling connection with others. However, one day her stepfather brutally invaded her territory under the pretext of "asking Celie to cut his hair for him". After that, the razor was entangled with "sexual violence" for her and became a devastating memory. This experience also symbolizes

the deprivation of her bodily autonomy. The razor began to become a symbol of fear and a tangible symbol of patriarchal violence and male control. But this fear wasn't always lurking in Celie's heart. When she discovered that her husband had been hiding letters sent by Nettie, for the sake of family bonds, the image of the razor transformed for the second time. At this point, the razor was no longer a symbol of fear and patriarchal violence, but became a tool for defending family connections, reclaiming the right to know, and taking control instead of being at others' mercy. This flip marked a turning point in her awakening to bodily autonomy: the razor went from being "something used to control her" to "a power she commanded." In other words, the razor wasn't just a tool for revenge--it became a symbolic milestone in reclaiming her body space. This demonstrates that Celie acknowledged her right to resist, and that her body was no longer just a site for enduring violence but a being with agency.

Celie's subjective initiative after awakening was the decisive factor that enabled her to reconstruct her body space, and the most obvious manifestation of this initiative was the emergence of her interest in sewing. After leaving Mr.___, Celie moved into Shug's home. Here she fell in love with making trousers. The work she does is not only cutting but also designing. Pants were originally supposed to be a symbol of male culture, but Walker let Celie take control of them. To some extent, this indicates Walker's transcendence and redefinition of the patriarchal space. Celie picked up a pair of scissors that resembled a razor and created her own work of art, achieving both material and spiritual success. This behavior indicates that her body no longer submits to others but has become a subject capable of creating meaning and economic value. She escaped from the patriarchal space and from then on no longer worked passively but actively created. In this kind of production, she established her own subjectivity, gained social recognition and economic autonomy. As Grosz argues, the body is a cultural surface that can be inscribed and reinscribed [7]; Celie's process of designing and making trousers demonstrates her subjective initiative in writing about her body space. This process not only shaped the meaning of her body but also projected her physical space onto the external social domain, thus enabling her to complete the transformation from inner awakening to external practice. In this sense, sewing not only means making a living, but also means that Celie has gained physical value, identity and spatial sovereignty. Therefore, Celie's mastery of the skill of sewing is a sign of the successful reconstruction of her body space.

5. Conclusion

Through the portrayal of Celie's arduous process from losing her body space to reshaping her own subjectivity, Walker profoundly reveals in *The Color Purple* the process by which women's body space exerts power as patriarchy and the efforts and significance of women regaining their own subjectivity. At the beginning of the text, Celie's body became an "occupied space" under the dual pressure of patriarchy and race. She was not only deprived of her verbal power and economic power, but most importantly, the inherent autonomy of her body was also taken away. All of these constitute a cruel reality, that is, the loss of her own subjectivity. Yet, supported by a female community including Shug, Sofia, and Nettie, Celie gradually breaks her silence and, through acts such as resistance with the razor, creative labor in sewing, and the awakening of desire, achieves a fundamental transformation of body space from "other-possessed" to "self-governed." This process of reconstruction is not only a form of personal liberation but also reflects a pathway for Black women to generate subjectivity amid structural oppression. Through the metaphor of body space, the novel concretizes the intertwined oppressions of gender, race, and class, while the reshaping of the body resonates

with the core concerns of feminist spatial theory: space is not a static container but a dynamic field that can be recoded through resistance, creation, and relationality. Through sewing, Celie was able to achieve financial independence and also find emotional connections in love and mutual support. Her body thus transformed from a disciplined subject into a creative subject space with subjective initiative.

Therefore, *The Color Purple* tells not only a story about the growth and resistance of individuals, but also deeply reveals the intrinsic connection between body politics and spatial autonomy. Walker wants to tell all black women through *The Color Purple* that the awakening of subjective consciousness begins with the re-mastery of the right to control the body and is further consolidated through the emotional connection and practical actions among women. Although Celie's story has passed for decades, when placed in contemporary society, her experience still holds significant implications. She reminds every girl who is oppressed and finds it hard to express her own voice that only by breaking free from the constraints of the existing spatial order and re-establishing her understanding and control over her own body can she gradually achieve true freedom and self-completeness.

Disclosure statement

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Violet Sorrengail's Growth Narrative and the Feminist Remaking of Romantasy in Rebecca Yarros's *Fourth Wing*

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Abstract: Rebecca Yarros's *Fourth Wing* (2023), the first book in the Empyrean series, has become a representative work of the recent development of "romantasy", and this paper explores how the protagonist Violet Sorrengail in the novel represents a significant revision of the female hero in contemporary fantasy. Feminist fantasy criticism, disability studies and genre theory are employed to trace the development of Violet from a chronically ill, politically conscripted cadet to a dragon rider whose authority stems from tactical intelligence, adaptive embodiment and truth-telling, rather than inherited power or magical exceptionalism. *Fourth Wing* has introduced three new developments in its genre: first, fragility and chronic pain are no longer depicted as weaknesses to be overcome but as sources of knowledge and strength; second, the structure of romance has been changed to consent-based, transparent and chosen partnerships, moving away from the "fated mates" model of many paranormal and fantasy romances; third, by setting the coming-of-age story against the backdrop of institutional criticism of militarised education and state propaganda, the academy plot has been transformed from a neoliberal meritocracy fantasy into an exploration of systemic violence. The article places the novel within the larger feminist genealogy of fantasy, tracing from Joanna Russ's analysis of the heroine's limited scripts to contemporary disability-feminist systems, and concludes that *Fourth Wing*'s commercial success is not a decline in feminism but rather the mainstreaming of feminist narrative strategies in mass-market fantasy.

Keywords: *Fourth Wing*; Feminist fantasy; Disability; Chronic illness; Female hero; Military academy fiction

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1. Introduction

When Rebecca Yarros's *Fourth Wing* was released in May 2023, few people expected that a novel about a dragon-rider academy would become one of the top commercial successes of the decade and, as the publishing industry quickly dubbed it, the "romantasy" phenomenon [1-2]. Violet Sorrengail is a twenty-

year-old scribe who, according to her mother General Lilith Sorrengail's wishes, has been sent to the Riders Quadrant of Basgiath War College; this place is known to be extremely harsh, and its unofficial motto is "fly or die". Violet is not physically fit for the military life here, with joint problems, long-term pain, a tendency to faint under pressure, and a life of being told she is too weak. She lives, binds the two dragons (the largest and most feared dragon alive), discovers a state conspiracy, and falls in love with the rebellion's heir apparent; how she does so is the feminism of the novel.

Fourth Wing is not only a popular work of fantasy but also a significant formal and ideological development in contemporary fantasy literature. I believe that the novel has updated the story of female growth—what earlier criticism referred to as the "female hero" tradition [3-4]—by adding the three elements that mass-market fantasy has often kept separate: a disabled body as a source of agency rather than pity; a romance plot based on consent and informational equality; and an academy narrative that has been transformed from a merit-playground into a critique of the institutions producing soldiers and lies. Violet Sorrengail is noteworthy not because she is a replica of the tough-as-nails action heroines in the 1990s and 2000s, but because she refuses to be one and will not be a damsel either.

2. Romantasy and the feminist genealogy of fantasy

The term "romantasy"—the fusion of romance and fantasy into a single market category—has been mocked in some quarters as a marketing confection, but the fusion it names has a respectable critical genealogy. From the Gothic novels of the 18th century to Anne McCaffrey's Dragonriders and the romantic fantasy of the 1980s and 1990s, these genres have been continuously popular; what is new is less a combination and more the scale, cultural importance, and readership of these works, which are overwhelmingly women and increasingly demand emotional and moral fulfillment from their fantasy [2]. Early feminist critics of fantasy identified the exclusion of women from the genre in detail. Joanna Russ's First Essay: *What Can a Heroine Do? Or Why Women Can't Write* (1972) observed that the heroine was limited to a small number of plots—marriage, suffering, and the exceptional-woman exception—while the hero enjoyed the open road of adventure. Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope's *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* (1981) have identified the compensatory archetypes of the altruist and the artist for women characters who achieve heroic agency indirectly.

Fantasy studies has since tracked the genre's partial emancipation of its heroines: the swordswomen and questers of post-Tolkien popular fantasy, the feminist high fantasy of the 1970s and 1980s, and the recent wave of dark academia and academy fantasies in which young women negotiate magic, institutions, and desire simultaneously [5-7]. Farah Mendlesohn points out in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008) that formal innovation is also a type of representation [8]; a woman who is the hero of an unaltered story can change the world without changing the language. Therefore, the question posed by *Fourth Wing* is not whether its heroine is strong, but rather how she is not strong, and whether the narrative grammar of the hero's journey has been altered to accommodate a different kind of strength.

It is also worth pausing on the medium through which *Fourth Wing* became a phenomenon. The rise of the novel was not due to traditional review coverage but rather to BookTok and Bookstagram communities, where young women readers predominantly engage in public discussions and collective interpretations of their reading, rating romances by their consent practices, treatment of female friendship, handling of violence, etc., using a vernacular yet genuine critical vocabulary such as "red flag", "green flag", and "spice

level". Feminist criticism has sometimes seen the readership of mass-market romance as an ideological trap; at the same time, the readership of romantasy functions as a self-organizing critical apparatus, and *Fourth Wing* provides this apparatus with material for adjudication by making its consent scenes explicit enough to be clipped and quoted and its moral dilemmas legible enough to be argued about. The work of fiction is also in line with the reading culture of society for learning by doing.

Romance novels have become popular in recent years. In this way, the rise of romantasy can be seen as a redistribution of genre power rather than a merger of fantasy and romance. Mid-century fantasy criticism often viewed romance as a weakness of "serious" fiction, and thus, *Fourth Wing* presents courtship, sexual desire and emotional negotiation as events in world history that are no less important than battles. The two parts of the novel, the deadly trials and the emotional encounters with Xaden Riorson, are not in opposition; both are skills Violet needs to learn and both are politicised. At the bottom, this denial is feminist in character because it rejects the traditional space for women's lives and is not limited to the genre ghetto. However, it is also formally feminist in that it gives equal narrative attention to scenes of dialogue, negotiation and consent as well as to scenes of conflict. Therefore, the famous "slow burn" of the Violet-Xaden arc is not for show but aims to teach readers how to experience desire as a process of mutual learning rather than as a goal to be achieved or attained.

3. The fragile body as heroic instrument

The fourth revision of *Fourth Wing* addresses problems with the body of its heroine. Violet Sorrengail is first mentioned in Basgiath without any mention of a disability in the story; Yarros has confirmed that Violet's joint dislocations, chronic pain, dysautonomia-like fainting, and soft, easily bruised skin are based on hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (hEDS), and the author shares this with her sons—but it is also the foundation of life. Genre-wise, it is almost unprecedented: the heroine of an action-fantasy blockbuster is, according to the repeated descriptions in the novel itself, frail. Feminist disability studies provide the tools for analysis of this strategy. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's Extraordinary Bodies (1997) presents the division of bodies in contemporary culture into "normal" and "extraordinary" [9], and treats non-normative bodies as spectacles or objects of pity and medical problems; Alison Kafer's Feminist, Queer, Crip (2013) believes that disability is a political and relational category, and the problem of disability is produced by environments and expectations as well as by the bodies themselves [10]. *Fourth Wing* shows Kafer's idea literally: Violet's body is not the problem; it's Basgiath's environment—cliffs to be climbed, saddles built for other bodies, a curriculum that values strength above all else.

The work does not need to be moved. Violet is not a subject for inspiration porn, a disabled character celebrated merely for existing, a figure of tragedy, or a hope for a magical cure. Her relationship with the dragons sharpens her senses but also weakens her joints, and by the end of the novel, her body is still the same as when she arrived. Tobin Siebers (2008) thinks that the representation of disability is emancipatory when it treats disabled people as complex [11], desiring, flawed subjects instead of as metaphors, and *Fourth Wing* achieves this by making Violet's disability ordinary in the narrative—it is present in all the scenes but is not the subject of the theme. There is no emotion; therefore, the long-term pain she has is shown in the specific details of daily life: she suppresses the pain and locks it away in a "wall", manages her energy, dislocates her shoulder during a fight, pops it back in, and adapts. The story also shows the application of

assistive technology. The custom saddle her friends designed for her to ride Tairn, the largest dragon in existence, caused a crisis of internalised ableism in Violet. She first refused the accommodation and insisted on riding like everyone else. Tairn believes that because one does not look like the other students, they are not less deserving of a good place. Living in the dormitory is not a favour or a gift but the foundation for achieving excellence.

The political ideas in this work are more pronounced when compared with those of typical heroes in the genre. The traditional fantasy heroine who keeps up with the men does so by erasing the specificity of the female body or by obtaining magical compensation for it; the body is still a problem to be solved, and the solution is generally assimilation into a masculine norm. Violet is not so good. Given the demands of her body language, she does not wish to fight and chooses to observe and prepare instead. When she defeats an opponent by using an allergy instead of wit, it is not endearing; rather, it is the implementation of a fighting system that values knowledge, planning and environmental manipulation as martial arts. Among other reasons, it is also a theory of intelligence as female-coded strength that the romance plot then validates: Xaden, the novel's ideal of traditional martial masculinity, falls in love with her mind first—with her research, her memory, her nerve. Feminist critics have long pointed out that the acceptance of the female hero generally requires her to give up the very qualities that made her outstanding [4]. Violet is not a bad person; she wishes only to be free of shame and otherness.

The Dragon bond also extends the idea of human-animal relationships to other species. Dragons in *Fourth Wing* are not horses; they are rulers who choose their riders and can end or alter the relationship at will through telepathy. Violet Bonds are not a single dragon but two; Tairn is the strongest in his generation, and Andarna is a young dragon of an unknown lineage, and this is not a story of power but of inheritance. Both dragons choose the gentle scribe over the empire's most formidable warriors, which is the main irony and theme of the book—that the creatures with the most refined judgment in the world of Navarre value worth based on qualities imperceptible to Basgiath's human hierarchy. The bond is also mutual in its effect on disability reading: Tairn gets to live in the world of people and meet a reliable companion, while Violet gains a new body but is left out of the loop. Flight in this economy is not about overcoming disability but about enhancing it; a disabled body is taken into the air by an alliance, not by healing.

4. The scribe as subject of knowledge

Violet's growth narrative is, at its core, an epistemological one. She starts the novel as a history student and a writer of the "History of the Isles", and this study of history is used as the main political tool in the book. Basgiath is an institution based on the myth of the rider and the dragon bond, and Violet's counter-narrative is archival. She reads the propaganda she was raised on and finds the flaws in it and she hears the oral history of the Tyrrish rebellion—Xaden's people, whom her mother helped suppress—and discovers that the official chronicle of Navarre is a forged document supporting an ongoing political crime. *Fourth Wing* is a genre that often has heroes with swords and crowns, but here, the heroine has a research method.

There are some feminist implications. First, it moves the heroine's agency from the body to the mind without devaluing the body. Violet fights constantly and fights well, but she fights as a strategist. Secondly, it creates romance through epistemic intimacy: The relationship between Violet and Xaden deepens with each piece of knowledge they come to learn about one another, starting with their initial disagreement over Tyrrish history

and ending with the discovery of the venin and the fading wards. Where the traditional romance plot is based on misunderstanding and concealment (the heroine does not know what the hero is), *Fourth Wing* is different. Violet needs to learn, and the suspense of the plot comes from what she will do with that knowledge. Thirdly, the archival motif connects the narrative of personal growth with institutional criticism. Violet's growth is shown by her survival of the gauntlets and her choice to follow the truth over duty to her mother and the founding story of the kingdom. Growth in this novel is the ability to change one's mind in public.

The academy plot is the traditional way to show such development, and *Fourth Wing* deliberately uses the Bildungsroman structure of the school story but darkens it. Basgiath's educational philosophy is lethal triage: the curriculum kills the weak to strengthen the strong, and the Threshing, the War Games, and the Parapet function as a Foucauldian machinery for producing obedient elite bodies. Violet's resistance is not rejection or conformity, but is a type of tactical residence—she has learned the rules of the institution well enough to live there, but she does not give it the consent of a subject. Her well-known defiance of hierarchy includes refusing to carry out the orders of the higher-ups for unarmed prisoners, protecting the weaker cadets, and eventually escaping with Xaden's marked ones. Thus, the story has reversed the usual allegory of the academy. If the school story traditionally presents the meritocratic legitimisation of hierarchy (the hero rises to succeed through the system), then Violet's rise shows the opposite: the survivors of the system are not the best, but the luckiest and most adaptable, and its deepest lesson is a lie. The story of her growth does not end with her graduation from the school; instead, she leaves the institution and crosses the border to join the rebellion with the evidence she has obtained. That is to say, the goal of the female hero is not to rule but to reveal corruption.

The plays of the school's annual drama present this epistemological problem in a mechanical way. Firstly, there is the parapet. If one cannot control their fear and composure, they will fail, so Violet has prepared by studying and observing. The Gauntlet, the combat assessments, and the Threshing all teach the same lesson under different circumstances: the institution rewards what it can measure (speed, strength, nerve), but the plot rewards what it cannot (pattern recognition, lateral thinking, loyalty). Violet's usual victories are forensic in nature. She knows about her opponents' lives in advance from research on them, as well as their allergies and grudges, and treats every fight as a problem of information asymmetry. Thus, the novel has quietly subverted the official epistemology of the military academy and rejected the idea that knowledge belongs to the command and obedience to cadets. Violet's survival shows that the cadet who knows more than the commanders is the cadet the institution cannot handle, and the story's sympathy is entirely for her unsuitability.

5. Romance after the bond: Consent and the erotics of equality

Any account of the feminist innovation in *Fourth Wing* should also be romantic, and it is as well-planned as the fighting scenes. Xaden Riorson is the opposite of Violet in every way. He is strong in body and spirit, politically powerful despite being the son of the general, and connected to the rebellion that her mother suppressed. He is also her enemy by birth. His father led the uprising that Lilith Sorrengail defeated, and Violet's family name is listed in his people's execution warrants. The scaffolding of enemies-to-lovers is well-known; what Yarros does inside it is not.

