

Research on the Living Heritage of Kangba Culture under the Perspective of Cultural and Creative Industries

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Abstract: The living heritage of Kangba culture in the cultural and creative industry, exemplified by the "Bodhi Accompanied" Rural City Cat Reverence Cultural Jewelry Design practice, has been explored and organized through literature research, field investigations, and in-depth interviews. The study found that the Kangba culture possesses unique elements of cat reverence culture, which hold significant value in the cultural and creative industry. By studying the practice of the "Bodhi Accompanied" Rural City Cat Reverence Cultural Jewelry Design, not only is the essence of Kangba culture manifested, but new ideas and methods are also provided for its living heritage in the cultural and creative industry. This research holds both theoretical and practical significance for the living heritage of Kangba culture in the cultural and creative industry.

Keywords: Kangba Culture; Rural City Cat Reverence Culture; Living Heritage; Jewelry Design

1. Introduction

The Kangba Xizang region is an area rich in historical and cultural heritage, where the culture of cat reverence is one of its significant cultural elements. It has distinct regional characteristics and visual features. Therefore, in this study, it is used as the basic element for cultural excavation and research. The project of "Bodhi Accompanied" Rural City Cat Reverence Cultural Jewelry Design aims to excavate the essence of Kangba culture and integrate it into cultural and creative products through design practices, thereby promoting the inheritance and development of Kangba culture. This paper seeks to explore the living heritage of Kangba culture in the cultural and

creative industry, using the "Bodhi Accompanied" Rural City Cat Reverence Cultural Jewelry Design practice as an example, and delve into and organize the Kangba culture.[1]

2. Kangba Culture and Cat Reverence Culture

2.1 The Diversity and Uniqueness of Kangba Culture

Ganzi Prefecture is located in the western part of Sichuan Province, on the southeastern edge of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau. Locally, it is commonly referred to as the "Kangba" region, or simply "Kang." The term "Kangba" is a transliteration from Xizang. As an ethnic concept, it means "people of the Kang region" (historically referring specifically to the Kangba Xizang, but now broadly includes all who live in the Kang area). As a geographical concept, it refers to "the area where Kangba people live," namely the "Kang region." This region is one of China's three major Xizang regions (Weizang, Amdo, Kangba), mainly covering areas like Chamdo in Xizang, Ganzi in Sichuan, Yushu in Qinghai, and Diqing in Yunnan. This region, primarily inhabited by Zang but also home to Han, Qiang, Yi, Hui, and other ethnic groups, is characterized by a diverse, varied, historically profound, and peripheral Kangba culture.[2,3]

Xiangcheng County is located at the junction of Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, in the southwestern part of Ganzi Prefecture, the northern section of the Hengduan Mountains, the southern end of the Shaluli Mountain range, and the longitudinal valley area on the east bank of the Jinsha River. It is neighbored by Daocheng County to the east, borders Shangri-La City in Yunnan to the south, is adjacent to Batang County and Derong County

to the west, and borders Litang County to the north. The county spans 68.6 kilometers from east to west and 120.7 kilometers from north to south, covering an area of 5,016 square kilometers. With an average altitude of around 3,900 meters, its permanent population is 31,407 as of November 2020. Often referred to as the "Southern Gate" of Ganzi Prefecture, it is a crucial point on the Dali — Lijiang — Zhongdian — Xiangcheng — Daocheng — Litang — Kangding golden tourist route.[4] "Xiangcheng" is the Chinese transliteration of the Zang language word "Kacheng". Its meaning is the "Buddha beads in hand". The Shuoqu River runs from north to south through the county, acting like a thread connecting the white villages (the white Zang houses where the locals live) along both banks of the river, looking like a string of Buddha beads, hence the name. It is an autonomous county predominantly inhabited by Xizang, along with other ethnic groups such as the Yi, Qiang, Miao, Hui, and a total of 16 different ethnicities.

