

# Research on the Application of Visual Communication Based on Ancient Shu Cultural Symbols

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**Abstract:** With the excavation and research work carried out in recent years, mainly at the Sanxingdui. The ancient Shu culture has gradually formed a large-scale research progress. The article focuses on the history and current situation of ancient Shu culture, refines its representative symbolic language to visually reproduce ancient Shu culture, and explores the traditional aesthetics of modern illustration design. As a unique part of Chinese civilisation, the use of visual symbols of ancient Shu culture can trigger the audience's history and current situation. Historical memory and cultural identity help to enhance the visual recognition and emotional memory of the brand.

**Keywords:** ancient Shu culture; symbolic language; illustration design; cultural identity

## 1 Introduction

Driven by the wave of globalization, the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture has become an important issue of the times. Ancient Shu culture, as part of China's long history, contains rich historical information and unique regional characteristics. This article aims to explore the application of ancient Shu culture in the field of modern visual communication, transforming the symbolic language of this ancient civilization into modern visual elements through illustration design, with a view to stimulating the public's interest in and recognition of traditional culture, especially the younger generation. The article will start from the historical background of ancient Shu culture, analyze its current research status and resource development in contemporary society, and then explore how to combine ancient Shu cultural elements with modern design to promote its dissemination and development in the new era with innovative visual communication strategies. Through this study, we expect to provide new perspectives and practical paths for the modern expression of traditional culture, so that the ancient Shu culture can be revitalized in the stage of globalization.

## 2 Historical overview of ancient Shu culture

With the research on the cultural relics centred on the Sanxingdui site in the 1980s, the ancient Shu culture has become one of the regional cultures within the Chinese ancient civilisation with more prominent regional characteristics, vividly demonstrating the distinctive characteristics of the "unity of diversity" of Chinese culture. Behind the splendid and dazzling

Ancient Shu Culture is the well-developed Ancient Shu Civilisation, which originated in the present-day Sichuan Province in the south-west of the country. Although "Ba" and "Shu" are often used together, "Ba Shu culture" is not the same as "Ancient Shu culture". On the one hand, there are differences in the origins, folkways and customs of the Ba and Shu tribes; on the other hand, there are obvious differences between Ba and Shu as recorded in classical literature.

According to Mr. Li Shao Ming, "Ancient Shu culture is an ancient cultural form that existed on the Chengdu Plain during the pre-Qin period and was represented by the farming civilisation and bronze civilisation. Ancient Shu Culture is an ancient cultural form represented by farming civilisation and bronze civilisation that existed on the Chengdu Plain during the pre-Qin period <sup>[1]</sup>. At present, a large number of gold, jade and bronze wares have been unearthed at the Sanxingdui site, which represents the ancient Shu culture, and the beautifully designed gold foil of the Sun God Bird and the exaggerated bronze masks with longitudinal eyes highlight the unique folklore, beliefs and art forms of the ancient Shu culture.

### **3 Current status of research on ancient Shu culture**

#### **3.1 Current status of resource development of ancient Shu culture**

The ancient Shu culture is best known for the Sanxingdui civilisation and the Twelve Bridges culture, and the Sanxingdui Ruins have the highest degree of development of ancient Shu cultural resources. The Sanxingdui Ruins Museum is building a high-quality tourism brand based on the cultural resources of ancient Shu culture through the path of integrated development of tourism industry and cultural industry. On the one hand, the Sanxingdui Museum is focusing on the design of cultural and creative products of the main body of "Ancient Shu Culture", and on the other hand, it is accelerating the construction of digitalisation and multi-media cultural dissemination. In addition, some areas in Sichuan gradually integrate the ancient Shu culture into city construction. 2007, Qingyang District, Chengdu City, in the planning and construction of the ancient Shu cultural tourism corridor; in 2008 PI County prepared the "Chengdu Wangcong Cultural Industrial Park Overall Planning Report", and at the same time held the Ancient Shu Cultural Festival, the use of the Wangdi Duyu and the Congdi Kaiming attached to the development of cultural resources in the tourism industry, to attract investment and promote the development of the county's economy; Wenjiang Vigorously build the fish mallard culture, into all aspects of urban construction, relying on the fish mallard ancient city ruins, the construction of fish mallard ancient street, to create the corresponding leisure and entertainment facilities and cultural and tourism projects; as the source of Shu culture Shuangliu is the first ancestor of the ancient Shu Silkworm Cong's founding place, will be the Mushan to create the "Ancient Shu Silkworm Cong" cultural brand is the policymakers of the place! It is one of the priorities of the policy makers in Shuangliu to plan and develop the Muma Mountain Silkworm Cong Cultural Park and build it into a famous tourist attraction in Sichuan, with a view to promoting the economic development and cultural heritage of Shuangliu.