The key is the collateral effect of the dragon bond: riders bonded to dragons can feel the proximity and emotions of others through the bond with their dragon's mate, so Violet and Xaden are involuntarily

connected and can sense desire, fear, and arousal from afar. In the grammar of paranormal romance, this connection is fate; it is the trope of "fated mates" that eliminates the need for choice because the universe has already made a selection. *Fourth Wing* is not the same. A bond induces indirect disclosure rather than obligation and eliminates the possibility of deception at the level of emotion by increasing the cost of non-disclosure. Because Xaden can feel Violet's wishes and she is aware of his feelings, any increase in the intensity of these emotions must be expressed through words; thus, their connection functions as a system of openness rather than a way to draw nearer. All the famous intimate scenes in the novel are conducted with explicit verbal consent—Xaden's repeated check-ins and Violet's clear "yes"—and the relationship develops through shared sensations rather than the negotiation of wills.

This is a substantial revision of the love story. For a long time, feminist romance criticism has investigated whether the heroines of this genre satisfy readers through patriarchy or provide resistance, and *Fourth Wing* has shifted the focus of erotica from conquest to recognition. Xaden's charm is consistently shown to be the very qualities that Violet's world does not like: intelligence, tactical intelligence, stubbornness and a lack of pity. The power imbalance in the opening chapters (he could kill her; he knows about the rebellion) is systematically dismantled and redistributed: Violet saves Xaden as often as he saves her; her knowledge repeatedly surpasses his strength; and the discovery that her family's history is connected to the rebellion of the betrayed founders places her at the moral center of the story by the end. Therefore, the fantasy of romance is no longer about submission to a powerful man but about partnership with such a man, and this fantasy explicitly desires a man who can be outsmarted, outwitted, and occasionally saved by women. Given the current trend in the genre of "romantasy" to feature physically invincible immortal heroes, Xaden's role as a man who learns to share power and discovers that sharing is erotic rather than emasculating is a genuine ideological innovation.

It should be pointed out that the work is not told from Xaden's point of view. *Fourth Wing* is told in the first person by Violet, so the reader is also in her position and learns about Xaden's intentions, his loyalty, and what the bond transmits. Critics of romance have often pointed out that the genre's emotional education is carried out through the heroine's interpretation work; learning to read the hero is the plot. Yarros radicalises by means of literalism. Violet's task is not to decipher the mysterious behaviour of the other children, but to judge based on her own feelings and observations; therefore, the novel shows that strong emotions are not always facts. The climax of the trust crisis occurs when Violet learns about the extent of Xaden's concealment of the venin and the marked ones, and it is resolved not through coercion of the bond, but by a conversation where both parties disclose, both choose, and the choice is explicitly reaffirmed. Desire is not fate, as the novel says; rather, it is a repeated choice by the two people who are still dangerous to each other and have all the information.

6. Matriarchy, militarism, and the ambivalence of power

Fourth Wing's feminist credentials are complicated—productively, I would argue—by its treatment of female authority. The novel's most terrifying figure is not a man but General Lilith Sorrengail, Violet's mother, who consigns her chronically ill daughter to a war college with the breeziest cruelty in the book and presides over the execution of a surrendering enemy commander in the opening pages. Lilith embodies a familiar dilemma for feminist criticism: she is a woman who has risen to the summit of a patriarchal institution by out-performing its violence, and her power is exercised almost exclusively against other women—against Violet,

whom she tries to break into a soldier; against the memory of her own sister, whose death haunts the family. The novel offers her no absolution. Her matriarchy is not sisterhood but command, and *Fourth Wing* is clear that representation at the top of a violent hierarchy does not feminize the hierarchy.

This denial of the "girlboss" alibi also extends to the depiction of female rivalry and solidarity among the cadets in the novel. The Riders Quadrant is a pressure cooker of competitive violence in which women are not exempt from predation by sisterhood—and should not be, the narrative suggests, because exemption would be its own condescension. Violet's closest friends are formed out of necessity in difficult times: Rhiannon is reliable; Liam is faithful but not romantic; Sawyer and Imogen are intelligent and competent. Imogen is an older student who is initially not liked by Violet but eventually becomes a teacher; thus, the novel presents a particular feminist model of seniority: a strong woman who has succeeded in the institution chooses to create a path for the next generation rather than Lilith, who chooses to cause trouble. Between these two poles, the mother who is broken and the mentor who supports explores the ethics of female power in *Fourth Wing*: strength is not about fighting against the violence of the institution, but choosing how to use one's own strength.

The work of fiction also seeks to connect the analysis of gender with a critique of state power. Navarre's Wards, the magical shield of the kingdom, are crumbling; the official explanation is that it is a war of attrition against the venin, soul-draining wielders of forbidden magic, and the kingdom's historical narrative is a collection of falsifications that criminalised the very province providing the resources for the Wards. Violet learns of this plot and, in turn, spreads the news among the public; thus, the private lesson of "trust your body, trust your mind" is extended to "distrust the state's story". *Fourth Wing* is often called "escapist comfort fiction" in the current era, but its story of state propaganda, militarised education and a ruling class's sacrifice of peripheral populations for security is almost a contemporary allegory. The novel does not resolve this allegory; instead, at the end, Violet defects across the border to join the rebel group, and there is no closure, leaving the series as an ongoing exploration of loyalty, evidence, and the ethics of resistance.

The novel's distrust of power is not limited to women. The marked ones are the children of the executed rebels that Xaden is secretly training to learn how institutions create legible enemies and then recruit them. After the rebellion was crushed, there was no reconciliation; instead, the children of the defeated were forced to join the college that had taken in their parents, and their collars and marks made their subordinate status impossible to hide. Violet is taught that her own privilege as the general's daughter and the archive's favourite student is also part of this system of inherited punishment. The feminist reading of this material is that gender and class analysis go hand in hand; the same narrative logic that has Violet be grateful for her mother's brutal faith in life also requires that the marginalised people be grateful for the empire's mercy. The answer of the novel is the same in both registers: gratitude is a leash, and its end shows that Violet refuses the leash in both directions at once, refusing both her mother's command and the empire's story; thus, the growth narrative has a structural symmetry, and she leaves Basgiath as she refused to enter it, on her own terms.

7. Conclusion

Fourth Wing has been a great commercial success and is now a model for the state of feminist fantasy: has the rise of romantasy diluted the radical spirit of the genre, or has it finally reached the attention of the public? The latter has been proposed, but not always. Through Violet Sorrengail, Yarros has created a heroine whose strength lies in character rather than magic—the patience of a scholar, the shrewdness of a strategist, and the

self-awareness of a disabled person about their own limitations and strengths [4]—and has thus opened a new path for women readers in the genre of historical romance. The three directions of the renovation of the novel are: the body (fragility is rewritten as strategy), the mind (archival knowledge becomes heroic agency), and the heart (consent and epistemic equality are the conditions for romance). None of these are new in isolation; their combination at the centre of a mass-market blockbuster is.

Qualification refers to the political economy of the achievement of success. A feminist text that has sold millions of copies is now merely a commodity in a market eager for new innovations, and the shelf of romantasy is already crowded with dragon academies and scarred generals. However, the feminist paradigm of *Fourth Wing* has also been strengthened—difference without a cure, romance without destiny, growth without institutional loyalty—and set the stage for imitators to negotiate now. The purpose of feminist criticism is to continue to read these works thoughtfully; it is not that there are no defects in them—*Fourth Wing*'s class politics, the eroticisation of lethal pedagogy, and the omission of named disability representation are all valid subjects for criticism—but because their readers, mainly young women, are engaged in a narrative-level exploration of fundamental issues: whose bodies are valued, whose knowledge is acknowledged, and what kind of love demands power. Violet Sorrengail does not live up to the expectations of the institution at Basgiath; instead, she refuses to be judged by it. Millions of readers have refused to create a feminist model in practice after that refusal.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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A Study on Communication Strategies and Innovative Design for Intangible Cultural Heritage Paper-Cutting in the Context of New Media

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Abstract: The widespread adoption of digital media is transforming the creative processes, forms of expression, and dissemination channels of paper-cutting as an intangible cultural heritage. As a national-level intangible cultural heritage, the art of paper-cutting currently faces practical challenges such as a generational gap in transmission, limited dissemination channels, inadequate digital design capabilities, and lagging database development. This paper adopts a framework centered on preservation, presentation, and dissemination. Integrating research practices in digital preservation, symbol library construction, and innovative design, the study explores two key areas: dissemination strategies and innovative design. Regarding dissemination strategies, it proposes two approaches: creating a dissemination matrix through multi-platform collaboration and ensuring cultural integrity to safeguard the authenticity of the craft. In terms of innovative design, it investigates methods for digital innovation in paper-cutting through four aspects: database construction and standardization, intelligent generation, immersive experiences, and personalized customization. It is argued that the transmission of paper-cutting from a new media perspective must shift from static preservation to dynamic dissemination. By using databases as a foundation, digital technology as a tool, and cultural significance as a baseline—and driven by the dual engines of dissemination strategies and innovative design—the sustainable transmission of paper-cutting art can be ensured.

Keywords: New media; Intangible cultural heritage paper-cutting; Dissemination of intangible cultural heritage; Digital innovative design; Dynamic transmission

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1. Introduction

In the digital age, the media landscape and cultural reception patterns have undergone profound changes. The preservation and transmission of traditional handicrafts cannot be limited to simply replacing tools; rather, they require a profound reshaping in terms of creative concepts, aesthetic standards, and dissemination strategies. Paper-cutting is a major representative of Chinese folk art, boasting a long history and rich cultural heritage. Through long-term exchanges among different regions and ethnic groups, it has developed diverse styles and has been listed as a national-level intangible cultural heritage. However, due to factors such as

neglect stemming from traditional attitudes, the impact of modern lifestyles, and a lack of stable practitioners, many exquisite techniques are struggling to be effectively passed down. Paper-cutting now faces the risk of being lost, and the space for its transmission continues to shrink. Digital technology has opened a new pathway for the preservation and transmission of paper-cutting art. The transmission of intangible cultural heritage should proceed in three steps: preservation, presentation, and dissemination. Digitization extends the duration of preservation, enriches forms of expression, and broadens channels of dissemination [1]. A systematic analysis has identified various issues, including weak awareness of paper-cutting preservation, a generational gap in skills, inadequate digital design, and lagging database development. To address these shortcomings, this study proposes design optimization strategies to enhance digital capabilities, establish a comprehensive database, and utilize virtual reality technology and other methods [2]. Taking practice as the starting point, this study explores innovative design methods such as digital design, interactive design, and AI-assisted generation. While most research has focused on the two aspects of "preservation" and "technology," it also provides more robust technical support for the synergistic mechanisms between new media dissemination strategies and innovative design.

This study approaches the subject from the dual perspectives of communication strategies and innovative design. On the one hand, it explores the new possibilities that new media brings to the dissemination of paper-cutting; on the other hand, it analyzes how digital technology facilitates innovative design in paper-cutting. Building on this foundation, the study seeks pathways for the living transmission of traditional crafts within the contemporary media environment.

2. Dissemination strategies for intangible cultural heritage paper-cutting in the context of new media

With the advent of new media technologies, the dissemination of paper-cutting art no longer relies solely on interpersonal communication but can leverage digital technologies such as the Internet, AR, and VR to achieve multidimensional, multi-channel dissemination, opening up new possibilities for artistic expression. With the advent of new media, traditional hand-cut paper art can now employ alternative methods to create dynamic effects and achieve interactive artistic expression. Furthermore, by integrating modern technology with various other art forms, the scope of artistic expression in paper-cutting has been expanded.

2.1. Multi-platform collaboration to create a multi-dimensional network for paper-cutting dissemination

In the past, the art of paper-cutting was constrained by traditional transmission mechanisms such as the master-apprentice system and workshop-based practices. Its dissemination was limited to specific groups or organizations involved in its transmission, failing to achieve widespread public impact and resulting in limited dissemination effectiveness. With the advent of the digital age, the dissemination of paper-cutting can now rely on various platforms to establish a multidimensional dissemination network. One approach involves creating official websites dedicated to paper-cutting art, social media accounts, and online exhibitions to showcase outstanding paper-cutting works to the public and introduce the techniques and historical background of the art form. Modern media offers diverse channels; traditional folk transmission models—such as word-of-mouth and behavioral imitation—have been disrupted. Mass media has become a vital vehicle for cultural transmission in the dissemination of folk culture, and various electronic audiovisual

media provide a more comprehensive and in-depth presentation of folk culture, breaking through the temporal and spatial constraints of traditional folk transmission [1]. By creating dedicated webpages for the promotion and dissemination of paper-cutting art to organize information about the art form and related materials, we can effectively expand dissemination channels and garner greater public attention. Second, short videos and live streams can be used to showcase the paper-cutting process, teach techniques, and share the stories of master artisans. Artists utilize online videos, images, and text to impart paper-cutting techniques and creative inspiration, encouraging more people to participate in the creation and preservation of this art form [2]. Through online teaching platforms, live streams, and remote conferences, teachers and students can interact with one another; pre-recorded videos and online courses can be used to convey knowledge of paper-cutting art to a wider audience. Digital technology can create a relatively comprehensive database of intangible cultural heritage, preserving relevant information through various formats—including text, images, video, and audio—to achieve the goals of preserving, documenting, and disseminating cultural heritage through new media and computer information technology [3]. Multi-platform collaboration not only breaks down geographical, linguistic, and temporal barriers but also leverages the complementary nature of various media forms to build a vast audience outreach network.

2.2. Upholding cultural standards: Drawing the line between viral content and the authenticity of artistic craftsmanship

While new media dissemination offers broad reach to audiences, it also carries the risk of diluting cultural significance. Fragmented dissemination typically extracts only the most visually striking elements while neglecting the underlying cultural logic. For the art of paper-cutting—which is rooted in traditional craftsmanship and regional knowledge—this approach poses a potential threat. It results in the superficial symbolization of paper-cutting, leading to a phenomenon where technical spectacle replaces cultural depth. The paper-cutting industry is driven by profit motives, often neglecting the cultural charm inherent in the art form itself. The blind pursuit of economic and commercial gains diminishes the cultural value of this traditional artistic heritage and hinders its development [3]. Under traditional models of transmission, the preservation of paper-cutting art has not received sufficient attention from the academic community. The meanings behind the patterns are recorded as isolated cases; this unsystematic approach fails to reflect the intrinsic connections between designs or the universal principles of design, thereby complicating systematic research [1]. Therefore, the establishment of a cultural oversight mechanism is of paramount importance.

This mechanism should be constructed on three levels: first, by establishing a database support system and creating a comprehensive database to record the latest paper-cutting artworks and related information in real time; second, by organizing the collected information according to different categories and themes, and formulating a complete set of cataloging rules and classification methods to improve search speed while ensuring data is well-organized [2]A copyright protection and licensing mechanism should be established to form a scientific protection system. This will address data licensing management and access control issues, implement security strategies to prevent data theft, leakage, and tampering, and effectively safeguard the integrity and uniqueness of paper-cutting art [2]. Establish a content review and value-guidance mechanism; facilitate dialogue among inheritors, scholars, and disseminators to define the scope of protection for core techniques and spiritual symbols; determine which elements must be passed down in traditional ways and which may undergo a certain degree of artistic adaptation and reinterpretation; thereby striking a balance

between creative freedom and the authenticity of cultural heritage. Only by maintaining firm principles amid openness and exercising caution in innovation can the art of paper-cutting preserve the integrity of its cultural essence in the face of the pressures of the "traffic-driven" logic.

3. Pathways for innovative design of intangible cultural heritage paper-cutting in the context of new media

In the new media environment, innovative design in the art of paper-cutting should not merely involve simple imitation of traditional patterns; rather, it should utilize digital technologies to conduct systematic exploration across various aspects, including design methods, forms of expression, and application scenarios.

3.1. Intelligent generation: Moving from manual tracing to human-machine collaborative design

Traditional paper-cutting requires a great deal of time and effort, whereas digital technology can automate complex production processes, making it convenient and efficient for more people to understand and learn the art of paper-cutting[2]. Digital innovation in design primarily involves methods such as interactive design and virtual reality. Interactive design emphasizes user engagement, making paper-cutting artworks more interactive, while virtual reality technology provides users with an immersive experience of paper-cutting art, effectively sparking creative inspiration [4]. In practical design, combining traditional and modern elements—as well as static and dynamic aspects—for visual expression not only holds aesthetic value but also helps the audience gain an intuitive understanding of key stages in the paper-cutting process, thereby promoting the development and dissemination of paper-cutting techniques to a certain extent.

In terms of tools, artists can utilize drawing tablets, digital cutting tools, computers, and tablets to create more artistic and innovative paper-cutting works. This not only broadens the creative possibilities of paper-cutting art but also attracts young people and a new generation of artists to join the field, infusing the art form with fresh vitality and creativity [2]. Intelligent generation is not intended to replace manual craftsmanship but rather to liberate designers from repetitive tasks through human-computer collaboration, allowing them to focus their energy on creative conception and cultural expression, thereby achieving dual improvements in both efficiency and quality.

3.2. Immersive experience: Recreating the paper-cutting process with digital technology

Traditional paper-cutting artists use static forms to depict dynamic imagery, lending their works a sense of movement. With the advent of the digital media era, the ability of animation technology to depict time and space has breathed new life into the art of paper-cutting. In paper-cutting animation, artistic forms are no longer confined to a single static frame but can be presented from all angles. Through the visual language of animation, paper-cutting art has gained more vivid and rich dimensions of expression. The judicious use of modern animation design software and techniques can comprehensively showcase every aspect of paper-cutting animation—from spatial composition and character transitions to scene choreography—thereby completely breaking through the limitations of traditional paper-cutting animation, which could only be expressed on a two-dimensional plane [1]. This brings paper-cutting techniques, related historical facts, and cultural significance to the public's awareness.

An immersive experience places users within a virtual digital environment, allowing them to personally

experience the paper-cutting process and thereby gain a more comprehensive and clear understanding of the art form [2]. By substituting virtual reality technology with paper-cutting elements, symbols, tools, and paper materials, the design and creation of paper-cuttings are completed on a computer. This virtual approach opens up a broader market for paper-cutting techniques and contributes to the better preservation and development of paper-cutting as an intangible cultural heritage [3]. Dynamic visual content transforms the characteristics of paper-cutting craftsmanship into looping visual sequences that possess aesthetic value and help audiences understand key stages of the production process, thereby overcoming, to some extent, the communication dilemma of "seeing but not understanding" [3]. The primary purpose of immersive experiences is to transform the audience from passive observers into active participants, deepening their understanding of and connection to the art of paper-cutting through physical perception and hands-on practice.

