

Dong Brocade in Hunan, China: Literacy and Re-invention of Tradition in the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection

Qiong Liu, Mateta Sirisuk*

Faculty of Fine-Applied Arts and Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University, Mahasarakham, Thailand

Corresponding author: Mateta Sirisuk, E-mail: metta.s@msu.ac.th

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we investigated (i) the history, development, and current situation of Dong brocade in the Dong Autonomous County of Passage, Hunan Province, China, from the perspective of the historical development of the Dong ethnic group and (ii) the traditional re-invention of Dong brocade weaving techniques and the re-creation of the traditional educational literacy in the perspective of the intangible cultural heritage protection. This study is qualitative, mainly using the concepts of traditional re-invention and educational literacy, adopting two methods of data collection, namely, documentary research and field survey, and presenting them in the form of descriptive analysis. The results of the study show that the Dong people in China have a long history, and Dong brocade is a product of the social life and ecological environment of the local Dong people. With the development of the times and under different social demands, Dong brocade has been recreated in terms of the production process, raw materials, product types, and traditional education, and the literacy of Dong brocade has also been "recreated." This study explores how to promote the traditional re-creation of Dong brocade from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage protection and how to realize the educational literacy of Dong brocade in various ways with the support of the government, enterprises, and universities. This is of great value to the theoretical study of the living heritage of Dong Brocade and the Chinese government's promotion of the protection and development of minority cultures.

Key words: Dong Brocade, Educational Literacy, Re-Invention of Tradition, Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection

INTRODUCTION

The Dong is an ethnic minority in China, and Dong women have created a unique brocade culture, Dong brocade, with their unique sense of aesthetics and superb weaving skills. The Dong brocade of the Dong Autonomous County of Tongdao in Hunan Province is famous for its colorful patterns and motifs, and it became China's national intangible cultural heritage in 2008. Located in the southernmost part of Huaihua City, Hunan Province, China, and at the junction of Hunan, Guangxi, and Guizhou provinces (regions), Dong Autonomous County of Tongdao is one of the significant Dong settlements in China. The county has a total area of 2,239 square kilometers. According to the seventh population census data, as of November 1, 2020, the resident population of Tongdao was 20,047, of which Dong accounted for 78.3% of the total population (Yanhui & Wei, 2010). The county is 58 kilometers wide from east to west and 68 kilometers long from north to south, with a total area of 2,239 square kilometers (Dong Ethnic History Compilation Group, 2008). The area of Dong brocade inheritance in Tongdao accounts for about 60% of the total area of the county, mainly distributed in

the western and southern townships known as the "Hundred Mile Dong Cultural Corridor," mainly in the townships of Yatonbao Township, Baoyang Township, Jingwuzhou Township, Dupo Township, Shuangjiang Township, Huangtu Township, Pingtan Township, Longcheng Township, Pingyang Township, Ganxi Township and some other villages in Xianxi Township (Yanhui & Wei, 2010).

In the Dong ethnic group, which has no writing, the Dong brocade, which reflects the historical inheritance and real-life scenes, has become a carrier of Dong culture. However, academic research on Dong Brocade has yet to yield rich results. The existing research mainly focuses on the cultural interpretation and historical changes of Dong brocade. The cultural heritage and protection of Dong brocade skills have not attracted enough attention from society, and the academic community needs a systematic study on this issue. With the advancement of modernization, the subversion and destruction of the Dong brocade inheritance environment have been intensified, making it face various difficulties, such as the disintegration of the inheritance foundation and the disappearance of cultural connotation. In this context, as cultural self-confidence and cultural renaissance have become the

consensus of the times, it has gradually become a realistic demand to re-examine the contemporary value of folk art and carry out creative transformation and innovative development of folk art. This paper introduces “re-invention of tradition” and “educational literacy” to dynamically present the logical process and operational mechanism of traditional re-invention of Dong brocade, as well as the impact of Dong brocade, a traditional ethnic minority weaving skill, on educational literacy in the process of continuous traditional re-invention under the perspective of intangible heritage. Therefore, the research in this paper will play an essential role in promoting the literacy and re-creation of Dong brocade weaving techniques, constructing the educational literacy path of Dong brocade, and promoting the protection and role of intangible cultural heritage by our government.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts qualitative research methods, focusing on Dong brocade in Tongtong Autonomous County, Hunan Province. It conducts a descriptive analysis of the research results using the central concepts of “reinvention of tradition” and “educational literacy.” The research process includes extensive literature review and six months of interviews.