#### **3.2 Current status of the application of ancient Shu culture design**

Ancient Shu cultural resources contain high cultural dissemination value and market

development potential, and their design and production as cultural creative products have positive significance and economic value for their external dissemination and cultural product development. At the level of design application, many scholars have studied the application design of ancient Shu culture from different angles. Chen Gang, in his article "A preliminary study of the expressive characteristics of tea painting in ancient Shu culture", aims to explore the connotation of the artistic value of tea painting and combines it with the characteristics of ancient Shu culture, integrates the artistic characteristics of the two, and finally comes up with the best strategy for the application of tea painting in the implementation of installation art design activities<sup>[2]</sup>. The design team of Xihua University used multi-layer wood carving and acrylic CNC engraving technology to present the ancient Shu culture based on the gold foil, gold masks, bronze birds and other artefacts unearthed at Jinsha Ruins and the local culture of Sichuan Embossed Refrigerator Stickers with Elements<sup>[3]</sup> Zhang Beijia and Gao Gao Li researched the use of ancient Shu culture elements in blind box product design in light of the new trend of today's tourism product design, and made products such as "Sanxingdui Archaeological Discovery Blind Box", "Praying for Blessing in the Divine Palace Blind Box" and "Sichuan Xiaodui Blind Box", which are conducive to the promotion of ancient Shu culture and the synchronisation of the trend of the times. "Sanshingdui Archaeological Discovery Blind Box", "Praying for the Blessing of the Divine Palace Blind Box" and "Sichuan Shu Xiaodu Blind Box", which are conducive to the promotion of the ancient Shu culture and the trend of the times<sup>[1]</sup> Huang Jing is committed to combining the ancient Shu culture with the current popular animation modelling, exploring the possibility of injecting animation modelling with traditional national cultural connotations, and stepping out of a specific national characteristics of the animation industry<sup>[2]</sup>. Zhu Qijia starts from the fantasy style illustration design of ancient Shu culture, proposes the illustration design scheme of Samsungdui characteristic culture debit card, the co-branded Samsungdui illustration of the king of tea, the series of Samsung Yew five emperors illustration, and Samsungdui national tide illustration, and points out the market positioning and publicity and promotion strategy of the application of the fantasy style illustration design of ancient Shu culture<sup>[3]</sup>. It also pointed out the market positioning and promotion strategy for the application of fantasy style illustration design of ancient Shu culture.

Ancient Shu culture has great potential for development and application in design. In view of the current market potential of national trend and national style culture among youth groups, the study will focus on ancient Shu culture, combining its historical stories, character modelling and other elements with contemporary Chinese pop art style to design illustrations of ancient Shu culture with Chinese cultural characteristics, so as to promote the dissemination and development of ancient Shu culture.

## **4 Communication Strategy Based on Ancient Shu Cultural Symbols**

### **4.1 Visual design construction with illustration design as the main theme**

Ancient Shu has a diverse and rich intangible cultural heritage, including unique religious beliefs, colourful witch arts, unique food customs and other folk cultural resources. The article extracts the historical figures and legends of ancient Shu culture as the theme of illustration

design, and shows the rich connotation of ancient Shu culture through visual transformation (see Fig. 1).