3.3. Personalized customization: Expanding the application scenarios of paper-cutting through user participation

Digital technology not only protects and preserves the cultural heritage of paper-cutting but also ushers in a new era for the art form. Through digital preservation methods, paper-cutting works can transcend traditional boundaries to create more innovative and creative pieces, thereby driving continuous innovation and the ongoing transmission of paper-cutting techniques [2]. At the application level, innovative digital designs for paper-cutting can extend to various areas such as cultural and creative products, digital collectibles, cultural tourism experiences, and urban cultural IPs. They also allow users to participate in personalized customization, utilizing platforms such as the internet and mobile apps for digital creation and application. This breaks through the geographical, linguistic, and temporal constraints that once limited the dissemination of paper-cutting art, reaching a much broader audience [2]. Personalized designs tailored to user preferences can enhance user engagement and retention, convey rich cultural content to the audience, and ultimately establish a comprehensive digital resource library, laying a data foundation for future innovative designs. This not only promotes the innovative development of paper-cutting as an intangible cultural heritage but also facilitates its living transmission [4]. During the design process, a balance between tradition and modernity should be maintained to prevent homogenization and excessive commercialization, allowing traditional aesthetics to integrate into contemporary life in a more subtle way. The application of innovative digital design can broaden the channels for disseminating paper-cutting, opening new avenues for its teaching and transmission. This not only helps enhance learners' interest and innovative abilities but also strengthens the reach and influence of paper-cutting [4].

4. Conclusion

From a new media perspective, the preservation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) paper-cutting should shift from static conservation to dynamic dissemination. Framed by the concepts of preservation, presentation, and dissemination, this article explores pathways for dynamic transmission through the dual lenses of dissemination strategies and innovative design. In terms of dissemination, multi-platform collaboration forms a multidimensional dissemination network that reaches a broad audience, while cultural curation draws a line between the logic of traffic and the authenticity of the craft, jointly ensuring both the breadth and depth of dissemination; The establishment of databases and standards provides a resource foundation; intelligent generation promotes human-machine collaboration; immersive experiences transform

audiences from observers into participants; and personalized customization expands application scenarios and enhances engagement. Driven by the dual engines of "dissemination strategies and innovative design," the vitality of paper-cutting in the present can be revitalized.

However, as dissemination increasingly relies on visual impact and the logic of traffic, the regional, environmental, artisanal, and historical memories embodied in paper-cutting are prone to simplification or misinterpretation. A truly vibrant tradition does not simply follow the crowd, but rather remains steadfast in an open environment while proceeding with caution in the face of innovation. Heritage bearers, designers, and communicators should collectively shoulder the responsibility of interpretation—making full use of the narrative potential of new media while maintaining reverence for and discernment regarding the cultural essence. Only by striking a balance between technological empowerment and cultural preservation can paper-cutting continue to thrive in the digital age and achieve sustainable transmission.

Disclosure statement

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Innovation and Development of Digital Projection Art in Cultural Tourism Projects in the Context of New Media Art

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Abstract: Against the theoretical background of the media turn in new media art, this study examines the mechanisms through which digital projection art generates innovation in cultural tourism projects across technology, spatiality, narrative, interaction, and communication. Using a combination of literature analysis, case synthesis, and comparative analysis, the study examines the evolution of digital projection art, its application logic in cultural tourism, and its practical challenges from four dimensions: technological media, spatial narrative, interactive experience, and cultural communication. It further develops a four-dimensional evaluation framework encompassing technology, experience, culture, and communication, and proposes an innovation pathway of cultural anchoring, spatial narrative, interactive generation, and data feedback. The study argues that the value of digital projection depends not on equipment specifications or visual spectacle per se, but on whether technology can be effectively coupled with cultural content, spatial structures, and visitor behavior. Digital projection can therefore evolve from a conventional visual display tool into a spatial medium capable of producing cultural meaning. In applying digital projection to cultural tourism projects, practitioners should avoid technological homogenization and the superficial treatment of cultural symbols, and establish an innovation mechanism grounded in cultural authenticity, centered on spatial narrative, supported by moderate interaction, and safeguarded by continuous evaluation. The findings provide references for theoretical research on digital projection art, digital transformation in cultural tourism, and the design and evaluation of immersive cultural spaces.

Keywords: Digital projection art; New media art; Cultural tourism; Spatial narrative; Interactive experience; Digital cultural communication

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1. Introduction

With the continuous evolution of digital technologies, new media art has become an important field of contemporary art, reconstructing modes of artistic expression and audience interaction through digital and network technologies [1]. Amid the global wave of digitalization, the digital transformation of cultural tourism

has become an established trend, and leveraging digital technologies to enhance the competitiveness of cultural tourism has emerged as a central concern for both academia and industry [2].

As an important form of new media art, digital projection art has considerable potential for application in cultural tourism settings because of its visual presentation capabilities and technological support. Digital projection can enhance the attractiveness of cultural tourism through immersive experiences and interactive design [3], while digital art enables audiences to participate in, manipulate, and even co-create artworks, providing an important theoretical basis for this study [4].

Current applications of digital projection in cultural tourism face challenges including high technical implementation difficulty, limited visitor participation, and superficial cultural interpretation. Existing studies have largely focused on the technological value of new media art, digital cultural tourism, and immersive experience, often treating digital projection as a tool for scene enhancement. Systematic discussion remains limited regarding the role of projection in constructing cultural meaning, the influence of spatial structures on narrative, and the ways in which visitor interaction can reshape artworks. Accordingly, this study conceptualizes digital projection as a spatialized new media medium and moves beyond a technology-application perspective to examine its mechanisms of narrative, experience, and cultural communication. Rather than focusing on demonstrating technological sophistication, the study seeks to explain how technological capabilities are transformed into cultural and experiential value and to develop an evaluation framework and innovation pathway.

The contributions of this study are threefold. First, digital projection is redefined from a mere display technology as a composite medium that connects cultural content, architectural space, and visitor behavior. Second, spatial narrative and interactive generation are integrated into an analytical framework to explain how projected images generate meaning through changes in viewers' bodily movement and environmental conditions. Third, a four-dimensional evaluation framework of technology, experience, culture, and communication is developed, together with an implementation pathway of cultural anchoring, spatial narrative, interactive generation, and data feedback, thereby addressing the practical challenges of cultural tourism projects that emphasize visual technology while neglecting cultural interpretation and long-term operation.

2. Digital projection art and the current state of cultural tourism projects

2.1. Research on new media art

As an emerging form integrating technology and art, new media art has developed rapidly since the late twentieth century and has become an important component of contemporary art. New media art creates a distinctive synergy between users and technology, providing interactive experiences that are difficult to achieve through traditional art forms [5]. By enhancing interactive experiences and optimizing visitor participation, new media art significantly improves the quality of cultural tourism experiences [6]. The integration of new media and cultural tourism enables innovative promotional strategies and effective value co-creation through user participation in content production. In addition, new media art has reshaped the communication of cultural tourism and strengthened connections between visitors and local heritage [7].

From a theoretical perspective, new media art does not simply replace traditional media with digital devices; rather, it changes the mode of existence of artworks, the relationships of communication, and the position of audiences in the participatory process. Manovich (2002) emphasizes characteristics including

numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding [1]. Accordingly, digital projection art is no longer simply a matter of "projecting images," but of using the variability of digital media to establish artistic systems that change with space, time, and audience behavior.

In cultural tourism settings, projection can transform architecture, heritage sites, and landscapes into programmable visual interfaces, giving static cultural objects a temporal dimension and narrative rhythm. Grau's (2003) research on the relationship between "illusion" and "immersion" demonstrates that immersive imagery has a long media history [8], with its core mechanism lying in altering viewers' perception of space through visual environments. Digital projection art therefore possesses both technological-media and artistic-expression attributes and should not be understood solely in terms of equipment and visual effects.

Overall, research on new media art provides this study with a theoretical foundation concerning media characteristics and audience participation. However, existing research has paid limited attention to how digital projection completes cultural translation in specific cultural tourism spaces and has rarely incorporated spatial structures, visitor behavior, and communication feedback into a unified analytical framework.

2.2. Development of digital projection art

As an important branch of new media art, digital projection art uses digital technologies to project images, videos, animations, and other content onto physical surfaces, creating visual effects that combine the virtual and the real. Its development can be traced back to the 1980s, when advances in computer graphics and digital display technologies facilitated its emergence. By the 1990s, improvements in high-resolution projection equipment and computing capabilities enabled digital projection art to be widely used in art exhibitions and public spaces. Entering the twenty-first century, digital projection art continued to develop as projection equipment became more compact and intelligent, and projection content became increasingly diverse. Artists have continuously explored new forms and technical approaches, promoting its broad application across different fields. Digital projection art has gained wide recognition for its effectiveness, communicative capacity, interactivity, and experiential qualities [9]. Its application in cultural tourism projects has also become increasingly widespread, making it an important means of promoting innovation and development in cultural tourism.

The development of digital projection art has not been a linear process of equipment upgrading; rather, it has been jointly driven by advances in display technologies, computer graphics, digital image production, sensors, and real-time interaction. Improvements in brightness, resolution, edge blending, geometric correction, and real-time rendering have enabled projected imagery to conform more accurately to building façades and irregular structures. Projection mapping has consequently developed strong spatial adaptation capabilities, allowing architecture itself to participate in visual narrative. Related research has also begun to shift from technical feasibility toward cultural information transmission and visitor-experience evaluation [10].

At the same time, digital projection has gradually shifted from "pre-produced playback" toward "real-time generation." Interactive projection incorporates cameras, depth sensors, and motion capture into the structure of artworks, making audience behavior a trigger for changes in imagery. The artwork is consequently generated through the relationships among the creator, system, audience, and space.

From a research perspective, studies of technological evolution have sufficiently demonstrated the spatial adaptation and real-time interaction possibilities of projection mapping. However, further questions remain: How can technological adaptation be transformed into cultural narrative? How do spatial interfaces influence visitors' understanding? These questions constitute the focus of the analysis below. After clarifying

the media evolution of digital projection, it is also necessary to examine it within the industrial context of the digital transformation of cultural tourism.

2.3. Digital transformation of cultural tourism projects

Cultural tourism projects enhance tourism attractiveness and visitor satisfaction through cultural experiences. With the rapid development of digital technologies, the digital transformation of cultural tourism projects has become an overarching trend. This transformation aims to comprehensively upgrade various aspects of cultural tourism projects through digital technologies, thereby improving competitiveness and service quality. In recent years, Chinese cultural tourism enterprises have actively promoted industrial digitalization, innovated cultural tourism scenarios through digital technologies, introduced digital consumer products, and developed smart cultural tourism formats to achieve high-quality development [11].

Digitalization in cultural tourism does not mean that all traditional content must be technologized; rather, it requires rethinking how cultural resources are understood, communicated, and consumed through digital media. Experience economy theory emphasizes that spatial environments, plot organization, and participation processes constitute important sources of experiential value [12]. This implies that the value of digital projection lies less in the equipment itself than in its ability to transform cultural resources into experiences characterized by emotion, spatial rhythm, and participation mechanisms.

Accordingly, cultural tourism projects should establish a chain of "cultural resources–digital content–spatial settings–visitor behavior–experiential feedback" to avoid the tendency to prioritize construction while neglecting operation. The core of digital transformation is not "technology substitution," but the use of technology to reorganize cultural content, spatial experiences, and visitor relationships.

With the empowerment of new technologies, the media ecology is undergoing profound transformation. This not only brings changes in users' consumption habits and challenges to promotional and operational concepts, but also creates new opportunities for the cultural tourism industry in technology-driven development, content expansion, and brand building [13].

Digital projection art plays an important role in this digital transformation. On the one hand, it enriches the content and forms of cultural tourism projects, providing visitors with visual experiences and a sense of immersion. On the other hand, digital projection art enables personalized and customized design to meet the needs of different visitors. Through digital projection, historical and cultural stories can be presented visually, allowing visitors to experience a cultural atmosphere. Combined with technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality, digital projection can also create more immersive experiential spaces.

Existing research on digital cultural tourism and immersive experiences provides this study with insights into experience economics and operational feedback. However, most studies remain focused on technological applications and descriptions of experience, with limited discussion of the mechanisms of digital projection through the complete chain of "cultural authenticity–spatial narrative–interactive generation–communication feedback." This gap provides the entry point for the present study.

3. Mechanisms of digital projection art in cultural tourism projects

3.1. Types of digital projection applications in cultural tourism and mechanisms of cultural translation

As an emerging art form, digital projection art has been widely applied in various cultural tourism projects

and demonstrates diverse types and technological characteristics. Major types include augmented reality projection, interactive projection, immersive projection, and holographic projection. Each type has distinctive technical characteristics and application contexts. Augmented reality projection overlays digital content onto real-world scenes to create a visual effect combining the virtual and the real [14]. Interactive projection emphasizes audience participation and enables real-time interaction between people and projected content through sensing technologies [15]. Immersive projection uses multi-surface or surrounding projection to create an all-encompassing immersive experience. Holographic projection employs optical technologies to present three-dimensional images, creating the visual effect of objects floating in space. These technological characteristics enable digital projection art to provide diverse experiential modes in cultural tourism projects, thereby enhancing visitor participation and satisfaction.

The four types above are not mutually exclusive and often appear in hybrid forms in actual projects. Rather than classifying them by equipment type, digital projection can be understood along three dimensions: spatial scale, interaction depth, and narrative mode. Spatial scale ranges from cultural artifacts and buildings to exhibition halls and open landscapes; interaction depth can gradually progress from one-way viewing to co-creation; and narrative modes can develop from linear presentation to branching exploration.

In cultural heritage settings, the advantage of projection mapping lies not only in attracting visitors but also in transforming historical information that is difficult to observe directly into visual narratives with a temporal dimension [16]. However, when imagery lacks a meaningful connection to the cultural value of the site, visual effects may instead result in "technology overshadowing content." Li and Ito (2023) argue that the evaluation of projection-mapping projects should consider dimensions including cultural understanding, information retention, and negative experiences [16].

From the perspective of application mechanisms, digital projection forms at least three modes of cultural translation: reproduction, interpretation, and recreation. Reproduction emphasizes historical evidence; interpretation emphasizes knowledge communication; and recreation emphasizes artistic expression. When historical information is uncertain, artistic imagination should not be presented as fact, so as to maintain the credibility of cultural communication.

3.2. Typical application cases and mechanism analysis

To make the case synthesis more comparative, this study selects the immersive art exhibition "Exploring the Classic of Mountains and Seas: Why Kunlun," the "Boundless · Illusory Realm" immersive international light-and-shadow theme park, Shanghai Disney's "Zootopia Celebration Projection," and Xi'an Tang Paradise's "Dreams of the Tang Dynasty" as representative cases. The cases are compared across six dimensions: projection type, spatial scale, interaction depth, narrative mode, cultural translation, and major challenges. Case materials are drawn from publicly available reports, including China News Service, CNR, the official website of the Qinghai Provincial People's Government, Guangming Online, official information from Shanghai Disney Resort, and Xi'an Daily.

Table 1. Multidimensional comparison of typical cases

Comparison Dimension	Exploring the Classic of Mountains and Seas: Why Kunlun	Boundless · Illusory Realm	Shanghai Disney's Zootopia Celebration Projection	Xi'an Tang Paradise's Dreams of the Tang Dynasty (2026 Updated Edition)
Projection Type	Gesture-interactive projection / gauze-screen imaging / holographic light and shadow	3D Mapping / lighting / projection / interactive installations	Projection on castle architecture	Water screen / gauze screen / naked-eye 3D / panoramic laser
Spatial Scale	Museum exhibition space	Outdoor ecological island, garden landscape	Theme-park castle façade	Open landscape performance; 300-mu Furong Lake
Interaction Depth	Medium to high interaction	Immersive walking experience; multi-scene interaction	Spectator-oriented	Boat-based moving-viewing experience
Narrative Mode	Mythological IP narrative; science popularization + art	Nonlinear exploration; light-and-shadow narrative	Plot-driven, IP-based	Linear performance narrative
Cultural Translation	Recreation	Recreation	Recreation	Reproduction and recreation
Main Challenges	Cultural anchoring needs strengthening	Weak cultural anchoring; relies heavily on light-and-shadow atmosphere	Limited cultural authenticity; relies on IP content	Pressure from operational updating and heritage conservation

3.2.1. "Exploring the classic of mountains and seas: Why Kunlun" immersive art exhibition

The immersive art exhibition "Exploring the Classic of Mountains and Seas: Why Kunlun" opened at the Qinghai Art Museum on July 9, 2026, and is scheduled to run through late October. Organized by the Publicity Department of the Qinghai Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China and Qinghai Publishing & Media Group Co., Ltd., it is a major cultural tourism activity of the "Xihai 2261 · Hehuang Cultural Festival." The exhibition is divided into four major sections—historical popularization, art display, digital interaction, and participatory activities—with 16 sub-exhibition areas in total. Static displays constitute the main format, supplemented by digital interaction.

The digital interaction section integrates technology with traditional culture and features three immersive light-and-shadow zones: "Four Celestial Spirits," "Characters in the Mountains and Seas," and "The Lost Valley Flower of the Classic of Mountains and Seas." In "Four Celestial Spirits," projected images of the four mythological guardians fill the entire space, and visitors can trigger the projections through hand gestures. The "Characters in the Mountains and Seas" zone likewise allows visitors to trigger projected mythical creatures by waving their hands. The "Lost Valley Flower of the Classic of Mountains and Seas" zone combines gauze-screen imaging, holography, and an infinity mirror to create an illusion of a floating nine-tailed fox. The participatory section includes a children's coloring-to-screen interaction and China's first large-scale VR spatial experience themed on the Classic of Mountains and Seas. Visitors can photograph immersive light-and-shadow scenes featuring the "Four Celestial Spirits" and Mount Kunlun (see Figure 1).