The sample for this study comprises a diverse group of individuals connected to Dong brocade, selected through purposive sampling. The sample includes: Dong brocade inheritors, Dong brocade-related practitioners, Government officials, Schools, Researchers, Villagers, Tourists, and modern young people. The selection of modern young people is regardless of gender, and the age group is between 18-25 years old.

The instruments used for data collection include: Structured and semi-structured guides tailored for formal and informal interviews. Electronic questionnaires, designed to gather opinions from modern young people on Dong brocade. Observation checklists, used during field observations to ensure consistent data recording. Participatory research tools, used to engage with the community and gain deeper insights into the cultural context.

The data analysis process involved several steps: (1) Thematic analysis: Transcripts from interviews and observation notes were coded and analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns. (2) Descriptive analysis: The research results were described in detail, focusing on the central concepts of “reinvention of tradition” and “educational literacy.” (3) Triangulation: Data from different sources (interviews, questionnaires, observations) were cross-verified to ensure reliability and validity. (4) Comparative analysis: Responses from different groups (e.g., inheritors vs. modern young people) were compared to highlight contrasting perspectives.

RESULTS

Cultural Tradition of Dong brocade: Historical Development and Ecological Environment

The early history of Dong brocade can be traced back to more than 2,000 years ago, and according to historical

records, there were signs of the development of Dong brocade among the Dong people as early as the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (Dong Ethnic History Compilation Group, 2008). Among the ancient Asian peoples, the Baiyue were the first to plant cotton. Between the Han dynasty and the Tang and Song dynasties, the Dong ancestors' textile technology and printing and dyeing techniques had developed considerably, especially in the color matching of weavings and costumes, which had accumulated relatively rich experience and formed their aesthetic characteristics. Li Yanshou, a historian of the Tang Dynasty, wrote in the *Biography of the Northern History - Bureaucrat*: “Bureaucrat people can make fine parts, and the color is bright and clean,” which proves the characteristics of Dong brocade's gorgeous colors (Jirong & Jie, 2019), indicating that the textile dyeing and finishing techniques of the Dong ancestors at that time had reached a certain over-achievement level. The Dong society in the Ming and Qing dynasties took shape, and the brocade also entered a period of prosperity and the brocade weaving crafts of Dong weavers became increasingly mature and exquisite. In the Qing Dynasty, the Dong brocade in the Tongdao area was already famous, and the Dong people circulated the saying “Embroidery in Liping, brocade in the Tongdao,” which shows that the Dong brocade in the Tongdao has become a wonder in the art of national brocade weaving with its rich and profound cultural connotations, unique and complicated production techniques, rich and rhythmic pattern shapes, as well as bright and harmonious color matching.

The weaving technique of Dong brocade was produced and gradually perfected by the Dong people in a specific historical period, carrying and embodying the great wisdom of the ancient laboring people and the profound thought of making things. Since ancient times, Dong women have grown their cotton, have personally processed it from spinning to weaving to embroidery, in continuous practice, have accumulated a wealth of experience, have mastered the pure skills for the prosperity of the Dong brocade art, and have laid a solid technical foundation. Dong women start to learn brocade weaving from the age of seven or eight under the teaching of elders, starting from the most basic spinning to simple pattern brocade weaving until the essential maturity of brocade weaving skills before getting married, usually before the wedding to produce completed post-wedding supplies, including the love object, the wedding dowry items and children's basic supplies. In the hand-to-hand transmission from one generation to another, the Dong brocade production process continues to improve and develop.

Dong brocade can be divided into colored and plain brocades according to their color. Plain brocade is relatively plain in color (Figure 1) usually with white as the warp thread and blue-black as the weft thread, and woven with black and white, blue and white, or black and blue. Colored brocades, (Figure 2) on the other hand, use a variety of colored threads to create a variety of gorgeous patterns. The brocade commonly used daily is usually called “daily-use brocade.” Daily-use brocade is the most widely used by the Dong people, and there are many varieties of brocade. It mainly

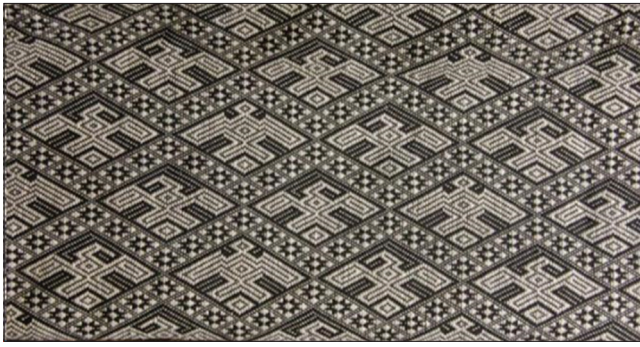


Figure 1. Plain brocade



Figure 2. Colored brocade

includes household articles and daily necessities. Household articles mainly include quilts, pillowcases, pillow towels, and so on, while daily necessities include handkerchiefs, belts, headbands, garments, and so on. In the Tongdao, almost all Dong girls know how to weave brocade, and they usually have a brocade weaving tool called “Steeple Loom” (slanting loom). The girls will spread the silk thread whenever night falls, sit on the steep machine, and weave according to a specific pattern (Dong Ethnic History Compilation Group, 2008).