2.2 The Long-standing Culture of Revering Cats

The Kangba Xizang region is an area with a rich history and profound cultural heritage. The Kangba Xizang region possesses unique cultural legacies, such as religious beliefs, folk customs, and traditional crafts. Among them, the culture of cat reverence stands as an important cultural element of the Kangba Xizang region. The inhabitants of the Kangba Xizang region widely regard cats as sacred animals, believed to ward off evil spirits, avert disasters, and protect households. In their daily lives, cats are seen as symbols of good fortune and are treated with kindness and respect. This culture of cat reverence is reflected in the Kangba Xizang region's faith, customs, arts, and other aspects.[5,6]

Regarding the origins of the cat-revering culture: Legend has it that there were originally no cats in the Xiangcheng area. During the heyday of Buddhism, people adhered to the doctrine of "do not kill." However, rats took this opportunity to multiply in vast numbers and wreak havoc locally, not only stealing food but also nibbling on religious scriptures and books, posing a severe threat to the continuity of Buddhism. Local devotees, hearing that cats in distant India

could eradicate rats, had no choice but to travel far to India to invite cats to come and protect their faith by eliminating the rats. During negotiations with the cat, the envoys agreed to three conditions: First, allowing it to sleep and keep warm next to the warm stove; second, feeding it primarily with cow's milk; and third, allowing it to partake in household joy and happiness as a family member. Seeing the generous treatment, the cat willingly traveled the long distance to Xiangcheng. From then on, the rat infestation in Xiangcheng was eradicated. People revered cats as "guardians of the faith," offering them special care and even incorporating them into the totem of the kitchen god. As a result, cats in Xiangcheng hold a special religious status. People regard them as reincarnated figures of revered monks and offer them protection. Locals also believe that cats can bring wealth. If a foreign cat visits a home seeking food, the homeowner would present it with lavish meals. In this region, anyone who kills a cat would be penalized as if they had harmed a monk or nun. Even if the cat is a stray that steals chickens, it cannot be harmed without cause. This led to the formation of the unique culture of cat reverence in Xiangcheng. Locals revere and worship the cat as their significant guardian deity, passing this tradition down through generations. This has gradually led to the formation of various images venerating the cat and other related legends and stories.

3. Application and Embodiment of the Cat-Revering Culture in Cultural and Creative Design

3.1 Design Inspiration and Creative Source

The design series "Bodhi Accompaniment" takes the Xiangcheng cat-revering culture as its primary cultural medium and creative starting point. It abstractly derives from the well-known and revered cat forms in Xiangcheng, making them the principal design elements. This approach extends to various popular jewelry types, including earrings, rings, necklaces, and brooches, reinforcing the design's continuity, coherence, and the series' essence. The design's characteristics manifest in the following Figure 1:

3.2. Design Details and Features

Form and Aesthetics: The overall movement

and specific physical features of the revered cat (head, ears, tail, etc.) are extracted as concrete design elements. These are abstracted and integrated with techniques such as rotation and twisting to satisfy the specific functional and cultural style requirements. The design captures the round head, pointed ears, twisting body, and curled tail of a cat, always showcasing the lively and dynamic features of cats, evoking natural affection in users.[7]

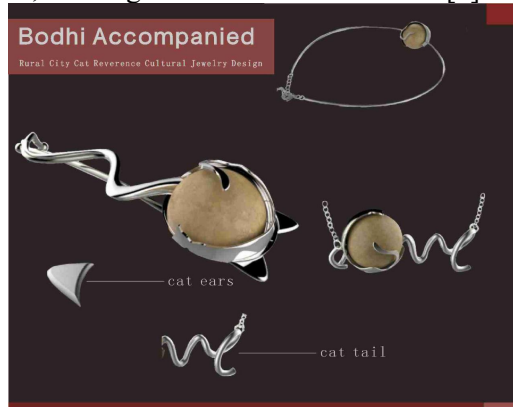


Figure 1. Bodhi Accompaniment - Xiangcheng Cat-Revering Jewelry Design Series (Proposal)

Material Selection: The main materials chosen are standard silver (commonly known as 925 silver) and Xiangcheng's "Phoenix Eye" Bodhi seeds. Silver represents metal, and the Bodhi seed signifies wood, symbolizing the union of metal and wood. Wood stands for the beginning of all things in the East. Gold, especially its dominant yellow hue, signifies perseverance. Combining the cold of metal and the warmth of wood illustrates the balance of strength and gentleness in Eastern aesthetics.

Standard silver is made by adding 7.5% copper to silver during the jewelry-making process. This alloy, which consists of 92.5% silver and 7.5% copper, is internationally known as Standard silver. Because of the addition of 7.5% other metals, Standard silver has the ideal hardness, making it widely used for setting jewelry. Furthermore, rhodium plating (commonly referred to in the industry as white gold) on Standard silver can significantly delay the yellowing or blackening characteristics of silver under oxidation or sulfidation.