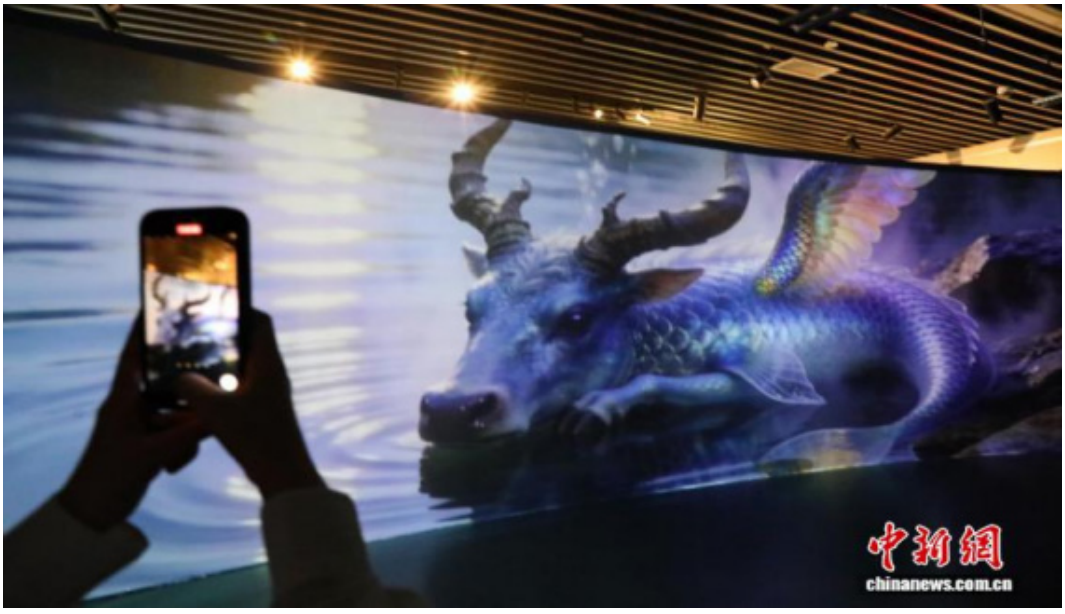

Figure 1. Visitors photographing the immersive light-and-shadow scene featuring the "Four Celestial Spirits" and Mount Kunlun.Source: China News Service; photograph by Ma Mingyan.

The key feature of this type of exhibition lies in transforming classical texts into visual light-and-shadow narratives and lowering the threshold for cultural understanding through gesture-based interaction. However, its cultural translation is primarily a form of "recreation," and care must be taken to prevent artistic imagination from replacing cultural interpretation. The exhibition closely aligns with Qinghai's local cultural context and is linked to the Hehuang Cultural Festival. Its model of "static display + digital interaction" also provides a reference for the digital transformation of small- and medium-sized art museums.

3.2.2. "Boundless · Illusory Realm" immersive international light-and-shadow theme park

The "Boundless · Illusory Realm" immersive international light-and-shadow theme park is located on the Hutuo River Art Ecological Island in Zhengding County, Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province. Covering approximately 90,000 square meters with a total investment of RMB 53 million, it is the first original immersive international light-and-shadow art IP in Hebei Province and opened to the public in 2021. The project uses modern digital technologies—including lighting, projection, original music, interactive installations, audiovisual installations, and 3D Mapping—to transform existing garden landscapes through projection mapping and create 12 major immersive light-and-shadow art spaces: "1 Light Trail," "2 Dawn," "3 Twilight," "4 Genesis," "5 Order," "6 Poetry of Light," "7 Starshine," "8 Night Song," "9 Forest Spirit," "10 Illusory Realm," "11 Boundless," and "12 Rebirth of All Things" (see Figure 2).

Using an "island light-and-shadow +" model, the project integrates diverse interactive experiences, including murder-mystery games, drama, live performances, camping, and themed festivals, into the light-and-shadow program to create a new immersive nighttime tourism experience. In 2022, the project was selected as a "2022 Smart Tourism Innovation Project" (source information to be further verified). The park is normally open from Tuesday to Sunday evenings and closed on Mondays; specific hours are subject to the attraction's official real-time announcements.



Figure 2. Night view of the "Boundless · Illusory Realm" immersive international light-and-shadow theme park.Source: Guangming Online, special report on the "2022 Smart Tourism Innovation Projects."

The project's mechanism lies in coupling projection mapping with garden-landscape space, allowing natural space to function as an interface for image generation. Its advantage lies in the immersive walking experience: visitors do not watch from fixed seats but gradually piece together the light-and-shadow narrative while moving through the space. However, such projects can easily develop the problem of "strong visual atmosphere but weak cultural memory" if they lack a stable cultural anchor.

3.2.3. Shanghai Disney's "Zootopia Celebration Projection"

As a Disney destination featuring the world's first and only Zootopia-themed land, Shanghai Disney Resort launched a themed projection show during the theatrical release period of Zootopia 2. The "Zootopia Celebration Projection" was presented from November 18, 2025, to January 27, 2026, each day before the "ILLUMINATE! A Nighttime Celebration" show at Enchanted Storybook Castle. Based on the storyline of Zootopia 2, the projection show presents light-and-shadow adventures featuring characters such as Judy and Nick, accompanied by theme music performed by Shakira (see Figure 3).

The Zootopia-themed land uses animatronic technology, an upgraded building information model (BIM), and projection effects to reproduce, to the greatest extent possible, the characters and settings from the animated film. Such projects can flexibly adjust content according to narrative and temporal requirements and can therefore accommodate different thematic needs.



Figure 3. Shanghai Disney's "Zootopia Celebration Projection" presented on Enchanted Storybook Castle.Source: Xinhua News Agency; photograph by Liu Ying.

The advantage of this type of project lies in the coupling of IP-based narrative with spatial entertainment. However, its cultural translation is primarily a form of "recreation," and care should be taken to avoid equating cultural expression entirely with visual entertainment.

3.2.4. Xi'an Tang Paradise's "Dreams of the Tang Dynasty" (2026 Updated Edition)

"Dreams of the Tang Dynasty" is a large-scale immersive water-dance and light-and-shadow show at Xi'an Tang Paradise, operated by Qujiang Cultural Tourism Performing Arts. The show was officially renewed and relaunched in April 2026 and entered its regular performance season from April to October, beginning at 8:00 p.m. each evening with a duration of approximately 50 minutes.

The performance draws on the imperial garden landscape of Tang Paradise, using the 300-mu Furong Lake as a natural stage and the Ziyun Pavilion complex as a real-life backdrop. It adopts a boat-based moving-viewing format in which audiences become "dream seekers" upon boarding, creating a fully immersive experience in which "people travel through a painting and boats move through a dream" (see Figure 4). The production employs elevating water screens, multidimensional computer-controlled fountains, panoramic laser projection, building-scale naked-eye 3D projection, and an immersive surround-sound system; the main water screen reaches 20 meters in height. Structured around the poetic world of Li Bai, the performance integrates classic poems such as "Invitation to Wine" with music and dance, presenting epic scenes including Spring River and Moonlit Flowers, the Silk Road Camel Bells, Rainbow Skirts and Feathered Coats, and the Qujiang Banquet. It thereby creates a multisensory spectacle integrating water, light, image, buildings, and boats.

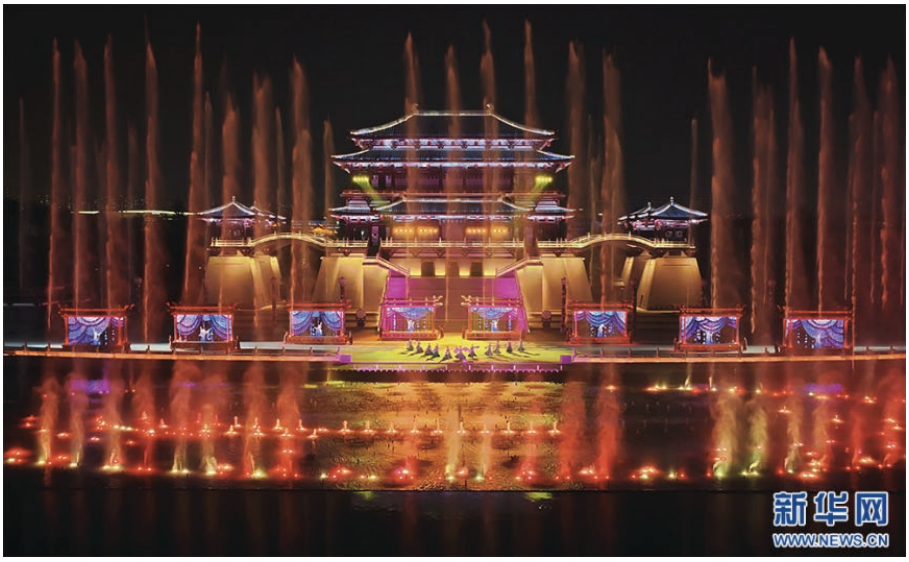

Figure 4. Boat-based moving-viewing format in "Dreams of the Tang Dynasty." Source: Xinhua News Agency; photograph by Wang Zhichao.

This type of project is well suited to open landscapes and performance spaces. Its boat-based moving-viewing design makes spatial movement itself part of the narrative rhythm. However, the relationship between historical authenticity and artistic imagination should be carefully managed to avoid excessive entertainment-oriented treatment.

The comparison above shows that different types of digital projection have distinct advantages and limitations in terms of spatial scale, interaction depth, narrative mode, and cultural translation. Museum galleries are more suitable for low-intervention, interpretive projection; outdoor ecological spaces are more suitable for immersive, exploratory projection; theme parks are more suitable for IP-based, entertainment-oriented projection; and open landscape performances are more suitable for audience-oriented, hybrid projection. The application of digital projection should not be determined by equipment type, but by cultural objectives, spatial conditions, and visitor behavior.

Projected imagery not only provides visual enjoyment for passive observers but also offers immersive experiences to active participants [17]. In some exhibition halls and museums within cultural tourism projects, holographic projection is used to display precious artifacts and historical figures, enabling visitors to gain a more vivid and intuitive understanding of history and culture. With its diverse forms and technological advantages, digital projection art enriches application scenarios in cultural tourism projects and improves experiential quality and viewing value. The cases above indicate that digital projection in cultural tourism has developed multiple application mechanisms while also revealing problems concerning cultural anchoring, interaction depth, and operational updating. The following section discusses innovation mechanisms and the evaluation framework on this basis.

4. Innovation mechanisms of digital projection art in cultural tourism projects

4.1. Innovation in technological foundations: From equipment-centered to system-centered design

Digital projection art plays a critical role in driving innovation in cultural tourism projects, particularly in

integrating traditional culture with modern technologies. With advanced digital technologies, historical sites and museums can reconstruct historical scenes and the original appearance of cultural artifacts, providing visitors with immersive and realistic experiences and thereby enhancing the attractiveness of cultural tourism projects [18]. Technologies such as digitization, modeling, holographic imaging, and virtual cultural-resource construction not only facilitate the dissemination of valuable historical and cultural resources but also support immersive visitor experiences. These technological innovations can promote coordinated development between tourism-oriented exploitation and the preservation of cultural resources, thereby contributing to transformation and progress in the cultural tourism industry.

Technological innovation should shift from an "equipment-centered" to a "system-centered" approach. The number of projectors, resolution, and brightness do not independently determine experiential quality; what truly matters is the compatibility among equipment, software, content, and space. Technology selection should be based on site characteristics and narrative objectives rather than simply pursuing higher specifications. Real-time rendering, AI-generated content, computer vision, and spatial positioning are reshaping the production workflow of projection art. AI can assist in content generation and material organization, but such applications must be grounded in archival verification and artist-led creative processes.

4.2. Innovation in narrative and experience: From visual display to spatial narrative and interactive generation

Digital projection art provides visitors with diverse forms of experience through a wide range of expressive modes. Augmented reality (AR) projection overlays digital content onto real-world scenes, enabling visitors to experience the integration of virtual and real environments through AR devices [19]. For example, at historical sites, AR projection can reconstruct ancient architecture and everyday life scenes, making visitors feel as though they have traveled into the past [20]. Interactive projection uses sensing technologies to enable visitors to interact with projected content, thereby enhancing participation and enjoyment [15]. Immersive projection uses multi-surface projection and surround sound to create an all-encompassing immersive experience. Holographic projection employs optical technologies to present three-dimensional images and create the visual effect of objects suspended in space.

The key to innovation in expressive forms lies not in the number of formats but in whether different media form a logically coherent spatial narrative. Simply enlarging two-dimensional video onto a building façade does not automatically create immersive art. Genuine spatial narrative requires consideration of viewing height, walking routes, dwell time, and spatial transitions so that imagery corresponds to bodily movement. Immersion includes at least four dimensions: perception, space, narrative, and behavior. Only when light and sound, spatial position, story rhythm, and behavioral feedback operate synergistically can projection art move beyond "visual spectacle" toward a meaningful experience. Related research also indicates that immersive technologies themselves do not directly guarantee visitor satisfaction [21].

Content innovation is central to sustaining the vitality of digital projection art. Through animation and video, digital projection gives static historical and cultural content new vitality, reconstructing historical scenes and cultural stories to provide visitors with more vivid cultural understanding [22]. Interactivity is a core component of content innovation, as visitors can participate in content creation through interactive installations and experience the enjoyment of creativity [3]. In addition, digital projection art enables customized design, presenting specific visual content according to different themes and requirements [23]. Some cultural tourism projects exhibit a tendency toward "visual spectacle," using intense effects to create

momentary impact while lacking stable connections with local culture. Digital projection should therefore move from "visual narrative" toward "cultural narrative," transforming history, people, folk symbols, and spatial memories into logically connected narrative units.

Digital storytelling can enhance participation and the comprehensibility of cultural information through multimedia content, user choices, and spatial positioning [24]. Projection projects can establish different information nodes along visitors' movement routes, allowing them to gradually piece together cultural stories through spatial action and form a form of "spatialized narrative" characterized by bodily participation. Cultural heritage projects must also properly manage the relationship between "historical authenticity" and "artistic imagination": digital reconstruction should be grounded in historical evidence, while artistic expression should clearly indicate its creative status, thereby balancing credibility and artistic value.

Innovation in interaction mechanisms further incorporates visitor behavior into image generation. Interaction does not simply mean adding a "touch button"; rather, it should form a behavioral cycle of "action–system recognition–image response–visitor understanding." When movement, touch, or sound can alter the structure of projected imagery, meaning production genuinely shifts from unilateral creator control toward multi-actor co-construction. Visitors are not only recipients of cultural information but also participants in spatial experiences and agents of communication. Interactive design should also account for differences in age, physical ability, and digital literacy by providing clear prompts, moderate learning costs, and non-compulsory participation [25].

4.3. Innovation in evaluation and operation: From visitor volume to cultural experience and continuous feedback

Digital projection art requires an evaluative feedback system. Visitor volume, dwell time, and online exposure cannot adequately answer whether visitors have genuinely understood cultural content. Existing research has incorporated overall experience, cultural knowledge acquisition, negative experiences, and subsequent willingness to communicate into evaluation [16]. In response to the insufficient cultural anchoring, differences in interaction depth, and operational updating pressures identified in the cases in Section 2, this study proposes a four-dimensional evaluation framework of technology, experience, culture, and communication and translates it into an operational indicator system, as shown in the following table.

Table 2. Four-dimensional evaluation indicator system of "technology–experience–culture–communication"

Primary Dimension	Secondary Indicator	Observation Points	Evaluation Method
Technology	Spatial compatibility	Degree of fit between imagery and architectural/irregular structures; brightness and ambient-light adaptation; edge blending and color consistency	Technical testing
	System stability	Equipment failure rate; rendering latency; multi-projector synchronization accuracy; maintenance costs	Operational records
	Technology–site fit	Whether equipment selection is based on site conditions and narrative objectives	Expert assessment
Experience	Immersive perception	Degree of coordination among visual, auditory, and spatial perception	Visitor questionnaire
	Interactive participation	Whether actions/sounds can trigger image responses; clarity of prompts; whether participation is non-compulsory	Behavioral observation
	Bodily participation	Correspondence among walking routes, dwell time, and image rhythm	Path tracking

Primary Dimension	Secondary Indicator	Observation Points	Evaluation Method
Culture	Information accuracy	Whether historical information is supported by evidence; whether artistic imagination is clearly identified	Archival review
	Cultural understanding	Whether visitors can recount core cultural information and establish associations between symbols and meanings	Pre-/post-test questionnaire
	Memory retention	Degree of retention of cultural content one week/month after the experience	Delayed follow-up
Communication	Willingness to share	Whether visitors voluntarily photograph and post content; frequency of cultural elements in shared content	Social media analysis
	Willingness to revisit	Whether visitors are willing to revisit or recommend the project; whether content updates provide reasons for repeat visits	Visitor questionnaire
	Communication extension	Whether online content generates secondary creation and enters cultural discussion	Online content analysis

The application of this indicator system should follow several principles. First, technological indicators should function as "threshold conditions" rather than "target conditions": meeting technical requirements is a prerequisite for project viability but should not be the core criterion for judging project quality. Spatial compatibility and system stability are fundamental to project viability, but technical parameters should not be used as the central basis for evaluating project quality. Second, experiential indicators should distinguish between "immediate immersion" and "meaningful experience." Visual impact can generate an immediate sense of immersion, but only when combined with cultural understanding can it produce an experience with lasting mnemonic value. Third, cultural indicators should balance "credibility" and "comprehensibility." Historical projects require archival verification mechanisms, while artistic projects should clearly identify their creative status, avoiding the presentation of artistic imagination as historical fact. Fourth, communication indicators should focus on "cultural communication" rather than "traffic-based dissemination." Mere online exposure cannot be equated with cultural communication effectiveness; the quality and depth of cultural information in shared content should be analyzed. In practice, indicator weights can be adjusted according to project type: cultural heritage projects should assign greater weight to "cultural accuracy" and "cultural understanding"; theme parks may appropriately increase the weights of "immersive perception" and "willingness to share"; immersive art spaces should focus particularly on "interactive participation" and "bodily participation."

Digital projection art also exhibits a pronounced trend toward cross-media integration. When projection is combined with sound, lighting, stage machinery, mobile terminals, spatial positioning, and social media, the communication boundary of artworks extends from physical sites into networked spaces. The resulting chain of "on-site experience–mobile dissemination–online re-creation" means that the influence of cultural tourism projects is no longer confined to the period of visitors' physical presence. More importantly, cross-media integration should not be a simple accumulation of technologies; rather, different media should establish intertextual relationships around the same cultural theme, with each medium performing a distinct narrative function. From the perspective of public cultural value, digital projection also has the potential to connect local culture with public memory. If cultural tourism projects can incorporate the voices of local communities, intangible cultural heritage practitioners, and ordinary visitors, and transform personal memories into visual materials, projection works can move from "telling culture to visitors" toward "telling culture together with the public." Such participatory content production can strengthen cultural identity and reduce content homogenization in cultural tourism projects. The principles of sensing, information

interaction, and spatial services reflected in smart-space design research also provide useful perspectives for integrating projection art with smart cultural tourism spaces [19,26].