Re-invention of tradition of Dong brocade

The “Re-Invention of Tradition” research concept derives from the “invention of tradition.” The *Invention of Tradition*, edited by British historian Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in 1983, is a collection of essays by six British and American scholars on the rationalization of the political transition from the “divine right of kings” to the “nation-state” in Europe (mainly in the British and colonial worlds) from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century. They argue that many of the so-called traditions were invented only in the modern period but were accepted and promoted as traditions. Such invented traditions were not unconnected with the past but implied continuity with it,

and wherever possible, these invented traditions attempted to establish continuity with an appropriate historically significant past.

The research concept of “Invention of Tradition” refers to the reinterpretation, adaptation, or creation of traditional cultural elements that meet specific needs or political objectives over a relatively short period (Peng & Metta, 2024). These new elements of tradition may not have deep historical roots, but they are shaped into cultural practices of continuity and tradition. The research concept “Re-invention of Tradition” emphasizes the reinterpretation, re-invention, or reuse of traditional or partially existing elements of traditional culture to adapt them to modern circumstances and needs. Traditional cultures may undergo changes in the re-invention of tradition, but they still retain certain historical roots and cultural connotations. Reinventing traditions is usually done for cultural transmission, maintaining identity, and adapting to changes. For example, specific traditional handicrafts or festivals may undergo moderate changes in modern society to appeal to a broader audience and adapt to contemporary aesthetics. Reinventing traditions contributes to transmitting traditional culture while maintaining cultural vitality and innovation.

The development of contemporary Dong brocade is based on the historical development of the Dong people, and the emergence of Dong brocade weaving technology can be regarded as an unconscious and conscious “invention” of the Dong people. With the development of Dong society, people’s demand for life and cultural and artistic products rises. Dong brocade products that can represent the history and culture of the Dong people and meet the aesthetics of the contemporary people have been continuously created. The “traditional reinvention” of Dong brocade is not to “invent” a new “tradition,” but to revitalize the weaving process of Dong brocade so that the function, positioning, and meaning of Dong brocade in contemporary society can be influenced by commercialization. It is to revive the weaving process of Dong brocade so that its function, position, and significance in contemporary society can be affected by commercialization and take on a new life. Dong brocade has been given a new meaning in the historical process of interweaving tradition and innovation.

Traditional reinvention of Dong brocade raw materials

Traditional Dong brocade is carefully woven with earth silk and cotton threads. Historically, from the Han Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, the Dong people made their handmade brocade by growing mulberry and raising silkworms to reel and wring threads, planting cotton to spin threads, using their own planted and prepared dyes to dye the threads into a variety of colors, and then weaving them into Dong brocade.

At the end of the Qing Dynasty, due to the timber trade in the mountainous areas where the Dong lived, the prosperity around the Dong villages, and the influence of the commodity economy on the Dong in the mountainous areas, many cotton commodities came into the Dong villages from the outside, and not only was a considerable amount of Dong cotton threads replaced by machine-produced “Shi Xian”.

With the implementation of the reform and opening up of mainland China in 1978, foreign textured yarns and eyed yarns entered the Dong area, and Dong women began to buy “Shi Xian” in the market, which was used to weave Dong brocades. The most significant advantage of “Shi Xian” is that it is rich in color and does not fade, saving time and effort and having a better aesthetic effect than traditional yarn, which has a complicated production process (Yanhui & Wei, 2010). Liu Xiang, a Dong brocade weaving woman, said that “Shi Xian is the most popular for brightly colored woven artwork” and that the change in raw materials has led to a change in the function of Dong brocade, from purely practical to decorative.

The influx of finished cotton threads, cloth, fabrics, silk threads, woolen threads, acrylic threads, chemical dyes, and sewing machines has led to the gradual decline and disappearance of the traditional crafts of cotton planting, mulberry planting, sericulture, spinning, weaving, embroidery and dyeing. Even in the most populated areas of the Dong, cotton planting, silkworm raising, and indigo planting are no longer common. The Dong women either buy back the finished yarns to weave into traditional plaid fabrics and floral thread fabrics, or buy back silk threads to make brocades, or buy back the fabrics to dye their blanks, and most of the dyes are chemical dyes purchased from the market.