Fengyan Bodhi is the most distinctive among Bodhi seeds, characterized by 1 to 2 prominent lines on its surface. These patterns resemble the beautiful and elegant eyes, hence the name

"Fengyan" (Phoenix Eye). In Buddhist scriptures, it mentions one of the "Eight Divisions of Devas and Nāgas", Garuda (a kind of super bird), which is believed to be the prototype of the Chinese phoenix, rebirthing every 500 years. As a result, in Buddhist paintings, sculptures, and embroidery, patterns themed around the phoenix are commonly found. Legend has it that the phoenix is a messenger of happiness in the human world, symbolizing auspiciousness. Fengyan Bodhi presents a rustic yet refined yellow-brown hue, possessing a hard texture that remains unaltered over time and gains luster as years pass. New beads are pale yellow, and as they age, their color deepens. Old beads exhibit a mix of red and black, signifying high quality. It is said that Xiangcheng is the only place in China where Fengyan Bodhi is produced. Wild Bodhi trees are everywhere here, with over 300,000 fruit-bearing trees, among which two are over a thousand years old. Not only is Xiangcheng a significant producer of Bodhi seeds, but it also boasts a wide variety of them. Collected in Xiangcheng are nine types of Bodhi seeds, including Fengyan Bodhi, Longyan Bodhi, Qilin-eye Bodhi, Yue-eye Bodhi, Phoenix-claw Bodhi, Dragon-claw Bodhi, Lotus Holding Treasure Bodhi, Dapeng Golden-thread Bird Bodhi, and Dumu Yinju Bodhi. For this design, the unique local Fengyan Bodhi is utilized as the primary foundational material, which not only accentuates the regional cultural traits but also effectively promotes the local Bodhi-related industries, benefiting the overall development of local tourism.[8,9]

Next, in terms of color coordination. The inherent metallic silver of the silver material and the original yellow-brown of the Bodhi seed are used as the color match. The warm hue of yellow-brown contrasts with the cold of silver. In this design series, the combination of Fengyan Bodhi and standard silver is employed, emphasizing a refined and simplistic aura. The overall color scheme exudes a calm yet vibrant and lively effect.

Lastly, regarding the craftsmanship. The inlay of Bodhi seeds primarily uses the bezel setting technique. As the name suggests, "Bezel Setting" means that the material being set is wrapped all around by a metal edge. It is the most stable and traditional setting method. The silver edge and the bodhi seed should fit

closely, uniformly, and smoothly, fully displaying the bodhi seed's original texture, pattern, and overall shape characteristics. Using a traditionally concise setting method can better reflect the artwork's restrained, calm, and elegant artistic temperament and the local simple and unpretentious folk customs. The surface treatment of the silver parts adopts the sandblasting method. After polishing the jewelry, high pressure is used to blast quartz sand or river sand onto the exposed jewelry surface, creating a finely sanded surface. The sandblasting process endows silver jewelry with a richer texture and a hazy, soft beauty.[10] (As shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3)



Figure 2. Process of Making the Artwork



Figure 3. Finished Product Image

4. Conclusions

This paper delves into the living heritage of Kangba culture in the Xiangcheng area and pays particular attention to the "Cat Reverence Culture", a pivotal element. Through detailed analysis and design practice, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Firstly, the living heritage of Kangba culture not only resides in preserving its history and traditions but is more about innovatively integrating them into modern life. This blend not only aids in the cultural inheritance but also invigorates people's interest and engagement in the culture. The reverence for cats in the Xiangcheng area serves as a

quintessential example of this dynamic inheritance.

Secondly, the design practices of "Bodhi Companion" have successfully infused the elements of Cat Reverence Culture into jewelry design. This not only meets the modern pursuit of beauty but also showcases the unique charm of Kangba culture. Such design practices not only assist in disseminating the Cat Reverence Culture but also pave new possibilities for the growth of Kangba culture.

Lastly, the design practices of "Bodhi Companion" underscore that cultural inheritance and innovation are not contradictory, but rather complementary. This philosophy and practice offer crucial insights for our understanding and propulsion of cultural evolution.

In summary, creativity derived from culture provides us with fresh perspectives and ideas to comprehend and boost the living heritage of Kangba culture. By adopting a cultural and creative perspective and method to extract, sort out, and redesign the regional cultural elements of the Kangba area, this provides some experience for subsequent sorting and promotion of local culture in this area. It can also offer new insights for the external dissemination of the culture of this region. It is hoped that this paper will spark heightened attention and interest in Kangba culture, contributing even more towards its preservation and innovation.

Acknowledgements

This article is a concluding result of a project from the Sichuan Province Social Sciences Key Research Base - Kangba Culture Research Center, Project Number: KBYJ2020A003.

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