Through comprehensive innovation in technology, form, and content, digital projection art injects momentum into cultural tourism projects. Technologically, it integrates the virtual and the real to create distinctive experiences; formally, augmented reality, interactive projection, immersive projection, and holographic projection diversify experiential modes; and in terms of content, dynamic, interactive, and customized approaches enhance both project attractiveness and cultural value.

5. Conclusions and prospects

5.1. Conclusions

This study analyzes the application of digital projection art in cultural tourism within the context of new media art and draws three main conclusions. First, the media value of digital projection derives from the synergy of technology, space, and cultural content rather than from the performance of individual devices. When buildings, heritage sites, or exhibition spaces become interfaces for image generation, projection art acquires spatial narrative capabilities that distinguish it from conventional screen-based imagery. Second, the experiential value of digital projection depends on balancing immersion, interaction, and cultural understanding. Visual impact can attract attention, but only when combined with clear cultural cues, appropriate behavioral feedback, and continuous spatial narrative can it be transformed into a memorable cultural experience. Third, the industrial value of digital projection must be realized through continuous operation and impact evaluation. Projects should shift from one-off displays toward digital cultural spaces characterized by updatable content, feedback-driven experiences, and extensible communication. Accordingly, digital projection art should not be understood as a technological add-on to traditional cultural tourism projects, but as a composite medium for reorganizing the relationships among culture, space, media, and audiences.

5.2. Innovation pathway

Based on the above conclusions, this study proposes an innovation model of “cultural anchoring–spatial narrative–interactive generation–data feedback.” Cultural anchoring addresses “what to communicate”; spatial narrative addresses “where and how to communicate it”; interactive generation addresses “who participates”; and data feedback addresses “how to continuously optimize.” The four components form a closed loop, transforming digital projection from a one-off visual display into a continuously updated cultural experience system.

Specifically, the first component is cultural anchoring. Projects should first clarify cultural themes, historical evidence, and the boundaries of expression to avoid superficial treatment of cultural symbols. Historical projects should distinguish between “historical authenticity” and “artistic imagination”; intangible cultural heritage projects should respect the agency of practitioners and bearers; and local cultural projects should incorporate community memories and local knowledge. The second component is spatial narrative. Projects should organize narratives according to the spatial characteristics of buildings, heritage sites, exhibition halls, neighborhoods, or open landscapes. Imagery should not merely be attached to surfaces but should correspond to viewing height, walking routes, stopping points, and spatial transitions. The third component is interactive generation. Interaction should be designed at different levels, ranging from one-

way viewing and simple responses to route selection and co-creation, with non-compulsory participation options adapted to visitors' age, physical abilities, and digital literacy. The purpose of interaction is not to increase operational complexity but to enable visitors to understand cultural content through action. The fourth component is data feedback. Projects should establish four-dimensional evaluation indicators covering technology, experience, culture, and communication, focusing on spatial compatibility, system stability, immersive participation, information accuracy, understanding and retention, willingness to share, and willingness to revisit, and should use evaluation results to update content and optimize operations.

At the operational level, mechanisms for content copyright, data security, and audience privacy protection should also be established. Interactive systems may collect information about movement, voice, or even facial features, and project operators should clearly define the purposes and retention boundaries of such data. Digital reconstruction and AI-generated content also involve issues of material copyright and authorship attribution. Only by incorporating technological governance into project design can digital projection art develop a stable and sustainable industrial ecosystem.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in examining digital projection within the media turn of new media art and emphasizing its composite attributes of "digital generation, spatial embedding, and relational interaction," thereby moving beyond the view of digital projection as merely a visual presentation tool. Methodologically, the study incorporates technology, space, experience, and cultural communication into a unified analytical framework and proposes a four-dimensional evaluation framework of technology, experience, culture, and communication together with an operational indicator system. In practice, the study proposes the pathway of "cultural anchoring–spatial narrative–interactive generation–data feedback," providing a reference for cultural tourism projects seeking to coordinate technological expression with cultural authenticity.

It should be noted that the above framework is primarily based on mechanism synthesis from existing research and typical cases and still requires validation through subsequent empirical studies. Digital projection art in cultural tourism projects currently faces risks of homogenization, technological dependence, and compromised cultural authenticity. Similar visual templates can produce "a thousand scenes with one face"; equipment maintenance and content updating require sustained investment; and excessive entertainment-oriented treatment of historical content may leave visitors with little more than a visual impression. Future development should therefore shift from "adding technology" to "adding cultural value." Subsequent research could establish a more refined evaluation indicator system through cross-case comparisons and conduct stratified analyses based on differences in experiences among visitor groups, thereby further testing the mechanisms through which digital projection influences cultural cognition, emotional identification, and tourism behavior. Future studies should also examine the marginal effects of different combinations of media to avoid cognitive overload caused by excessive technological layering.

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A Study of Translation Strategies for Translations of Classic British and American Novels from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract: In the context of cross-cultural communication, the transmission effect of implicit cultural elements is a core indicator determining the translation quality of classic British and American novels. This paper first clarifies the core connotation of translating classic British and American novels from a cross-cultural perspective, sorts out the characteristics of three types of implicit cultural elements, and establishes multiple evaluation criteria suitable for cultural communication goals. Second, based on a comparison of existing translations, it analyzes the specific manifestations and generative logic of translation deviations from three dimensions: linguistic expression, image transmission, and value transmission. Finally, it proposes targeted optimization strategies in three stages: pre-translation preparation, mid-translation transference, and post-translation verification. The relevant content can provide a reference for translation practice, help translations balance the restoration of the original's core and the cognitive adaptation of target readers, and realize the effective transmission of literary value in a cross-cultural context.

Keywords: Translation of classic British and American novels; Cross-cultural communication; Implicit cultural elements; Optimization of translation deviations

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1. Introduction

Classic British and American novels are important carriers for the transmission of heterogeneous cultures, and their translation quality directly determines the actual effect of cross-cultural literary communication. Traditional translation of British and American novels mostly takes linguistic equivalence as the core criterion and pays insufficient attention to the transmission of implicit cultural elements embedded in the text, such as folk customs, value orientations, and religious metaphors. This easily causes semantic deviations in translations and hinders value resonance among audiences in different cultural contexts. Exploring optimization paths for translating classic British and American novels from a cross-cultural perspective has

important practical value for restoring the original's semantic core and promoting the efficient dissemination of foreign cultures. In existing translation practice, three types of deviations—cultural misalignment, cultural loss, and cultural misreading—are widespread, but their generative logic has not yet formed a systematic analytical framework, and corresponding optimization strategies also lack implementable operational paths. On this basis, this study first clarifies the core connotation and evaluation criteria of translating classic British and American novels from a cross-cultural perspective, conducts an empirical analysis of the deviation manifestations in existing translations, and finally proposes operable full-process optimization strategies.

2. The core connotation of translating classic British and American novels from a cross-cultural perspective

2.1. Categories of implicit cultural elements in classic British and American novels

Based on the realistic context of cross-cultural communication, behind the textual meaning of classic British and American novels is embedded a large number of implicit cultural contents that are not directly stated. The transmission effect of such content directly determines the completeness of translation. Implicit elements of folk customs are codes of life and conduct formed over a long period in a specific region. They are mostly hidden in descriptions of daily dialogue and behavioral details and are not separately explained with corresponding background. If target-language readers lack prior knowledge of the corresponding culture, they can easily ignore the special meanings carried beneath the surface text. Further observation reveals that implicit elements of value orientation are consensus standards of right and wrong among a specific social group. They are mostly embedded in character choices and plot developments and do not directly express the creator's evaluative tendency. If translation conveys only the literal plot content, it will strip away the original work's implied expression of group stance [1]. From the deep logic of textual meaning, implicit cultural elements of religious metaphor are rooted in the long religious cultural tradition of Europe and America. They are mostly attached to the design of specific images and plot metaphors and are not separately marked with corresponding associations. If translation only performs surface-level verbal conversion, it will dissolve the deep meaning space established by the original work.

2.2. Core evaluation criteria for translation from a cross-cultural perspective

Based on the bidirectional characteristics of cross-cultural communication, the evaluation of translations of classic British and American novels needs to break away from the single dimension of traditional linguistic equivalence and establish multiple judgment standards matching the goals of cultural communication. The evaluation of information transmission accuracy focuses on examining the translation's complete transmission effect on the original's explicit narrative content and implicit cultural meanings, judging the degree of restoration of implicit cultural elements such as folk customs, value orientations, and religious metaphors embedded in the original, and avoiding problems of semantic loss in translation [2]. In light of the cultural communication attribute of translation, the evaluation of cultural adaptation compatibility focuses on judging whether the translation's transformation of different cultural connotations conforms to the expressive logic of the target culture, so that target-language readers will not develop cognitive deviations at the cultural level, nor will the deep meaning space preset by the original be dissolved. Relying on the ultimate goal of cross-cultural communication, the evaluation of reader acceptance focuses on examining the communication effect of the translated content among target-language audiences, judging whether the translation's mode of

expression is suitable for target readers' cognitive habits, enabling readers to fully perceive the original's narrative content and the cultural core behind it, and realizing the transmission of literary value in a cross-cultural context [3].

3. An empirical analysis of cross-cultural translation deviations in translations of classic British and American novels

3.1. Cultural misalignment deviations at the level of linguistic expression

The cultural misalignment of everyday expressions and forms of address is the core carrier of deviations at the level of linguistic expression. Based on a comparison of two widely circulated translations of Pride and Prejudice, specific forms of deviation can be identified. In the original work, common expressions involving tea-party small talk among the English gentry are used; in some parts of Wang Keyi's translation, the daily conversational habits of the Chinese urban class during the same period are directly applied, dissolving the class identity differences implied in the original context so that readers may misjudge the characters' social status hierarchy. Further observing deviations in forms of address, the original work has strict boundaries distinguishing different kinship relations and social ranks. In some parts of Sun Zhili's translation, the corresponding forms of address are simplified into common kinship terms used in China, blurring the social etiquette rules of the original era [4]. According to the evaluation criteria of cross-cultural translation, such deviations mostly stem from the translator's insufficient perception of the differences between the daily expression logics of the two cultures. Without transforming implicit cultural premises into expressions that fit target readers' cognition and directly making literal correspondences, semantic misalignment will occur, interfering with readers' accurate perception of the original's narrative details and affecting the transmission effect of the original's overall cultural connotation.

3.2. Cultural loss deviations at the level of image transmission

Image conversion in a cross-cultural context is the core carrier of the original's implicit cultural meaning, and its completeness of transmission directly affects the translation's restoration of the original's deep connotations. Based on a comparison of the two translations of Pride and Prejudice, when Wang Keyi's translation handles metaphorical expressions tied to the British manor hunting tradition in the original, it directly replaces the images with farming-related vehicles familiar to domestic readers, completely dissolving the gentry lifestyle characteristics implied in the original. Target readers cannot perceive the class-cultural orientation behind the images, which is a typical problem of meaning loss. Further observing the handling of allusive content, when Sun Zhili's translation handles allusive expressions related to European and American religious traditions in the original, it only makes literal conversion without adaptive transformation of the cultural references behind the allusions. Target readers will interpret allusive content with specific value judgments as ordinary scene descriptions, producing obvious connotative deviations [5]. Such deviations mostly stem from the translator's insufficient perception of the cultural associations behind images and failure to realize that the meaning of specific metaphors and allusions is deeply bound to the native cultural context. Direct literal conversion or arbitrary replacement of vehicles will greatly dissolve the special meanings carried by the original images and interfere with readers' perception of the original's deep cultural connotations.

3.3. Cultural misreading deviations at the level of value transmission

Implicit cultural elements of value orientation are the core carriers of the social attributes carried by classic British and American novels. Cognitive deviations in translation will directly distort the expression of group stance conveyed by the original. Based on translation examples related to views on marriage and love, when Wang Keyi's translation handles the relevant expressions of Elizabeth's rejection of Collins's proposal, it transforms the individual demand for marital autonomy implied in the original into an expression of resistance to marriage and love in the traditional Chinese context, dissolving the value orientation of female consciousness awakening implied in the original. Readers may easily misread the character's choice as a simple rejection based on class prejudice. Further observing translation examples related to class cognition, when Sun Zhili's translation handles Darcy's mention of class differences in his first proposal, it simplifies the rigid hierarchical cognition of the English gentry implied in the original into an ordinary expression of high or low status, stripping away the original's implicit critical tendency toward class contradictions in a specific era [6]. Such deviations mostly stem from the translator's default application of the value judgment standards of his or her own cultural context to the translation of the original content, without correspondingly sorting out the original's implicit temporal and group value stance. Ultimately, target-language readers will have directional misreadings of the original's core meaning, hindering the value resonance that literary communication in a cross-cultural context should achieve.

4. Optimization strategies for translating classic British and American novels from a cross-cultural perspective

4.1. Sorting cultural elements and establishing an advance documentation mechanism

Given the dispersed and hidden nature of cultural elements in classic British and American novels in the context of cross-cultural communication, translators will complete a full-text sorting of cultural elements before formally starting translation. Translators will read through the original text paragraph by paragraph, marking all directly appearing specific cultural markers, covering directly presented cultural content such as folk activities, religious ceremonies, and class forms of address. They will trace the cultural connotations of each marked element one by one, clarifying the element's background, specific meaning orientation, and applicable social scenarios, and organize all relevant information into standardized records[7]. After sorting explicit content, translators will shift their focus to excavating and organizing implicit cultural elements, examining sentence by sentence the cultural content embedded in textual details but not directly stated, covering implicit content such as social rules implied in dialogue details, value orientations carried by plot settings, and cultural traditions associated with image expressions. They will bind each implicit element to its corresponding contextual meaning, clarifying the element's association with the core narrative logic of the text, so as to avoid stripping away the deep cultural connotations carried by the element in subsequent translation. After all cultural elements are sorted, translators will carry out classification and documentation. They will systematically organize all marked and recorded cultural elements into three categories—folk customs, value orientations, and religious metaphors—and supplement each element with reference directions for transformation that fit the expressive logic of the target culture. The documented content will serve as the core reference for subsequent translation work. All translation content involving cultural elements will be verified against the documented records to reduce the possibility of cultural omission or semantic misalignment in translation, laying a solid preliminary foundation for the complete transmission

of the original's narrative content and deep cultural core. Translators will also reserve room for dynamic adjustment of the documented content. If new cultural elements not included in the documentation are found during subsequent translation, they can be added at any time to the corresponding classification module, ensuring the completeness and adaptability of cultural element sorting and avoiding translation deviations caused by omissions in preliminary investigation [8].

4.2. Adapting to the target context and adopting flexible translation methods

Based on the semantic characteristics of different cultural elements and the cognitive habits of target-language audiences, translators will flexibly choose differentiated translation methods to balance the transmission of the original cultural appearance and the efficiency of reader understanding. The applicable scenarios of foreignizing translation are concentrated on folk custom and religious metaphor elements with unique regional markers. Translators transform the original's exclusive cultural symbols according to their original meanings while supplementing shallow explanations that fit the expressive logic of the target language. They will not arbitrarily replace the original images or dissolve the special cultural attributes carried by the elements. From the perspective of cultural communication adaptability, the applicable scenarios of domesticating translation are concentrated on content with excessive cognitive differences from the target culture and prone to misreading if directly converted, mainly corresponding to some implicit cultural elements of value orientation and daily expression. Based on the completed cultural documentation, translators transform the original's embedded meaning logic that target-language audiences find difficult to understand directly into expressions fitting local cognitive habits. They will not directly copy literal content and cause readers' cognitive deviations, nor will they destroy the original's core narrative logic and emotional transmission. In light of the bidirectional attribute of cross-cultural communication, translators should dynamically balance the two translation methods, not rigidly apply a single translation model to all content. For different types of cultural elements in the same text, they should flexibly switch among suitable translation methods. For content involving the original's core value expression and cultural iconic content, foreignizing translation is preferred to preserve the original appearance; for non-core daily narrative and transitional expressions, domesticating translation can be used to lower readers' comprehension threshold [9]. Translators will control the scale of translation, neither arbitrarily tampering with the original's core meaning to fit the target culture nor deliberately adopting obscure expressions to preserve the cultural appearance and increase readers' cognitive burden. The selection of all translation methods is carried out with the aim of completely transmitting the original's cultural core and reducing cross-cultural communication deviations, so that readers from different cultural backgrounds can smoothly perceive the original's narrative charm and cultural value, and also encounter the unique content of heterogeneous cultures during reading, realizing the communication value of literary works in a cross-cultural context.

4.3. Strengthening reader orientation and conducting post-translation adaptation verification

Based on the audience-oriented characteristics of literary communication in a cross-cultural context, post-translation adaptation verification can effectively remedy omissions in the earlier translation stage and narrow the cognitive distance between the translation and target-language readers. Through a process of selecting reader groups under the target-language cultural background, translators will define test groups matching the target audience profile. The groups cover ordinary readers of different age levels and different amounts

of literary reading experience, excluding professional translation researchers, ensuring that feedback fits the real reading perceptions of ordinary audiences. In connection with the actual process of translation testing, translators will divide the complete draft into independent reading units matching the original's narrative logic and send reading content to the test groups in batches. After each delivery, they will collect and organize reader feedback. The collection scope covers three core types: readers' points of confusion, points of content misjudgment, and discomfort with expression. No additional background guidance is provided for the reading content, ensuring the authenticity and validity of feedback. From the perspective of organizing feedback content, translators will compare all collected feedback with the earlier documented cultural elements one by one and distinguish the specific attributes of feedback problems. For content involving misalignment in cultural element expression, they will adjust the content according to the applicable rules of foreignizing and domesticating translation. For content with insufficient linguistic fluency, they will optimize expression without changing the core meaning, and will not arbitrarily adjust the original's implicit cultural meaning orientation. Relying on the iterative process of adjusted content, translators will resend the revised local content to the test groups for a second reading verification, confirming that the revised expression neither triggers readers' cognitive deviations nor dissolves the cultural core carried by the original, and only incorporating it into the final draft after the reading feedback on the corresponding content no longer contains concentrated misunderstanding problems [10]. From the actual effect of cross-cultural communication, this kind of post-translation verification can effectively lower the cultural cognitive threshold of target-language readers while preserving the original's unique cultural attributes, improve the communication efficiency of heterogeneous cultural content in different contexts, and enable the cross-cultural value of literary works to be transmitted more widely. It conforms to the core evaluation criteria of literary translation from a cross-cultural perspective and builds a smooth channel for audiences in different cultural contexts to perceive the charm of heterogeneous literature.