The researchers learned from talking with Dong’s elders during the fieldwork in Pingtan Dong village in Tongdao that during China’s collective economic era, the family-based operation of Dong villages was terminated entirely, and their cotton production for making brocade was drastically reduced or even extinct. Until the 1960s and 1970s, when various domestic and imported fabrics supplied on the market came back to life, the production of tofu cloths also suffered a blow. As a result, the population of Dong people wearing tofu clothes continued to decline. Many significant changes occurred in the Dong region through China’s reform and opening up. The Dong had accepted chemical fiber fabrics, such as polyester and nylon, and many young men and women had begun to pursue marketable fabrics that represented fashion and sophistication.

Traditional reinvention of Dong brocade production technology

With the rapid progress of modern science and technology, banknote-spinning technology has been developed unprecedentedly. In Passage County, the slanting frame loom is mainly used to complete brocade weaving. This kind of loom can be used to weave cloth and brocade. The slant loom body part is made of machined brackets, legs, and a sitting board composition, with a body length of about 172cm and a width of about 70cm. The sitting board rests on the back of the slanting frame (Figure 3).

After the implementation of China’s reform and liberalization, in order to adapt to the needs of the market, some traditional brocade weaving factories and small family workshops began to make corresponding changes, the emergence of 2.2 meters, 2 meters wide, 1.8 meters high large-scale loom. This change enables the machine to weave fabric



Figure 3. Inclined frame loom

in different widths according to the customer’s demand for increasing the width of the cloth, in addition to significantly improve its speed in weaving brocade (Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County Overview Compilation Group, 2008). Another important innovation was the design of a particular thread-rolling machine. The invention of the thread rolling machine saves much time on traditional threading so that the yarns, which initially need to be threaded into the machine one by one, can be automatically and continuously connected to the threads. This kind of loom is more efficient, making the production of Dong brocade into the era of mechanization.

Nowadays, the Dong people pay more attention to practicality when choosing the materials for the accessories of the traditional slant loom. For example, when weaving brocades and picking yarns, people used tools made of copper, iron, or cow bones, but now, most of them use tools made of bamboo. According to Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County Overview Compilation Group, (2008), “In the past, some wealthy families used copper to show that they were well off, while the average family used tools made of ox bones. Both materials are more durable, but the downside is that copper is heavier. Using it for one day would hurt the wrist.” Nowadays, almost all of them use bamboo material to make yarn-picking tools. Firstly, bamboo is everywhere in the mountain villages of the Dong ethnic minority, so it is easy to get the material and simple to make. Secondly, bamboo is light to weight, so your hands will not get tired after using it for a long time; however, the disadvantage of bamboo is that it is not durable, and it is also easy to break, so a lot of them will be made to be used as spare parts.

Traditional reinvention of Dong brocade product types

Handmade Dong brocade textiles come from life and originate from practical use. With the Tongdao of time and changes in lifestyle, the number and variety of Dong brocade products have increased, resulting from the accumulation of experience and repetitive thinking of Dong brocade makers in their continuous production practice (Shiyi, 2014). Traditional Dong brocade products are used in a single scenario and are not widely used. In order to adapt to the needs of the commercialized market, Dong brocade has been

“re-invented” based on traditional culture, and various types of products have been innovated and tried.

In the past, Dong was woven on small looms. Nowadays, in connection with the development of the tourist market, the variety of products has increased selectively in terms of shapes and sizes. There are even many rectangular tapestries and semi-finished products that can reach a size of more than 100 square meters, which can be used for cutting and processing as a small finished type of product with a repeating pattern (Jirong & Jie, 2019).

With the change of the times, the values and the view of the nature of the Dong people have also changed, and some commonly used Dong brocade patterns have slowly withdrawn from the written Dong brocade because of the change of the concepts of the people of this ethnic group. At the same time, some new pattern contents have also appeared, such as figurative drum tower architectural patterns, traditional Han Chinese festival auspicious patterns, and Chinese character patterns. Some innovative patterns have appeared, such as E-shaped patterns, four-cornered flowers, and other deformed forms of traditional patterns (Chen, 2016).