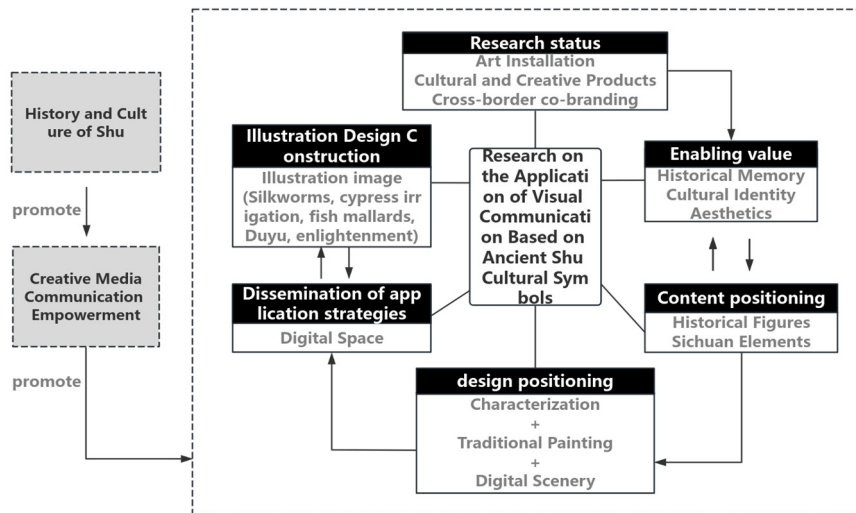


Fig. 1. Visual Communication Framework of Ancient Shu Cultural Symbols

In the presentation of the theme picture, the five emperors of ancient Shu are chosen as the prototypes for the creation of the five representative images of Silkworm Cong, Bergong, Yidu, Duyu, and Enlightenment, reflecting the outstanding contributions of each in the political, economic, and cultural fields. "Sericulture" is good at raising silkworms and creating the silk industry, which is portrayed as the image of a young girl who raises silkworms and embroiderers; "Bergong" is a ritual praying for blessings, which is portrayed as the image of a female sorcerer dressed in the ritual costume of the source of Sichuan opera, and the art of sorcery is richly survived in ancient Shu, and a considerable portion of the unearthed bronze objects have religious colouring. Among the excavated bronze artifacts, a considerable part of them carry artistic patterns with religious colours, and the Paigong clan brought hope and faith to the ancient simple working people at that time, and nowadays brush painting, paper-cutting, and face-changing of Sichuan Opera in Shu are also influenced by the art of the Great Witch. Among them, the "Fish and Eider", whose hunting and fishing techniques and love for the people and compassionate thinking brought peace and prosperity, illustrated the main image of the royal maiden dressed in animal costume, drawing a bow and shooting arrows, depicting the heroic and warlike image of the Fish and Eider clan; "Duyu" taught people farming, with hard work and labour, and the "Duyu" taught people farming, with hard work and labour. The illustration design uses the image of a hard-working woman supplemented by azalea elements as the symbol of Du Yu, and the azalea behind her is enlarged as a whole to emphasise the importance of the "Du Yu".

The "Kai Ming" (Kaiming Emperor), as the image of Ao Ling, the wise ruler who started the civilisation, pays homage to the mythical Kaiming Emperor, who was a great water ruler, by using blue colours and clothes with the characteristics of Ancient Shu, around the figure of Ao Ling, who was a great water ruler (see Fig. 2).



a. Image of the Embroiderer, a woman who raised silkworms and reeled silk from the Silkworm Cong Clan



b. Witch of the Pachinko Clan's Rituals and Prayers



c. Image of a woman from the Eider Clan



d. Portrait of a woman from the Duyu Clane Portrait of an enlightened emperor from the Ao Ling Clan



e. Image of Emperor Kai Ming of Ao Ling's

**Fig. 2.** Illustration design based on ancient Shu cultural symbols

#### **4.2 Dissemination and application of illustration design as the mainstay of the programme**

As a unique part of Chinese civilisation, the use of visual symbols of ancient Shu culture can touch the audience's historical memory and identity, and deepen the emotional connection between the audience and the brand. Based on the creative design of the visual elements of ancient Shu culture, applying them in different digital spaces not only expands the visual language of traditional media, but also helps to promote the creative inheritance and innovative development of the excellent traditional culture, and further stimulates the interest and sense of identity of the contemporary public towards ancient Shu civilisation. In addition, the young people of Generation Z have a preference for the fusion of traditional culture and animation culture, and the combination of ancient Shu elements with the second generation and the new ancient style can better impress the young consumer groups, and the integration

of ancient Shu cultural elements in the design of commercial promotion has a unique advantage (see Figure 3).

Zhou S, Zhang F. defined the design exclusiveness of illustrations in cultural and creative products in their thesis: *Application of Defamiliarized Illustrations to the Design of Culture and Creative Products*. Sanxingdui Museum just needs such applied illustrations to carry out cultural communication and commercial transmission to a certain extent<sup>[7]</sup>. Thorne C, Rennick-Eggleston S, Koleva B, et al. explored the constructiveness and feasibility of illustration as a visual form for visual interaction in public space in the design of interactive system. The conclusion is that good visual art can make visual communication more deeply rooted in people's hearts. Perhaps, in Sanxingdui Culture or Sanxingdui Museum, beautiful visual illustration interaction can be used to contribute to the transmission of cultural content<sup>[8]</sup>. DeRosa A. Andrew DeRosa in *Conversation with Keetra Dean Dixon*. It conveys to us the core relationship between design and culture. On the basis of comprehensive consideration, the spread of Sanxingdui culture should be based on basic business decisions. While satisfying the basic market, it should adopt the illustration form loved by the broad masses of China people to carry out cultural transmission to the maximum extent. In the process of communication, we can design different interactive modes to build interesting ideas for the basic ideas it conveys. This way is more acceptable to the public than traditional media<sup>[9]</sup>.