5. Conclusion

Translation of classic British and American novels from a cross-cultural perspective is essentially a bidirectional balancing process that takes into account both the preservation of the original's cultural core and the cognitive adaptation of target-language audiences. It cannot remain merely at the level of linguistic equivalence. The complete transmission of implicit cultural elements is the core difficulty of translation work. Translators need to break away from a single language-conversion mindset and establish a culture-first translation logic, forming a full-process quality control mechanism from early cultural element sorting and documentation, to flexible selection of translation methods in the middle stage, and to reader-oriented adaptation verification in the later stage. The application of relevant translation strategies can not only preserve to the greatest extent the unique cultural attributes and deep meaning space of the original classic British and American novels, but also lower the cultural cognitive threshold of target-language audiences, promote cross-context communication of heterogeneous literary works, and build an effective literary carrier for exchanges and mutual learning among different cultures.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Exploring Audience Interaction in Immersive Art Installations

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Abstract: Immersive art installations have moved from the margins of new media practice to the center of the contemporary exhibition industry, and their rapid rise has changed what audiences expect from an encounter with art. Rather than standing quietly before an object, visitors now walk through responsive environments that sense their presence, respond to their movements, and often depend on their participation to exist at all. This paper examines how audience interaction works inside such installations. It traces the shift from passive spectatorship to embodied participation, distinguishes three broad forms of interaction (sensory immersion, responsive co-creation, and collective engagement), and analyzes the technological, spatial, and social factors that shape the quality of these experiences. Drawing on recent case studies and visitor research, the paper also weighs recurring criticisms, including spectacle-driven design, uneven accessibility, and the pressure of social media documentation. It argues that meaningful interaction, rather than technical novelty alone, should serve as the primary criterion for evaluating immersive art.

Keywords: Immersive art installation; Audience interaction; Participation; Co-creation; Visitor experience

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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, exhibitions built around projection mapping, motion sensors, and spatial sound have grown into a global industry. Venues such as teamLab Planets in Tokyo, which welcomed more than 2.5 million visitors in 2023, and touring spectacles like Immersive Van Gogh have demonstrated that large audiences are willing to pay for the experience of being surrounded by art rather than simply looking at it. Critics remain divided. Some see a democratization of art viewing, while others dismiss the format as a photogenic distraction. What both sides often overlook is the visitor at the center of these spaces: how do audiences actually behave inside immersive installations, what do they take away, and which design choices make interaction meaningful instead of merely busy? This paper takes those questions as its starting point. Rather than asking whether immersive art is good or bad for audiences, the discussion that follows asks a more useful question: under what conditions does interaction inside these environments become meaningful? The paper moves from the historical shift toward participation,

through a typology of interaction forms, to the design factors that shape quality, and closes with critical challenges and practical implications for artists and institutions.

2. From spectatorship to participation

The traditional gallery asks very little of its visitors beyond quiet attention. A painting hangs at eye level, a sculpture sits behind a rope, and the visitor's task is to look. Immersive installations dismantle that arrangement. When a floor of projected fish parts around your ankles, or a wall of flowers blooms where you stand still, looking is no longer enough; the work waits for the body to act, and it answers. Emily Lawhead's analysis of teamLab: Continuity at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco describes this condition well: the exhibition operated as a digital ecosystem in which every visitor's movement had visible consequences, so that the artwork was never quite the same twice and never complete without an audience inside it.

Historically, the audience for installation art has been drifting toward participation for decades, from kinetic art and happenings to the relational works of the 1990s. What changed in the past ten years is scale and infrastructure. Cheaper projection, reliable computer vision, and real-time rendering engines turned experiments that once filled research labs into ticketed attractions that can process thousands of bodies a day. The audience, in turn, has been trained by smartphones and games to expect responsiveness from every surface. An immersive installation sits exactly at this intersection: it is an artwork that behaves like a device, and a venue that behaves like a theater.

The theoretical stakes of this shift are worth naming. Once the audience becomes a component of the work, the boundary between production and reception softens. Visitors are not merely interpreting a finished object; they are, in a modest but real sense, helping to produce it. Researchers working in the experience-economy tradition have begun to quantify what this adds. In a comparative survey of 356 visitors, Luo, Doucé, and Nys found that sensory-rich immersive exhibitions significantly raised attention and overall satisfaction relative to conventional displays, with the aesthetic and escapist dimensions of the experience doing much of the work [1]. Participation, in other words, is not a gimmick layered on top of art; it changes the cognitive and emotional terms on which art is received.

None of this means that contemplative viewing has been abolished. Many successful installations deliberately alternate between moments of high responsiveness and stretches of slow, ambient change, inviting visitors to drift between doing and watching. The interesting design problem is rhythm: too little response and the work feels like a screensaver; too much, and the visitor is reduced to a switch that keeps the machine running.

A note on scope is useful before going further. This paper uses "immersive art installation" for works that physically surround the visitor with responsive or enveloping media, whether in museums, commercial venues, or public spaces. Virtual reality headsets and purely screen-based experiences raise related questions, but they isolate the visitor from the shared physical setting that, as will become clear, does much of the interactive work in the cases discussed here.

3. Three forms of audience interaction

3.1. Sensory immersion and embodied presence

The most basic form of interaction in an immersive installation does not look like interaction at all: it is the

simple fact of being inside the work. Surround projection, directional audio, scent diffusion, and shifting light wrap the visitor in a sensory envelope, and the body responds before any deliberate choice is made. This kind of engagement is easy to underestimate because it demands nothing from the audience, yet it does something important. It dissolves the psychological distance that a frame or a pedestal creates. Studies of projection-mapped heritage sites show that visitors consistently report stronger emotional connection and better recall when content surrounds them rather than sitting on a screen in front of them [2]. The body becomes the interface, and presence itself becomes a mode of participation.

Sensory immersion has its limits, however. Envelope the visitor in spectacle for forty minutes and fatigue sets in; novelty decays quickly once the eye learns the system's vocabulary. Designers who rely on sensory intensity alone often discover that visitors remember the feeling of being overwhelmed but little of what the work was about.

This embodied mode also explains why immersive installations have proven unusually effective with audiences who feel alienated by conventional museums. Visitors who describe themselves as "not art people" often report that wrapped, sensory environments bypass their anxiety about interpreting art correctly. There is no wall text to decode and no wrong way to stand. The cost of this accessibility is that interpretation can remain shallow unless the work offers hooks for deeper engagement, a point taken up in the following sections.

The sensory dimension also carries mnemonic weight. Visitors asked weeks later about an immersive visit tend to recall bodily moments, such as the floor responding underfoot or the sudden hush when a room changed color, far more vividly than specific images. This suggests that embodiment is not just a delivery mechanism but the principal material from which memorable art experiences are built.

3.2. Responsive interaction and co-creation

A second form of interaction appears when the installation senses the visitor and changes in reply. Motion tracking, computer vision, and touch-sensitive surfaces allow digital elements to follow a hand, avoid a footstep, or bloom beneath a stationary body. The critical variable is legibility: visitors must be able to connect action and response, or the system reads as arbitrary. When the link is clear, something shifts psychologically. The visitor stops consuming the work and starts conversing with it, testing its rules, inventing small games, and often dragging companions into the experiment. Chen and colleagues, applying a service-theater model to digital exhibitions, found that this sense of reciprocal exchange between visitor, environment, and staff was a strong predictor of perceived value and revisit intention [3].

Co-creation extends the logic further by letting audiences leave durable traces: drawings scanned into a shared digital world, messages that become part of a projection, paths that accumulate into a collective composition. The visitor's contribution persists after they leave, visible to the next wave of participants. Interactive storytelling projects in museums, such as the projection-mapped installations built for the mastic villages of Chios, show how responsive techniques can carry real content rather than decorative effect, allowing visitors to trigger narratives that would otherwise sit silently in a vitrine [4].

It is worth distinguishing co-creation from mere customization. Customization lets a visitor select among preset options, the way one chooses a filter on a phone camera. Co-creation, in the stronger sense used by participation researchers, means the work would genuinely not exist in its realized form without the audience's contribution. The distinction matters for evaluation: customized experiences generate brief

delight, while co-creative ones generate attachment, because visitors can point at the environment and say, truthfully, that part of it is theirs.

The pacing of response matters here as well. Immediate reactions delight, but delayed or cumulative responses create anticipation and reward patience, teaching visitors that the environment remembers them. Some of the most affecting moments reported by visitors occur when a long-dormant part of a room finally responds, confirming that their presence had been quietly registering all along.

3.3. Social interaction and collective experience

The third form of interaction happens not between visitor and machine but between visitors themselves. Immersive rooms are shared spaces, and the presence of strangers becomes part of the artwork's behavior. A crowd that gathers in one corner changes the projection for everyone; children chase digital creatures across the floor while parents photograph the chaos. teamLab has built an entire philosophy around this condition, arguing that a viewer inside an interactive work becomes unusually aware of other people's presence, and that the art gains the ability to influence relationships among those present [5].

Recent analyses of immersive exhibitions in interactive scenes confirm that audiences read these spaces socially: interaction with the work and interaction with other visitors continuously feed each other, producing a perception of the exhibition as a collective event rather than a private encounter [6]. This sociality cuts both ways. A lively crowd can amplify joy and discovery; an overcrowded room can just as easily reduce the most carefully tuned installation to a queue for photo opportunities. Managing that tension is now a central operational question for venues.

Designers have begun to exploit this sociality deliberately. Some installations assign visitors complementary roles, so that one person's action completes another's. Others create resource scarcity or shared goals that force negotiation among strangers. Even simple architectural choices, such as circular rooms that face visitors toward each other rather than toward the walls, measurably increase eye contact and conversation. The room becomes a social instrument, not just a display surface.

The social character of immersive rooms also changes how meaning is made. In a conventional gallery, interpretation is largely private; in a shared responsive environment, visitors watch each other succeed, fail, and discover, and these observations become part of their own understanding. A stranger's delighted reaction is itself a kind of interpretive label, one that no curator wrote.

4. What shapes the quality of interaction

4.1. Technological design and system legibility

Technology in an immersive installation succeeds when it disappears. Visitors should not have to think about cameras, projectors, or latency; they should feel that the room itself is alive. Achieving that illusion is a practical engineering matter. Tracking must respond within a fraction of a second or the sense of agency breaks. Projection must be bright and precisely mapped or the surface reminds everyone it is only a wall. Sound must follow the visitor's position or the environment flattens into a film. The best systems also tolerate unpredictability: a toddler's sprint, a group selfie, someone lying down on the floor. An installation that only works when visitors behave correctly is an installation that does not work.

Legibility matters as much as responsiveness. Audiences arrive with no manual. Successful works teach their own grammar in the first minute, through obvious cause-and-effect, through watching other visitors,

or through subtle cues such as darker backgrounds signaling interactive zones. Where the grammar stays obscure, visitors default to passive watching, and the interactive investment is wasted.

There is a cultural dimension to technological design as well. Audiences have grown suspicious of systems that watch them, and an installation whose tracking feels surveillance-like triggers discomfort rather than play. The most trusted designs make their sensing visible in friendly ways: a projected ripple under the feet, a shadow that gains color. Such feedback reassures visitors about what the system sees, and it quietly teaches them how to drive it.

Maintenance is part of design too. Calibration drifts, projectors dim, sensors accumulate blind spots, and a work that responded crisply on opening night can feel sluggish six months later. Because audiences judge responsiveness in milliseconds, technical decay translates directly into experiential decay. Venues that schedule regular recalibration protect the illusion; those that defer it quietly train their audiences to stop trying.

4.2. Spatial and narrative design

Space choreographs attention. Open floors invite wandering and play; narrow passages create suspense; thresholds between rooms let designers reset the emotional tempo. Continuity at the Asian Art Museum used transitions between galleries to shift visitors from disorientation to calm, and the slow seasonal cycle of its projections rewarded those who stayed still long enough to notice. Narrative structure works similarly at the level of time. A loose arc of arrival, exploration, and departure gives visitors a sense of journey without scripting their route.

Content, finally, must be worth interacting with. The strongest installations tie their mechanics to a theme, so that touching, moving, and waiting mean something within the work's logic. When interaction is bolted onto generic visuals, audiences sense the hollowness quickly, and the visit degrades into a hunt for the most flattering backdrop.

Narrative also disciplines duration. Immersive visits typically last between forty-five and ninety minutes, and attention decays steeply unless the environment offers variation. Some venues sequence rooms by intensity, building toward a spectacular climax and releasing visitors through a calm epilogue. Others loop content on fifteen-minute cycles and trust visitors to self-regulate. Neither approach is universally superior, but venues that think carefully about the temporal shape of the visit consistently earn better reviews than those that simply fill a warehouse with projections.

Lighting and sound deserve mention as structural tools rather than effects. A darkened threshold slows visitors down and resets their expectations; a shift from ambient sound to localized audio draws attention to a specific zone without a single sign. These quiet cues organize behavior more gracefully than instructions ever could, and they cost nothing beyond design attention.

4.3. Audience differences and prior expectations

Not everyone arrives equally equipped. Younger visitors who grew up with touchscreens test interactive elements almost reflexively, while older visitors may wait for permission or instruction. Cultural expectations about museum behavior also shape participation: visitors trained by decades of "do not touch" signage often need visible proof that touching is allowed. Social context matters too. Families interact collaboratively, couples photograph each other, and solo visitors often engage most deeply of all, free of the pressure to perform for companions.

Prior exposure recalibrates expectations. First-time visitors tend to be dazzled by the sensory envelope alone; repeat visitors, who have seen the trick before, demand subtler forms of responsiveness and stronger content. Venues that ignore this learning curve find that novelty audiences and returning audiences want quite different things from the same room.

Practical design responses follow. Simple demonstrations by floor staff during the first minutes of a visit dramatically raise participation among hesitant visitors. Children's behavior, meanwhile, often functions as unintentional instruction: adults watch a child stomp on a projected koi pond and learn the rules without reading a word. Smart venues treat these social learning channels as part of the design rather than as accidents.

Socioeconomic background shapes participation as well. Visitors for whom museums are familiar territory tend to treat novel formats with confidence, while first-time cultural visitors often look for explicit cues about what is permitted. Clear, low-pressure invitations, such as staff who demonstrate rather than instruct, narrow this confidence gap without condescending to anyone.

Age, culture, confidence, and social context therefore act as invisible co-designers of every immersive exhibition. Designers who assume an average visitor design for no one; those who provide multiple entry points, from quiet observation to full physical play, give each visitor a way to find their own level of involvement, and the resulting variety itself enriches the collective atmosphere of the room.

5. Critical challenges and open questions

The rapid commercialization of immersive art has produced a legitimate backlash. Ticketed spectacle venues charge premium prices, and critics argue that many of them offer a thin artistic product wrapped in expensive technology, optimized less for meaning than for shareability. The Instagram economy amplifies the concern: when a significant share of visitors experiences a room primarily through their phone screens, interaction risks collapsing into content production. Visitor analyses of popular immersive exhibitions indeed show "photo-taking" and "check-in" among the most frequent behavioral keywords, a reminder that documentation can crowd out attention. Yet it would be lazy to dismiss the entire format on this basis. The same survey data also show high levels of reported engagement and positive sentiment, suggesting that audiences are perfectly capable of taking their photographs and still having a genuine aesthetic experience.

Accessibility raises harder questions. Sensory-dense environments can exclude visitors with photosensitivity, hearing impairment, or mobility limitations. Dark floors, uneven standing surfaces, and long periods without seating quietly filter who gets to participate. Cost filters further: with single tickets commonly priced between 26 and 40 dollars at commercial venues, immersive art is hardly the democratic medium its promoters describe. If installations genuinely depend on collective participation, then the composition of the crowd is part of the work's meaning, and exclusion is an artistic failure as well as a social one.

There is also a sustainability problem on the production side. Interactive systems require constant calibration, maintenance, and staff mediation; a broken sensor silently turns a responsive room into an expensive slideshow. Institutions adopting the format sometimes underestimate this operational burden, budgeting for the opening-night effect rather than the thousandth-day reality.

Finally, evaluation remains underdeveloped. Venues count tickets and hashtags because those numbers are easy, while the harder questions, such as what visitors learned, felt, or carried home, are rarely measured

systematically. Until evaluation moves beyond attendance metrics, claims about the educational or transformative power of immersive art will rest more on intuition than evidence.

A further challenge concerns authorship. When thousands of visitors co-produce a work, whose artwork is it? Institutions struggle to credit, preserve, and collect pieces that change with every crowd. Conservation departments built for static objects now face environments that exist only as software, sensors, and accumulated visitor behavior, raising questions about what exactly would be preserved for future audiences.

Measurement tools are catching up slowly. Some venues now experiment with computer-vision analytics to study how crowds actually move and dwell, complementing exit surveys that rely on fallible memory. Used transparently and with privacy safeguards, such data can reveal which interactive zones genuinely engage people and which are walked past, giving designers an evidence base that the field has historically lacked.

The economics of the format create their own distortions. High fixed costs push venues toward blockbuster programming and aggressive merchandising, which in turn shapes artistic choices toward the safely spectacular. Independent artists working at smaller scales often produce the most conceptually adventurous interactive work, yet they struggle to access the expensive infrastructure the form requires. Bridging that gap, through shared production facilities, touring partnerships, or modular open-source toolkits, may determine whether immersive art develops a genuine artistic culture or remains a branch of the attractions industry.

6. Implications for designers and institutions

The analysis above suggests a few working principles. First, treat interaction as content, not decoration. The rules by which a work responds to visitors should express its theme, so that participation itself carries meaning rather than merely triggering effects. Second, design for legibility before complexity: an installation whose grammar visitors grasp in the first minute will be explored more deeply than a technically richer system that stays opaque. Third, compose rhythm deliberately, alternating responsive peaks with ambient rests, because attention is a resource that exhausts and recovers.

Fourth, plan for the social life of the room. Capacity management, sightlines that let visitors watch each other interact, and spaces for companions who prefer to observe all shape the collective experience as much as the projection system does. Fifth, build accessibility and pricing decisions into the concept stage rather than retrofitting them, since who participates is inseparable from what the work becomes. Finally, institutions should invest in evaluation that goes past the ticket gate, combining observation, interviews, and digital trace data to understand what actually happens between visitors and works.