Educational literacy of Dong brocade

In long-term historical development, Dong brocade has formed a way of educational literacy with family and village as the core of socialization. The brocade weaving skills can be taught within the family or through the master-apprentice relationship. Some brocade weaving enthusiasts can also learn to master brocade weaving skills in specific scenarios by observing and asking for guidance. The traditional educational literacy of Dong Brocade are mainly as follows:

Family role

In the Dong brocade inheritance area of the Tongdao, the family has become the central place for the inheritance of Dong brocade weaving skills. The family is the basic unit and a place for interaction and intercourse between blood relatives, neighbors, and friends. In this kind of interaction and engagement, the Dong brocade craft is passed on from generation to generation. Family role is mainly between female groups, with mothers usually leading their daughters in weaving and sometimes grandmothers providing guidance. Girls of the Dong ethnic group are exposed to brocade weaving from a young age in their family environment and gradually master the skill through hand-to-hand instruction from their elders. In times of scarcity, Dong brocade was regarded as a craft that every Dong girl had to master, not only as a necessary skill to fulfill daily needs but also as an essential measure of a girl's talent.

Dong girls' learning starts from imitation, by learning how other people's brocade weaves and pointing out the same style and pattern. This imitation skill became the most common teaching method in the Dong brocade family role. From the research, we can easily find that family role is a process of cultural imbibition, in which the two sides of pedagogy live together and have deep daily contact. It is one-to-one experiential teaching, and in this teaching process, the

party that teaches knowledge has absolute authority; these factors ensure the integrity and systematic transmission of content.

This experiential pedagogical model of educational transmission, which emphasizes the importance of hands-on experience and believes that the key to learning lies in a hands-on environment and an experiential pedagogy on both sides, has evolved over a long period during the communication process of the family's educational transmission model.

Master and apprentice role

In the traditional sense, the inheritance of master and apprentice refers to the master and apprentice without blood relationship, a kind of teaching activity maintained by a contractual relationship. Master-disciple inheritance is the primary way of inheritance in the traditional craft industry. Breaking the limitation of technical exchange closed in the small unit of the family, the main body of the inheritance of skills began to move from blood relatives to unrelated outsiders, and the holders of skills slowly expanded from the family to the outside world (Xiuxiu, 2022).

The first prerequisite for master-disciple inheritance is the confirmation of the master-disciple relationship. Some trades do not have an apprentice selection process. In contrast, some trades require a strict apprentice selection process followed by grand ceremonies such as paying homage to the ancestor, performing the ritual of paying homage to the master, and the master's admonition before the master-apprentice relationship can be established. The master and disciple inheritance of Dong brocade weaving skills in the Tongdao area generally does not involve a ceremony for worshipping the master. However, the relationship between the master and the disciple only exists. It can be a one-to-one inheritance or mutual learning between relatives and advice between friends, meaning that the capable is the master.

Of course, there are also examples of people who did not have a clear master relationship but learned the skills by studying and consulting with many people and continuous practice. During the research, the researchers met several aunts in their 60s who learned the art of Dong brocade weaving from the girls in their villages when they were young. At first, they learned to weave cloth, which was not neatly woven, but after slow practice, they became increasingly skillful and produced exquisite Dong brocades.

Community role

Community role is a synthesis of the first two modes of inheritance, but it can also be inherited by self-studying and comprehending the main (Tan et al., 2024). There are generally two ways: one is not a master or did not go through the formal ceremony of worship of the masters, through more than watching the operation of the artists, analyzing the skills of the work. Thus, the memory of learning without a master is inherited by multiple nominal masters to multiple apprentices (Renmin & Pei, 2021). Due to the complexity of the Dong brocade process, some links, such as laying threads on the loom, which requires an expansive outdoor

space, cannot be completed by one person independently, so the Dong women often meet each other in the village's wide drum tower, sun pads, ball fields, and other public places to complete, to ask for advice and learn from each other, which has led to the formation of a community inheritance model with the village as the core.

Re-invention of tradition in the perspective of intangible cultural heritage protection

Existing problems of educational literacy of Dong Brocade

The rapid development of modern society, modern culture, and traditional national culture produce intense collisions. While the economy is developing rapidly and people's living standards are improving, the traditional culture of ethnic minorities is constantly being impacted, people's lifestyles and values are changing drastically, and traditional customs are gradually disappearing from people's lives (Shiyi, 2014).

In the Dong area in the past, the mastery of Dong brocade weaving skills was an essential part of family education, Dong girls, under the teaching and cultivation of female elders, began to learn to weave and embroider at the age of seven or eight years old. In addition to the necessary time for production and life, all their time and wisdom were invested in the inheritance of the art of weaving and embroidery and its creation; nowadays, girls begin to enter school at the age of six or seven years old, and it is impossible to carry much limited spare time for Weaving and embroidery work, modern Dong girls have been separated from the traditional Dong brocade weaving environment since they were young, and they have gone out to work to earn money when they become adults, so there are fewer and fewer people mastering the craft of Dong brocade. People are unwilling to stay in their hometowns to pass on the Dong brocade skills.