**Fig. 3.** Communication applications based on ancient Shu cultural symbols

### 4.3 Commercial Decision Making and Cultural Transmission Attributes of Illustration Design

As a form of design expression, illustration should have certain commercial decision-making and cultural attributes (see Figure 4). Among them, commercial decision-making is the first and cultural transmission is the second. First of all, the fundamental purpose of illustration design is to serve the specific content it expresses, and on this basis, to meet the functionality of its wide dissemination. Market demand determines the specific expression of the illustration. In the creation process of illustration, the aesthetic demand of the market determines the material medium and material language of the illustration, as well as the expression form of its comprehensive painting method. In the process of application after the illustration is completed, the market demand determines the specific expression form of its application in kind. Under the realistic environment of pursuing commercial interests, the artistry of illustration itself is limited by the market .

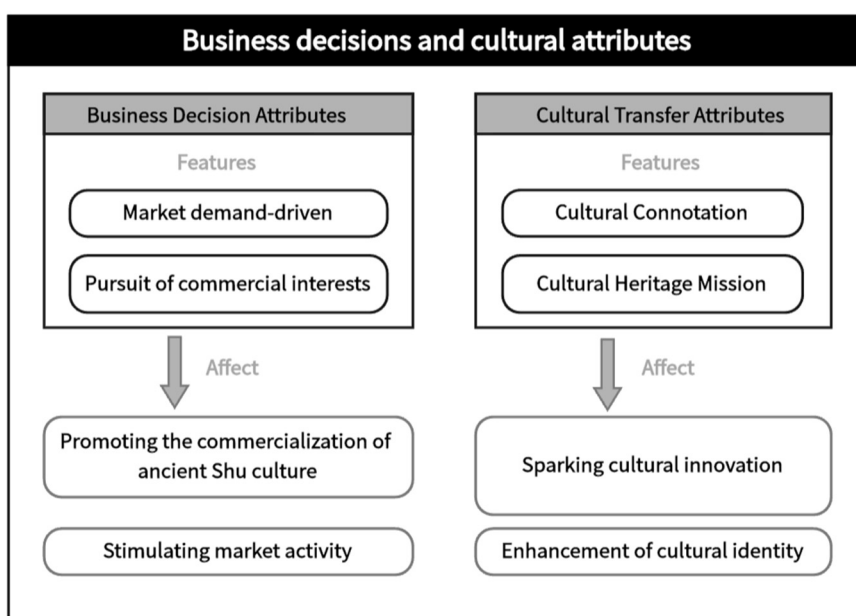


Fig. 4. Business decisions against cultural attributes

As a form of cultural and creative products, illustration design has certain artistic value and cultural transmission properties. After the illustration meets its commercial purpose, the expression of its cultural connotation is a manifestation of its own value, and the cultural and creative products have a natural mission of cultural transmission. Secondly, the illustration design of ancient Shu elements can promote cultural exchanges, not only with unique regional characteristics, but also with worldwide meaning, promote the exchange and understanding between different cultures, enhance the audience's sense of cultural identity, and evoke the audience's memories and emotions of ancient Shu culture.

Cultural industry is an important part of the modern economic system, and the illustration design of ancient Shu elements can promote the development of cultural and creative

industries and create new economic growth points. To summarize, the commercial decision-making and cultural transmission attributes of the illustration design of ancient Shu elements are intertwined and promote each other. Only after satisfying the first nature of commercial decision-making and pursuing cultural transmission attributes to seek balance, can we create illustration works of ancient Shu elements with both commercial value and cultural connotation to promote the inheritance and development of ancient Shu culture.

## 5 Conclusions

The article delves into the importance of ancient Shu culture in modern visual communication and design applications. By combining the elements of ancient Shu culture with modern illustration design, we can inject new vitality into the dissemination and development of traditional culture. In practical application, the visual symbols of ancient Shu culture can be effectively used in multiple scenarios such as digital media, promoting the integration of traditional culture and modern aesthetics. At the same time, this combination also helps ancient Shu culture to be revitalised in the context of the new era. In the process of creation and visual translation, attention should be paid to the protection and inheritance of the core values of ancient Shu culture, so that ancient Shu culture can be applied in a wider range of fields, ensuring that its uniqueness and depth will not be lost in the process of commercialisation and modernisation. It is expected that the study on the application of visual communication of ancient Shu cultural symbols can provide a theoretical perspective to supplement the communication of Shu cultural symbols as well as a reference for design means, so that we can jointly explore the modern expression of ancient Shu culture and contribute to the promotion of cultural diversity and the progress of human civilisation.

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