None of these principles requires rejecting spectacle. Sensory pleasure is a legitimate artistic currency, and the popularity of immersive venues has brought art-adjacent audiences into cultural spaces they would never otherwise enter. The goal is to spend spectacle in the service of engagement rather than letting it become the whole budget.

One more implication concerns staffing. Front-of-house teams in immersive venues do far more than check tickets; they model interaction, rescue confused visitors, and translate between the artwork and the audience. Training these teams, and treating them as interpreters rather than guards, is among the cheapest and most effective investments a venue can make, yet it is routinely neglected in favor of hardware upgrades.

Artists, for their part, face a discipline of their own: resisting the temptation to add one more sensor, one

more projection surface, one more effect simply because the technology allows it. Restraint is increasingly a marker of maturity in immersive practice. The works that linger in memory are usually those in which every interactive element answers to an artistic intention.

Institutions should also be honest in how they market these experiences. Promotional imagery that promises solitary wonder in an empty infinity room sets visitors up for disappointment when they arrive to a crowded floor. Venues that communicate the collective, sometimes chaotic reality of participation, and frame it as a feature rather than a flaw, tend to earn more forgiving and more engaged audiences.

7. Conclusion

Audience interaction is the engine of immersive art, and also its most fragile component. When presence, responsiveness, and social encounter are designed with care, installations can offer forms of participation that conventional displays cannot match, turning spectators into co-creators and strangers into temporary communities. When design chases novelty or photogenic effect alone, the same spaces flatten into expensive wallpaper. The distinction rarely lies in the technology budget; it lies in whether designers respect the audience as thinking, feeling participants rather than sensors with wallets. As the format matures, the venues that endure will be those that treat interaction as a question of meaning, measure what visitors genuinely experience, and keep widening the circle of who is invited to take part.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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A Study and Interpretation of the Epitaph of In Shinjō—Cross-Cultural Exchange in Tang Dynasty East Asian Ritual System

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Abstract: In 2004, the "Epitaph Presented to the Imperial Attendant in Shinjō" was unearthed in the eastern suburbs of Xi'an. This epitaph is currently the earliest surviving Tang dynasty stone inscription clearly bearing the name "Japan" and is now housed in the Northwest University History Museum. This paper uses cross-cultural communication theory as the analytical framework, combining epitaph measurements, epitaph interpretation, and Sino-Japanese legal documents to conduct multiple cross-verifications. It systematically analyzes In Shinjō's time of arrival in China, identity attributes, the origin of his sinicized name, posthumous official titles, and epitaph author, and sorts out his experiences in China. The research finds that In Shinjō was an official cultural medium specially selected by the Japanese court for studying the Tang dynasty imperial clothing and ritual system, representing the state-led institutionalized cross-cultural communication model in 8th-century East Asia; Their voluntary adoption of Han-style names is a typical cultural connotation and identity adjustment behavior during intercultural contact; The Tang court's posthumous honorary robes and official funeral regulations established a mature mechanism for acceptance, recognition, and symbolic incentives for foreign cultural learners. This epitaph fully preserves the official transmission link of Tang ritual and music civilization to East Asia. The stone inscription itself serves as a cross-cultural communication medium, providing rare first-hand physical materials for understanding pre-modern East Asian transnational cultural flows, dynastic foreign cultural narratives, and negotiation and adjustment among different cultures

Keywords: In Shinjō's epitaph; Envoys to Tang; Transmission of ritual systems; Cross-cultural exchange; Tang dynasty foreign management system

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1. Introduction

In 2004, the epitaph of In Shinjō was unearthed in the eastern suburbs of Xi'an. Its discovery is a testament to early Sino-Japanese cultural exchange, and the Northwest University History Museum has collected it and

published related materials [1]. This news sparked a wave of research into In Shinjō's epitaph in both China and Japan. This was also the first physical record of Japan, and the four characters "Country Name Japan" in the inscription clearly represent the Kaiyuan era, which is a key advantage distinguishing it from the "Epitaph of Du Sixian, Prefect of Xuzhou." Although the latter had early records of "Japan," the rubbings had a narrow circulation and lacked supporting historical facts, resulting in no systematic research results for a long time. As a stone inscription material that combines information on the figure's biography, Tang-Japanese diplomatic clues, and the Tang bureaucratic system, the In Shinjō Stele enables two-way comparison and mutual verification between unearthed artifacts and surviving documents. It is well known that epitaphs are a literary form that records the tomb owner. These inscriptions integrate multiple layers of information about the figure's life, Tang-Japanese diplomacy, and the Tang official system, enabling mutual verification between excavated artifacts and surviving documents

Most existing research focuses on archaeological interpretation, Tang dynasty statutes, and traditional Japanese historical research, discussing epitaph textual collation, In Shinjō's identity, and the posthumous official system, but analysis from the perspective of cross-cultural communication is relatively weak. The envoy system to Tang China is the most important transnational cultural flow carrier in medieval East Asia. Unlike individual and spontaneous folk cultural exchanges, it is coordinated by the national administrative forces of China and Japan, selecting professionals based on national institutional reform needs, completing the introduction, learning, and localization of institutional civilization, representing a typical state-led cross-cultural communication activity. As a student sent to Tang China specializing in court ceremonial dress and ritual systems, In Shinjō fully participated in the entire process of importing, absorbing, and localizing Central Plains ritual and music culture. The epitaph text clearly records the official cultural exchange process between Tang and Japan, naturally fitting the national cross-cultural communication perspective. Based on historical fact-finding, this paper focuses on exploring the communication mechanisms, cultural adaptation, symbol encoding, and external narrative strategies behind epitaphs, thereby enriching the research dimensions of cross-cultural exchanges between Middle and East Asia.

2. In Shinjō's identity and time of his arrival in China

The entire set of remains is divided into two parts: an inverted bucket-shaped stele cover and a square inscription stone, both made of bluestone: the bottom of the stele measures 37 cm in length and width, the top is a 20 cm square, overall height 7 cm, seal script arranged in four rows, totaling twelve characters, interpreted as "Epitaph for the Imperial Clothing Attendant to the Well Prefect"; The square inscription stone has twelve columns in regular script, with a maximum of fifteen characters per column, totaling 171 characters. Due to construction damage, the first nine characters from columns three to eleven are damaged and unrecognizable. Early studies only counted 162 characters, which is a data bias caused by not including missing characters.

Textual Collation: Gong's surname is Jing, courtesy name Zhencheng. The country is called Japan, truly gifted by heaven. Thus, he was able to carry orders to distant lands and hasten to visit foreign nations. He followed rites and music, inherited the official robes and hats; Wearing his belt and standing in court, he was hard to match. Who would have thought that he would study tirelessly, seeking the Way unfinished? When a boat moves in a ravine, in a moment he meets a galloping horse. On the day of the first month in the twenty-

second year of the Kaiyuan era, ... The soul and common people returned to their homeland (the complete collated text is replaced with fragments of). The inscription [2] follows the standard epitaph template for Tang dynasty people who died abroad, recording in sequence nationality, reasons for entering Tang, details of the funeral, and the eulogy. Interpreted from the perspective of cross-cultural symbol dissemination, the entire chronicle constructs a textual carrier for a two-way civilizational dialogue between Tang and Japan: "The Country Name Japan" completes the standardized identity coding of foreign regimes; "Walking in rites and music, wearing attire" records In Shinjō's active acceptance of the core ritual symbols of the Central Plains; "Sent to distant lands" clarifies his official role as a dedicated cultural medium; the concluding elegiac is an empathetic narrative design that balances foreign feelings and weakens cultural barriers, fully presenting the entire process of encoding, transmission, and adaptation of state-led cross-cultural communication in the 8th century.

Based on the epitaph, it can be roughly determined that In Shinjō alone was sent to Tang China in 717. According to the Dai Nihonshi: "In the second year of Reigi under Emperor Genzho, Tajibi Prefecture served as envoy to Tang, Ōtomoyama no Kami as ambassador, and Fujiwara no Mayo as deputy envoy, all sent to Tang in the fourth year of Kaiyuan. In the second year of Yōro, the governor of Tajibi Prefecture and others returned. In the fifth year of Emperor Shōwu's Tenpyō era, Tajihi Hirosei was sent as envoy to Tang, and Nakaomi Nakami was appointed as deputy envoy to Tang. The above records [3] say "the fourth year of Kaiyuan in Tang" roughly corresponds to 716 AD. The court appointed Tajibi no Kami as the envoy, Otomoyama no Kami as ambassador, and Fujiwara no Mayo as deputy envoy to form the Tang Dynasty mission, which returned home in Yōrō 2 (ようろう) (718). In 716, Imasaki turned nineteen, fully meeting the age selection criteria for Japanese government-funded overseas trainees, and thus was deemed to have crossed the sea to Tang China with this mission.

The epitaph materials clearly show that In Shinjō was a secular student studying abroad, not a monk studying abroad. Japanese who entered the Tang dynasty were divided into two categories: study monks and secular students. The writing style of their epitaphs was clearly distinguished: if a monk was a monk, the epitaph had to include the name of the temple, and the title included words such as "Great Deer," "Zen Master," or "Dharma Master," and the inscription would also introduce the subject's secular surname, secular name, and Dharma name one by one. Moreover, the document [4] clearly states, "Talent is called heaven-bestowed, thus I can be entrusted with missions to distant lands and travel to visit superior countries," and "How could I hope to study tirelessly and seek the Way without end?" The text "bearing orders to distant lands and racing to great nations" clearly indicates its official dispatch nature. "Mandate" represents the mission entrusted by the Japanese court, not spontaneous pursuit of learning by the people; The "Dao" pursued by "Seeking the Way Unfinished" refers to the state's top-level institutions, imperial attire, and ritual systems, distinct from ordinary students studying literature and handicrafts. Therefore, Shinjō's purpose in coming to China was to study Tang culture, possibly as a government-sponsored student sent by Japan. In 645, Japan carried out the Taika Reform, using the Tang dynasty's political, legal, and ritual systems as templates for national reform, forming top-down cross-cultural reforms coordinated by the government. Politically, it imitated the Tang's Three Departments and Six Ministries system and established the Two Officials and Eight Departments system. Economically, the bu-min system was abolished and the citizens' land system was practiced. The Taika Reform was essentially a political reform modeled after the Tang dynasty. After the Taika Reform, Japan gradually established a ritsuryō system. The nature of the state

began to transition from a slave system to a feudal system. After the Taika Reform, Japan's national strength began to grow rapidly. In 660, the Battle of Baijiangkou broke out between China and Japan, marking their first confrontation. The war ended in Japan's defeat, but Sino-Japanese relations did not become rigid; instead, the size of the mission to Tang China was tripled, with professionals selected according to domestic institutional reform needs to study in Tang. The mission system was an institutionalized transnational cultural communication mechanism, with the main dissemination being the two imperial courts and the content of the national ritual and music system. In Shinjō, as the "recipient of the dispatch," it simultaneously served as a learner of knowledge, cultural translator, and institutional translator, serving as a key medium in the cross-cultural communication chain at the national level.

3. Interpretation of the name in Shinjō

The official surname is Jing, courtesy name Shinari. The country name is Japan. Currently, there are several views regarding the name In Shinjō. Yasumimi Reiki from the French Academy believes that In Shinjō likely came from the Japanese In Shinjō family, with the noble surname Jing, given name Kami, courtesy name In Shinjō, and full name In Shinjō, but the given name was dropped when writing the epitaph, retaining only the surname and courtesy name. Higashino Haruyuki of Nara University in Japan believes that In Shinjō should have come from the Japanese Kuzui family[5]. Kutsurai belongs to a noble family, and "In Shinjō" is a dialectal homophone of "Kutsurai". Professor Wang Weikun of Northwest North University believes that the name In Shinjō may have been changed after arriving in China, which may be related to Abe no Nakamaro's change to Chao Heng. Tracing the origins of the system, foreign peoples adopted Han surnames and were sinicized. Typical examples in Chinese history come from the reign of Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei, such as: the Qiudun clan changed to Qiu, the Helai clan to He, and the Koba clan to Ke. Afterwards, Tang emperors not only granted surnames to the foreign royal clan but also bestowed many surnames from the foreign surnames to foreign officials [6]. Therefore, In Shinjō may have also changed his name during this period. The "Genna Surname Collection" records: "Japanese envoy Chōshūnin Zhenjin was appointed Minister of Imperial Kitchens in Chang'an; The Shuai Gengling Tongzheng appointed the Chōshū grandfather. Chōshin is a surname. "Chōshin" [7] was an ancient Japanese surname, with the highest ranks including Shin and Ren, and others including Zō, Kimi, Nakō, and Man. For example, the court official Abe no Nakamaro is abbreviated as "Asomi Nakamitsu." Heirene no Nakasei is simplified to "Chōshin Hirotomi [8]." In the Tang dynasty, simplification and rewriting occurred, and the epitaph " 井 " character could not be directly equated with the Japanese mainland Kutsui and Fujii clans.

Wang Weikun's view of "sinicizing and naming after entering the Tang dynasty" can be corroborated with the theory of cross-cultural adaptation. The epitaph describes In Shinjō as "upholding rites and music, inheriting the attire and cap; Wearing his belt and serving at court, unmatched in his own way. How could he strive to study tirelessly?" This shows his deep identification with Central Plains ritual and music culture. In the social and bureaucratic cultural environment of Tang Chang'an, the names of native Japanese clans were complex and lengthy, which was unfavorable for interpersonal interactions and official archival registration. The Honglu Temple managed outsiders, and its archives only recorded Chinese-style surnames and courtesy names; native Japanese clans were not included in official records, resulting in epitaphs only recording "Jing, courtesy name Zhencheng," without their native Japanese surnames.

From the perspective of cross-cultural communication, changing Han-style names is a typical act of cultural adaptation. A given name is an important symbol of cultural identity. The formation of In Shinjō's Han-style name is an adjustment of identity in cross-cultural interaction: on one hand, it is an individual's acceptance and identification with Tang culture; on the other, it is a strategic choice to adapt to the official Tang administrative system. It is a vivid case of "the recipient actively transforming their own symbol" during cultural transmission. In the process of cross-cultural communication, outsiders actively adjust their symbolic identity to reduce resistance to cultural adaptation, thereby adapting to the system and social context of the host country. In Shinjō's proactive construction of Han-style identity was not simply a name change, but a micro-level expression of cultural connotation: after deeply engaging with Tang ritual and music culture, he voluntarily borrowed Central Plains name symbols to reshape his identity, thereby better accomplishing learning and connecting with Tang official resources for dissemination.

4. Examination and interpretation of the posthumous title of In Shinjō's epitaph

In Shinjō arrived in Chang'an in roughly the latest in 733 AD, and the court posthumously awarded him the fifth rank of "Shangyi Fengyu" (Attendant of the Imperial Wardrobe). Emperor Xuanzong of Tang was able to grant In Shinjō such an official position, indicating that his relationship with him was extraordinary. The formation of such a close relationship was inevitably related to In Shinjō's outstanding performance [8]. Posthumous official titles were honorary titles given by the court to deceased officials. In the Tang dynasty, the previous rank and position of the recipient affected the posthumous rank and official title after their death. According to the "Ce Fu Yuan Gui", the foreign groups granted official titles by the court were divided into three categories: vassal monarchs, prince lineages, envoys skilled in special regulations, and students studying abroad; Shinjō belonged to the third category, which essentially was an institutionalized recognition of his achievements in ritual and musical symbols.

In Shinjō's posthumous official rank was not exceptional; according to the rank of posthumous titles, his official rank at the time was also around fifth grade. "Shangyi Fengyu" was an official title during the Sui and Tang dynasties. Its main duty was to manage the emperor's clothing exclusively. Although this position had no real power, it was a high official rank of fifth grade. Historically, those who held the position were mostly close relatives of the emperor or deeply favored and trusted by the emperor. According to statistics, about 26 officials held the position of "Shangyi Fengyu" during the Tang dynasty, most of whom came from imperial relatives, sons of meritorious or famous ministers, children of previous emperors, and those with specialized records or skills. In Shinjō clearly did not fall into the first three categories. In Shinjō, as a foreign scholar of ritual systems who died in Chang'an, was posthumously awarded this honor as a special honor and incentive established by the Tang court for foreign cultural researchers, serving as a supporting system for the Tang dynasty's cross-cultural acceptance system.

Granting official titles is merely a favor, not a real position. Therefore, the posthumous title of "Shangyi Fengyu" and the actual position of Shangyi Fengyu may not have a necessary intrinsic connection with the emperor. It is possible that the Tang dynasty granted posthumous titles to officials of foreign envoys to Tang who died in Tang, such as those of high rank or extraordinary individuals. Therefore, the posthumous "Shangyi Fengyu" and the actual position of Shangyi Fengyu may not have a necessary connection with the emperor. It is possible that the Tang dynasty granted official titles to envoys to Tang who died in Tang China

or to those with special contributions. At the same time, "Shangyi Fengyu" may also be related to In Shinjō's own expertise; for example, In Shinjō may have been responsible for or involved in the construction of the Ritsuryō state, related to the carriage and clothing system. During the Nara period, Japan was in a critical period of localization of the court attire system: in 718, the "Yōrō Ritsuryō" was issued, but the emperor's ceremonies and court assemblies still used local plain-colored formal attire; In the first year of Tenpyō (732), during the New Year's Day ceremony, the emperor wore the full set of Tang-style crown robes for the first time during the ceremony, fully covering the entire period of In Shinjō in Chang'an from 716 to 734 [8].

To complete the transplantation of crown and attire symbols, the Japanese court specifically selected bureaucrats familiar with court dress regulations to visit Tang China, and In Shinjō was the dedicated medium responsible for this civilizational transformation. The Tang dynasty Shang Yi Bureau preserved a complete set of imperial ceremonial dress production and usage standards, which closely matched In Shinjō's study goals. Posthumously awarding him the title of Shang Yi Feng Yu was not only an official recognition of his years of study but also reflected the Tang Dynasty's proactive export of ritual and music symbols and the overall dissemination strategy of building East Asian ritual cultural circles.