In the new social environment, the new generation of Dong people born in the modern environment faces complex social things, time is dispersed, and the past learning mode has been gradually unable to adapt. However, no new system appeared, resulting in the lack of suitable education in the literacy mode of Dong brocade inheritance; in the past, the skills were taught by elders, relying on the accumulation of experience. Most of the Dong girls did not have any cultural foundation for all kinds of Most of the Dong girls do not have any cultural foundation, so they rely on their mind to remember the complicated patterns. They memorize the brocade patterns of hundreds of bamboo sticks to form their body memory and then consolidate the innovation in the weaving practice day by day. At the same time, the economic returns of weaving Dong brocade are low, Dong brocade inheritors and factory workers in the form of work is no different, according to the design given by the weaving, but relative to the mechanized production of inheritors is their own from the planting of cotton and dyes, cotton threads and dyes, dyeing, to the weaving of cloth brocade, a series of processes are all purely handmade.

From an economic point of view, the labor time paid by the inheritors is not directly proportional to the economic

returns, which discourages people from inheriting this ancient craft. In the field, we found that young people of the Dong ethnic group have little understanding of the richness and complexity of the Dong brocade culture. What is worrying is that the profound Dong brocade weaving skills are facing a severe crisis of being lost. Therefore, people of the Dong ethnic group realize that they must begin to conduct in-depth explorations and research on this ancient and exquisite craftsmanship with national aesthetic characteristics in order to create opportunities for the transmission of this profoundly national Dong brocade weaving technique, such as the possibility of reinventing the tradition.

Intangible cultural heritage bearers are essential carriers of folk art transmission. The profound cultural heritage and exquisite art are in the hands of the inheritors, and it is only through their inheritance can the intangible cultural heritage be continued, and the inheritors are the decisive factor in making the inheritance of the intangible cultural heritage sustainable. Therefore, the inheritors are very important in continuing the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. However, human life expectancy is limited, and if the inheritor disappears, the intangible cultural heritage will also face the crisis of being lost. Feng Jicai, Chairman of the Chinese Folk Literary and Artists Association, once said, "The inheritors of folk culture are passing away every minute, and folk culture is dying out every minute (Jirong & Jie, 2019)." This quote illustrates the urgent need to protect intangible cultural heritage in China.

Reinventing the educational literacy of Dong brocade

Education has always been a practical human activity that involves passing down culture and imparting knowledge. It is a mechanism of social heredity and regeneration of culture through cultural humanization, which is manifested in culture (Ahu, 2021).

In order to implement the "Hunan Provincial People's Government Office on Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage Opinions" (Xiangzheng People's Government [2005] No. 27) and to further strengthen the protection of intangible cultural heritage, the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Tongdao County set up the "Protection Center of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Tongdao County" in April 2006, and established a specialized Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center, which is responsible for the protection of intangible cultural heritage. Exceptional Intangible Cultural Heritage set up a particular intangible cultural heritage protection center office (from now on referred to as the Office of Intangible Cultural Heritage), specifically responsible for the preparation of the county's intangible cultural heritage protection planning, organizing, and carrying out the county's intangible cultural heritage of the census of the county's training and the protection of the project business guidance, publicity, and other work.

In order to make the Dong brocade weaving skills effectively protected and inherited, the Tongdao County Intangible Heritage Protection Center and the Yatunbao Town Middle School, Yatunbao Town Central Primary School, Huangtu Township Central Primary School, and

other schools to establish the “Tongdao County Intangible Cultural Heritage into the classroom demonstration school,” the Tongdao Dong Autonomous County set up the Dong brocade weaving skills training center, the establishment of the license plate of Yatunbao Town The Dong brocade weaving technique training center was set up in the Tongdao Dong Autonomous County. The extracurricular practice bases of Yatunbao Middle School and Yatunbao Central Primary School were set up to organize the inheritor to give lectures and enrich cultural heritage. The main purpose is to let the primary and secondary school students in Tongdao County understand the Dong brocade weaving technique, feel the charm of Dong brocade, and inspire them to love their own culture.

In recent years, there has been more and more educational literacy through government and social organizations for vocational training. Specialized skill training carried out by vocational colleges is the second most crucial part of teaching literacy. Dong brocade weaving skills vocational education in Tongdao is mainly based on Tongdao Vocational Secondary School. Established in 2004, the Tongdao Dong Autonomous County Vocational Secondary School process of running the school highlights the “inheritance of national culture, the protection of ‘non-heritage’ craft” goal and promotes the Dong embroidery and dress to carry forward. According to the Tongdao Vocational Secondary School, mainly for clothing design and crafts, arts and crafts two majors opened the Dong weaving technology-related courses, invited the Dong brocade national representative inheritor Su Tianmei, provincial representative inheritor Wu Nianji as a teacher. In addition to inviting representative inheritors to teach in the school, the school has also hired designers with rich practical experience in society and art teachers to attend classes together, focusing on cultivating students’ practical ability. The school also carries out twinning support with Hunan Arts and Crafts Vocational College to promote the development and inheritance of Dong folk skills.

Local colleges and universities have unique conditions and advantages in the educational literacy of intangible cultural heritage and play an essential role in the inheritance and innovation of the outstanding culture of ethnic minorities based on making full use of regional cultural resources (Tercan & Durdane, 2023). The “local colleges and universities” here mainly refer to the colleges and universities built in the minority areas in the western part of Hunan Province and the neighboring areas, such as Huaihua University, Hunan University, etc. The role of local universities in the protection and inheritance of non-heritage is reflected in the basic theoretical research. Since the inheritance and protection of non-heritage requires a lot of fundamental theories and research to support them, the scientific research team of universities plays a significant role in this aspect.

Taking Huaihua University as an example, the disciplines of ethnology, management, art, and so on have paid attention to the protection and inheritance of non-heritage from different perspectives, and several relevant research results have been formed. In the Dong Autonomous County of Tongdao, several Dong cultural fieldwork sites have been established,

which include not only basic theoretical research but also the design practice of cultural creative products, extracting the elements of ethnic minority crafts, carrying out cultural creativity, and forming cultural creative products rich in ethnic characteristics, which provide ideas for the protection and inheritance of Dong brocade.

In 2009, the School of Design and Art of Hunan University initiated the first “New Tongdao” Design and Social Innovation Summer Camp in Dong Autonomous County, Hunan Province. The project has realized good interaction with local government, enterprises, and local residents, transformed cultural resources into industrial value, and promoted local cultural and industrial innovation in a participatory way, accumulating a wealth of regional cultural research and rural revitalization experience.

While the government of Tongdao County takes active measures for the inheritance and protection of Dong brocade skills, some small companies related to Dong brocade handicrafts have come into being—for example, the Dong Brocade Weaving Development Limited company in Yaluoye Dong Brocade in Tongdao County. The general manager of the company, Ms. Ou Ruifan, has long cooperated with two inheritors, Su Tianmei and Wu Nianji, and organized the “Dong brocade training course teaching program” and also participated in many domestic and international exhibitions with the Dong Brocade, successively participated in the 2010 Shanghai World Expo in China, the 4th Seoul International Textile Expo in South Korea, the 3rd China Textile and Accessories Expo, the 15th China Textile and Accessories Expo, and the 15th China Textile and Accessories Expo in China. In February 2012, the Yaluoye Dong brocade weaving base was awarded «National Intangible Cultural Heritage Productive Protection Demonstration Base» by the Ministry of Culture of the People’s Republic of China (Dong Ethnic History Compilation Group, 2008).

In addition to the research and development of products, the company has also established the Hunan Dong Brocade Museum, the Yawo Pawo Dong Brocade Workshop, the Dong Brocade Training Center, the Dong Brocade Weaving Skills Training Base, and the Yawo Pawo Dong Brocade Art Troupe, which have driven 3,000 rural women in the county to participate in the production of Dong brocade, training, publicity, and research work. Through the Yaloye Dong brocade Weaving Development Co., Ltd. a few years of hard work, the development of the Dong brocade industry has achieved remarkable results, not only so that the endangered “national treasure” Dong brocade has been effectively protected, inherited, and developed, but also for a large number of rural women to provide a doorway to employment without leaving the house, has produced good social and economic benefits. (Figure 4) The company has formed a production demonstration base of Dong brocade with “enterprise as the leader, base as the carrier, farmers as the link” radiating the whole county.

In most areas of intangible culture, the transmission and development of leek heritage is mainly realized through oral transmission by groups of bearers, as is the case with oral literature, traditional skills, and performing arts. In



Figure 4. Yaloye Company is training Dong brocade weaving skills for villagers of Dong villages in Tongdao County

this intangible cultural heritage territory, the bearers are the important bearers and transmitters of intangible cultural heritage; they are superhuman talent, spirituality, storage, mastery, carrying the intangible cultural heritage related categories of cultural traditions and exquisite skills, they are not only the living treasury of the intangible cultural heritage but also the intangible cultural heritage of the “baton” of the successive generations. They are the living treasures of intangible cultural heritage and the “baton bearers” and representative figures in the “baton relay” of intangible cultural heritage from generation to generation. This is also the key to the difference between non-heritage and tangible cultural heritage; the former needs to be passed on and protected in a “living” form, while the latter is preserved in a fixed form.