The Tang Six Codes: Honglu Temple Guest Office clearly recorded the posthumous arrangements for foreign personnel: the chief and deputy envoys of foreign missions, or leaders of third rank and above, had to report to the monarch, and funeral supplies were to be distributed by the government; For those of fourth rank and below, only vehicles were arranged for the funeral procession, without reporting to the emperor. The conversion standards were third rank for third rank, fourth and fifth rank for fourth class. According to the above, In Shinjō did not have the actual official rank of Chang'an and was classified as a fourth-rank foreign leader. Routine administrative procedures were only for the Ministry of Rites and Ministry of Rites to draft funeral standards and posthumous titles based on the unified standards of foreign tribes. News of In Shinjō's death alone was not necessarily reported to the emperor, and his funeral was conducted according to Tang dynasty customs for foreign officials, including writing epitaphs. Therefore, the epitaph recorded in the emperor's posthumous title for In Shinjō may be a case of the epitaph mentioning "the emperor's grief," but in reality, the title may have been determined by the official responsible for the work according to the usual rules and principles of posthumous titles. The epitaph may have been merely embellished and not personally witnessed by Emperor Xuanzong, or perhaps In Shinjō died due to a major sudden incident. Moreover, due to In Shinjō's significant contributions to the Tang dynasty, this incident alarmed Xuanzong, who, in his sorrow, personally issued an edict to confer the title. However, due to the lack of historical evidence and the discovery of new archaeological materials, these two views are merely speculations based on existing materials. Therefore, the issue of In Shinjō's official rank requires further research.

5. Interpretation of the author of the epitaph

The Tang dynasty established a clear official funeral handling process for foreign envoys and government-funded scholars who had passed away in Chang'an and Luoyang. The Bureau of Writings, the Zhenguan Office, and the Honglu Temple cooperated in a division of labor, jointly completing the writing, engraving, and placement of inscriptions. The Zhuozuo Lang and Zuo Lang were responsible for drafting the inscription documents uniformly and preparing general writing templates in advance to meet the bulk funeral needs of outsiders; the Zhen Guanshi undertook the practical work of stone carving and making funeral objects; the Honglu Temple's Dianke Office coordinated the entire process of living, studying, and posthumous

arrangements for outsiders in China, organizing basic archives and handing them over to the Literary Works Bureau for writing.

Who wrote the epitaph for In Shinjō ? The epitaph information for In Shinjō is brief, recording only surnames and courtesy names, lacking family background. The root cause is that the Honglu had limited registration materials for foreign students, unable to provide complete background information, so basic information could only be filled in with templates. At the end of the epitaph, "the form is buried in foreign soil, the soul returns to its homeland" was a common expression at the time in epitaphs, not written exclusively for Jing Zhen. From the perspective of cross-cultural communication, this standardized document template balanced Central Plains funeral traditions with the homesickness of outsiders, recording and transmitting Central Plains ritual and music culture while considering the emotional identification of outsiders, reducing psychological distance between civilizations. This was a gentle narrative approach in Tang dynasty official foreign cultural communication and reflected the dynasty's inclusive and considerate approach toward foreign cultural recipients.

The inscription's ending, "My form is buried in a foreign land, my soul returns to my homeland," is widely found in foreign inscriptions in the Western Regions and the Korean Peninsula, and belongs to the Bureau of Writings' pre-produced standardized universal script. From the perspective of cross-cultural narrative strategy, this sentence balances Central Plains funeral rites with overseas media and local sentiments, weakens psychological barriers between civilizations, and reduces the rejection of Central Plains ritual and musical symbols by outsiders. It is a typical example of Tang dynasty officials designing gentle narratives for external communication. The core narrative is fine-tuned based solely on the tomb owner's personal experience, confirming that the stele was not written by relatives or friends but is a formal official document carrying the Tang court's narrative of foreign civilization. The entire process proves that the Tang dynasty established an integrated management system covering foreign cultural media intervention, study tours, and posthumous matters. While adhering to the discourse of Central Plains ritual and music, it also considered foreign sentiments, adopted gentle and inclusive narrative strategies, and achieved a unity of institutional management and cultural dissemination, reflecting the mature techniques of medieval countries in external communication.

6. Conclusion

By combining the actual inscriptions on the In Shinjō stele with Chinese and Japanese texts, it is possible to fully reconstruct the cross-cultural transmission chain of the government-led ritual system in the 8th century between Tang and Japan: Japan formulated a policy of civilization transplantation based on Ritsuryō reforms, selecting professionals like In Shinjō to study ritual systems in Tang China; The Honglu Temple coordinated the daily management and ritual and music study channels for foreign trainees, allowing learners to absorb core systems such as imperial crowns and robes, after which relevant cultural norms returned to Japan for localization. At the same time, the Tang court established supporting preferential policies such as posthumous honorary titles and publicly funded burials, establishing a stable mechanism for two-way civilizational exchange. This institutionalized communication model, promoted jointly by the administrative systems of both countries, differs from scattered folk interactions and is the most mature form of cross-cultural exchange in Middle East Asia

Since the inscription was unearthed in 2004, current research has mostly focused on historical research on the tomb owner's name, identity, and posthumous official titles, with little explanation from the perspective of cross-cultural communication. Current research mainly focuses on modern transnational communication carriers, but there are still research gaps in typical cases of medieval official ritual system transmission. This stele inscription fills this gap, providing scarce physical evidence for analyzing pre-modern civilizational flows, intercultural adaptation, and dynastic strategies for foreign cultural export.

From a macro East Asian historical perspective, from the Taika Reform to the Nara period, Japan continuously sent missions to Tang China to fully absorb the Tang dynasty's political and ritual systems, with In Shinjō being a typical individual in this national-level civilization transplantation process. The historical facts recorded in the inscription, such as the eastward transmission of the crown and clothing system and the management and pension of foreign personnel, vividly demonstrate the cultural influence of the flourishing Tang dynasty on Northeast Asia and serve as firsthand archaeological evidence of equality and mutual learning between ancient Chinese and Japanese civilizations. Subsequent research can combine Nara clothing documents and Tang dynasty foreign inscription groups to clarify the complete transmission of the Tang crown and attire system into Japan, further uncover the interdisciplinary value of earth and stone carvings, and achieve the integrated development of cultural relic research and cross-cultural communication theory analysis.

Disclosure statement

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A Study on the Redesign and Revitalization of Visual Symbols in Intangible Cultural Heritage Crafts from the Perspective of Digital Media

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of rapid development in digital media, new media has opened up new avenues for the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) crafts. However, it has also exposed practical challenges such as the inherent weakness of transmission and the digital divide faced by practitioners. Furthermore, some revitalization efforts have given rise to issues such as superficial appropriation of symbols and the erosion of cultural significance. This paper adopts a digital media perspective, focusing on the visual symbols of intangible cultural heritage crafts as its research subject. Employing methods such as literature review, semiotic analysis, and case studies, it explores approaches to the graphic redesign of visual symbols across three dimensions—fundamental principles, semiotic deconstruction, and graphic reconstruction—and further examines implementation pathways such as the digitization of visual materials and the establishment of online dissemination channels. By translating traditional visual symbols through graphic redesign and leveraging digital media to promote the living transmission of intangible cultural heritage crafts, this study aims to provide design references for similar innovation practices in the field of intangible cultural heritage crafts.

Keywords: Intangible cultural heritage crafts; Digital media; Visual symbols; Living heritage revitalization

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1. Introduction

In the era of new media, most print media have been replaced by digital and electronic media. The development of the Internet has ushered people into the digital age. Digital media has fully permeated people's daily lives, and various online platforms have provided entirely new opportunities for the dissemination and promotion of traditional intangible cultural heritage crafts. This has broken through the geographical and in-person limitations of the past, allowing niche traditional crafts to enter the public eye. However, in the actual process of inheritance and development, intangible cultural heritage crafts still face numerous pressing practical issues that require urgent resolution. In particular, as modern lifestyles shift, urbanization and industrialization advance rapidly, traditional folk customs continue to disappear, and rural

lifestyles undergo drastic changes, the original foundation for the survival of these crafts is gradually eroding, and the traditional cultural spheres upon which they depend are suffering severe shocks [1].

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the visual presentation of many traditional crafts tends to be outdated, which inevitably puts them out of step with contemporary aesthetic tastes. Practitioners often encounter numerous difficulties when using new media tools, which can easily lead to a two-way communication impasse; as a result, many valuable intangible cultural heritage resources are unable to be effectively disseminated online.

In light of these practical challenges, this paper, grounded in the current communication environment, focuses on the innovative design and revitalization of visual symbols in intangible cultural heritage crafts. The paper first examines the various practical challenges faced in the transmission of these crafts, then explores specific approaches to the extraction, deconstruction, and graphic redesign of visual symbols, in an effort to identify strategies for the digital transformation of visual resources that are suitable for craftspeople.

2. Real-world challenges facing the development of intangible cultural heritage crafts in the new media environment

2.1. The space for passing down traditions is shrinking, making it difficult to continue the transmission of these skills

Since their inception, intangible cultural heritage crafts have been deeply rooted in folk life, folk customs, and regional culture, passing down from generation to generation through everyday contexts, folk rituals, and the master-apprentice tradition. In the past, various festive customs and rural settings served as vital platforms for the display, use, and transmission of these crafts. Ordinary people could encounter and learn these skills in their daily lives, naturally fostering a local atmosphere of cultural transmission. However, as lifestyles have changed and urbanization and industrialization have continued to advance, traditional folk customs have gradually faded, the rural landscape has undergone significant changes, and the cultural foundations that sustain intangible cultural heritage crafts have steadily weakened.

Because traditional handicrafts are no longer necessities in people's daily lives and their practical value has rapidly declined, it is difficult for young people to come into contact with these craft techniques and the associated culture in their daily lives. Take the silverware forging craft of Leishan, Guizhou, as an example: once a traditional craft essential to the daily lives of the Miao people, it has seen its foundation for transmission continue to erode as the outflow of labor due to urbanization has turned core villages into "ghost villages," leading to a sharp decline in the number of local artisans [2]. At the same time, most intangible cultural heritage (ICH) crafts rely solely on the master-apprentice model of oral and practical transmission passed down from generation to generation. The learning process is lengthy, the skills are difficult to master, and financial returns are slow to materialize. Compared to industries that offer immediate employment opportunities, it is difficult to attract young people to learn and carry on these traditions actively. Currently, the majority of intangible cultural heritage bearers are middle-aged or elderly, and with young people showing little willingness to carry on these traditions, the talent gap is becoming increasingly severe. As the scope of traditional inheritance gradually shrinks, many outstanding intangible cultural heritage craft skills will fail to be successfully passed down, leading to an awkward situation where there is no one to learn, no one to teach, and no one to carry on the tradition—a situation that severely impacts the long-term development of these crafts.

2.2. There are obstacles to the two-way exchange of intangible cultural heritage crafts

The ongoing deterioration of the preservation environment is merely a minor aspect of the challenges facing the development of intangible cultural heritage crafts. In the process of promoting these crafts through new media, two major issues—an aesthetic disconnect and the digital divide—have persistently plagued the sector, and these are the key obstacles that have long hindered their online dissemination.

The entire visual system of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) originates from the agricultural era; whether in terms of patterns and color schemes or overall design, it aligns with the aesthetics of that bygone era. However, contemporary audiences prefer a minimalist, trendy visual style. Consequently, there is a significant disconnect between the visual presentation of traditional crafts and the current aesthetic preferences of the general public. It is precisely this aesthetic gap that makes it difficult for online ICH content to retain young users, significantly diminishing its reach and impact.

At the same time, the digital divide has further compounded the challenges of disseminating intangible cultural heritage. Many veteran masters who have dedicated years to their craft—despite their exceptional skills and solid foundations—are, due to their age, largely unfamiliar with digital communication tools such as short-form video production. As a result, traditional crafts are not being disseminated as effectively as they could be.

In contrast, young professionals who specialize in new media operations generally lack a deep understanding of the cultural significance and technical details of intangible cultural heritage. This immediately highlights the imbalance between supply and demand in the dissemination of such heritage. With traditional visual formats falling behind and older-generation practitioners lacking digital skills, a two-way communication challenge arises.

3. Methods for redesigning visual symbols of intangible cultural heritage crafts

3.1. Extraction and deconstruction of visual symbols in intangible cultural heritage crafts

To address the issue of outdated visual styles in intangible cultural heritage crafts, the first step is to organize, distill, and deconstruct traditional visual symbols systematically—this serves as the fundamental basis for visual redesign. The visual symbols of intangible cultural heritage go far beyond mere surface patterns; they embody regional characteristics, folkloric significance, and the depth of craftsmanship.

In the actual production process, it is important to first understand that the primary reason for the differences among intangible cultural heritage (ICH) crafts lies in the varying methods and skills used to create a single product—and even the materials and forms employed differ—resulting in products with distinct characteristics. This practice of “using locally available materials” and “adapting to local conditions” is the defining feature of ICH crafts [3]. Next, traditional visual materials related to ICH crafts are collected, including classic patterns, distinctive color palettes, and other elements. Once the collection is complete, the complex visual elements must be filtered: secondary elements that do not align with contemporary aesthetics are removed, while the core visual symbols that best represent the craft’s distinctive characteristics are retained.

3.2. Methods for the reconstruction of graphic visual symbols in contemporary communication

After extracting, screening, and semantically deconstructing the visual symbols, the next step is to reinterpret

the visual symbols of intangible cultural heritage in a graphic design context and establish a brand-new visual system tailored for digital media. This design transformation primarily involves optimizing visual effects while upholding the core cultural essence, thereby better adapting ancient traditional elements to modern communication contexts.

The key to simplifying forms lies in simplification and reconstruction. Since traditional handicrafts feature complex lines, the optimization process must distill core symbols, eliminate superfluous decorative details, and retain only highly recognizable outlines and primary structures. The optimized forms are simple and can be adapted to mainstream digital communication contexts; Targeted adjustments to color schemes are also necessary. Most traditional intangible cultural heritage color palettes have low saturation, which does not align with modern aesthetics. The specific solution involves making subtle color adjustments during the design process; by maintaining the traditional color palette, the designs can better align with the aesthetic preferences of younger audiences.

4. Implementation pathways for revitalizing intangible cultural heritage crafts through digital media art

4.1. Building a diverse communication matrix to bridge the digital divide in the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage

To truly achieve the long-term revitalization of intangible cultural heritage crafts, the key lies in establishing online communication channels and addressing the critical issue of inheritors' limited digital operational capabilities. Since most inheritors have virtually no foundation in digital operations, they are simply unable to independently create content or manage social media accounts. In response to this situation, a diverse and streamlined online communication framework can be established, which would significantly lower the barrier to entry for intangible cultural heritage inheritors participating in digital communication.

A practical approach would be to leverage major new media platforms to create dedicated accounts for intangible cultural heritage (ICH). These accounts could showcase the entire handmade production process and innovative visual design works in an accessible manner. Young people, who are more familiar with new media strategies, could be tasked with filming, editing, and promotion, while ICH masters focus on demonstrating their exquisite craftsmanship and interpreting the cultural significance of the techniques. This arrangement would allow both parties to benefit from complementary collaboration; In addition, a small-scale online exhibition platform can be established to showcase original ICH works and craft details in one place, breaking through the geographical limitations of physical exhibition halls and making it easier for the public to gain a deeper understanding of ICH culture.

4.2. Establish a comprehensive, coordinated system to ensure the long-term revitalization and transmission of intangible cultural heritage

The digital revitalization of intangible cultural heritage crafts is not merely an innovation in dissemination, but a systematic endeavor encompassing cultural transmission, design innovation, industrial development, and ecosystem building. Taking the design transformation of Tu ethnic embroidery artisans as an example, the juxtaposition of "tradition and modernity" that has emerged in the emerging digital media environment has prompted their creative practices to transcend the narrow model of "cultural replication." Under this model, the embroidery artisans proactively adopt a cultural innovation paradigm that symbolically fuses

ethnic motifs with contemporary aesthetics, thereby preserving the genetic identity of the "pan embroidery" technique while also providing interpretive space that aligns with contemporary tastes [4].

If we are to establish a comprehensive system for the innovation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), the most critical step is to resolve communication barriers between designers and ICH inheritors, bridge the gap between design creation and craft production, and further enable designers to uncover hidden techniques and deeper cultural connotations within ICH, thereby transforming modern design concepts into concrete solutions compatible with traditional craftsmanship; In this process, inheritors can also engage with entirely new modern aesthetic approaches, refresh their design thinking, and thereby transform their years of accumulated craftsmanship experience into innovative, practical, and visual design resources, achieving a deep integration of traditional techniques and modern design.

5. Conclusion

Inheriting and developing China's outstanding traditional culture is an integral part of building a socialist cultural powerhouse and a modern Chinese civilization. The evolution of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in modern society undoubtedly serves as an ideal entry point for examining the processes and mechanisms underlying the inheritance and development of China's outstanding traditional culture [5]. The digital media era offers entirely new opportunities for the transmission and development of ICH crafts, while also placing higher demands on their modernization and innovative dissemination. The practical challenges currently facing ICH crafts—such as the shrinking scope of transmission, a misalignment of visual systems, and the digital divide—constitute the core bottlenecks constraining their development. To break through these developmental challenges, we cannot rely solely on promotional efforts; instead, we must make concerted efforts in two dimensions: visual innovation and digital revitalization.

This paper systematically examines the various challenges facing the development of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) crafts in the new media environment and clearly identifies the core contradictions between traditional inheritance models and modern digital dissemination. By integrating real-world communication scenarios, this study explores effective pathways for the digital transformation of online visual materials. Using visual redesign as a starting point, it optimizes the methods of ICH dissemination, leveraging digital technology to overcome communication limitations and enabling traditional crafts to adapt to the pace of development in the digital age. The study aims to provide practical guidance for the digital revitalization of ICH crafts, helping traditional ICH overcome current development bottlenecks as quickly as possible and achieve sustainable, stable, and dynamic transmission and innovative development in the digital age.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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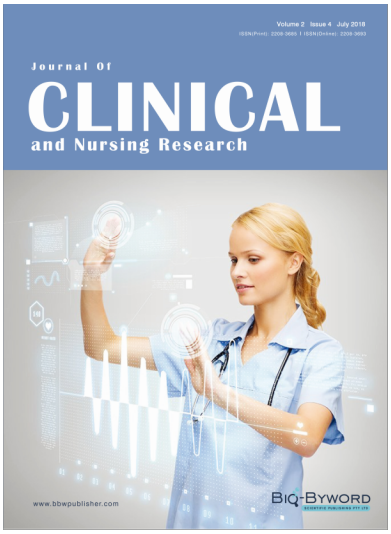

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