Therefore, in the protection and role of non-heritage, it is essential to emphasize the power of people and adhere to the people-oriented principle. As long as these cultural heritage bearers are protected, the intangible cultural heritage will not disappear; as long as these intangible cultural heritage bearers are incentivized, they will continue to forge ahead, and their products will become more and more refined; as long as these intangible cultural heritage bearers are encouraged to continue to recruit apprentices to teach, the intangible cultural heritage will continue to be inherited by successors. This viewpoint is also proved in the practice of educational literacy of Dong brocade weaving techniques, where the inherited population is the core force of non-genetic role. Though such non-heritage items as the brocade weaving technique usually exist in the minds of the holders of intangible cultural property as a kind of knowledge, technique, or skill before the finished product is formed, only these artisans, artists, and craftsmen are able to pass on their knowledge and skills to the people who are the bearers of the intangible cultural property. It is only when these craftsmen, artisans or ordinary people reproduce, perform or produce them in different ways that their existence is felt.

DISCUSSION

As an intangible cultural heritage, Dong brocade represents a significant traditional handicraft with deep cultural and historical roots. The intricate process of its formation, development, and inheritance highlights both its uniqueness and its inherent limitations. These limitations are often shaped by factors such as the availability of raw materials, the

time-consuming nature of handcrafting, and the specialized skills required to produce high-quality brocade. As society progresses with the rapid development of modern science and technology, a series of contradictions and contrasts inevitably arise in the collision between modernity and tradition. These contradictions manifest in various forms, such as production efficiency, material comfort, durability, and fashion features.

One of the primary challenges faced by traditional handicrafts like Dong brocade is production efficiency. Modern manufacturing techniques prioritize speed and cost-effectiveness, often leading to mass production. In contrast, traditional handicrafts involve labor-intensive processes that require significant time and meticulous effort, resulting in higher costs and lower production rates. This disparity poses a threat to the sustainability of traditional crafts in a competitive market. Material comfort and durability are other areas where modern and traditional approaches often clash. While modern materials and techniques can enhance comfort and longevity, traditional crafts rely on age-old methods and natural materials that may not always meet contemporary standards of comfort and durability. This can limit the appeal of traditional products in a market dominated by modern alternatives. Fashion features and aesthetic appeal also play a crucial role in the survival and relevance of traditional crafts. In today's fast-paced world, fashion trends evolve rapidly, and consumers, particularly young people, seek products that align with current trends. Traditional crafts, with their timeless designs and cultural significance, may struggle to keep pace with these ever-changing trends. However, there is also a growing appreciation for unique, handmade items that offer a sense of authenticity and cultural connection.

In response to these challenges, various initiatives have been undertaken by the government, enterprises, and artisans to preserve and promote traditional handicrafts. Government programs often focus on providing financial support, training, and infrastructure to artisans. Enterprises may collaborate with artisans to integrate traditional designs into modern products, making them more appealing to contemporary consumers. Artisans themselves are exploring innovative ways to blend traditional techniques with modern aesthetics, creating unique pieces that resonate with both tradition and modernity.

In conclusion, the intersection of tradition and modernity presents both challenges and opportunities for traditional

crafts like Dong brocade. Through innovative approaches and sustained efforts, it is possible to navigate these challenges and create a vibrant future for traditional handicrafts that honors their past while embracing the present.

CONCLUSION

Through the study and descriptive analysis of the development history of Dong brocade in the Passage, we can find that Dong brocade weaving is a product of the long historical development of the Dong people and a reflection of the wisdom of the local Dong people. Although the traditional Dong brocade has been gradually replaced in the daily life of the Dong people under the impact of the market economy, the corresponding national and local intangible cultural heritage protection policies have brought new opportunities for the development of Dong brocade. Through the traditional re-creation of Dong brocade, profound innovations in raw materials, production processes, and product types have been formed, forming cultural commodities at the fingertips so that schools, governments, and enterprises can jointly participate in exploring the mode of educational literacy of Dong brocade.

This paper studies Dong brocade from the perspective of traditional re-creation and educational literacy, bridges the gap in the research field of Dong brocade, further enriches the connotation of the concept of traditional re-creation and educational literacy, and provides a model for other similar traditional handicrafts related researchers to learn from, and provides theoretical references to carry out the educational literacy and protection of intangible, cultural heritage in China.

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