

# Research on Digital Application of Traditional Elements of Hainan Li Nationality in Modern Design

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**Abstract:** As technology has been continuously valued, the informationization is gradually entered people's lives and has replaced many traditional media. In this context, traditional culture has gradually been forgotten by people with the advent of the information age. In order to adapt to the era of modern digital applications and avoid traditional culture being abandoned, traditional cultural elements should be applied in modern design, so that more people can understand it and related knowledge. By conducting research on the traditional culture elements of Nanhai Li Nationality, this paper explores the digital application mode of its traditional culture elements in modern design.

## 1. Introduction

China is a multi-ethnic country with 5,000 years of civilization, because of which, there are great amount of ancient art architectures and different folk customs in this country. These different traditional culture characteristics slowly nourish modern people there. With the continuous development of society, people's lives are continuously improving, but at the same time, traditional culture is gradually forgotten. Many unique traditional customs have gradually been replaced by science and technology. People are getting used to the Spring Festival without fireworks and some other festivals with no corresponding traditional customs. They slowly lose interest in some festivals and do not take them seriously. In this sense, to change people's thinking habits needs to slowly bring people the atmosphere of traditional holidays in daily life, so that they can learn about traditional culture.

## 2. The symbolism of the elements of Hainan Li Nationality

China is a country consisting of fifty-six nationalities. Each nationality has its own unique traditional cultural customs, and we can find the unique elements of every nationality from their unique language, unique songs and distinctive paintings. Therefore, these elements also have a certain symbolic meaning, representing a specific nationality to a certain extent. When someone sees these representative elements, he can immediately associate with the nationality which has this element. Hainan Li Nationality is a component of China and has its own symbolic element. For example, the unique cultural elements of Hainan Li nationality can be found from the patterns in the clothes and rhythm of songs proper of this nationality<sup>[1]</sup>. In China, each cultural element has unique symbolic meaning. These symbolic elements have contributed to the development and research of these ethnic groups to a certain extent, and also provide valuable reference materials for the study of Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, to find a traditional cultural custom of a nation, it is necessary to find out the symbolic cultural elements unique to this nationality.

## 3. Traditional cultural characteristics of Hainan Li Nationality

As a country composed of many nationalities, there must be many different traditional cultures. In order to find out the culture of a nationality in these traditional cultures, it is necessary to understand the traditional cultural characteristics of this nationality. Specifically, to find Hainan Li Nationality needs to find out its unique traditional cultural characteristics first. The traditional culture of Li Nationality is mainly characterized by its unique architectural style, totem, tattoo, brocade, etc. They

are unique and have a certain cultural deposit. And with the changes of time, the cultural characteristics of Li Nationality are constantly changing, constantly adding new elements and constantly changing the previous bad habits. Li Nationality is one part of the ancient Baiyue Nationality. Li Nationality as well as Tong Nationality and Yi nationalities are all components of the ancient Baiyue. Even now, Li people have deep links with the people and Buyi Nationality and Shui Nationality. In ancient times, the ancestors of Li Nationality sailed from the mainland to the island to farm. And thus, the island residents were called “Li Liao (俚僚)” as time went by. And then as time went by, “Li (俚)” slowly turned into “Li (黎)”, namely the “Hainan Li Nationality” today, and they have lived on the island for more than 3,000 years <sup>[2]</sup>.

### **3.1. Architectural style**

Because people live in different environments, the characteristics of their living are often different. Different places generally show greatly different styles. But in the same nationality, people live in the same environment and have the same style. In the past, Hainan Li Nationality used to build houses mainly with bamboo, wood, straw, clay and other materials. Because the shape of the built house was particularly like a boat, it was named as “boat house”, and they have been included in National Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2008 <sup>[3]</sup>. In modern times, the “boat house” in three places has been well protected because of the attention of many people, so that they are not washed away and submerged in the past long time. It also allows more people to learn about the Li culture and promote more people to protect the culture.

### **3.2. Tattoo culture**

Some songs of Hainan Li Nationality tell why the Li people leave tattoos on their bodies or faces. Once upon a time, a man and his younger sister came to Hainan because of a disaster, and they walked around the Hainan Island to see if anyone was there. But, Hainan Island was not inhabited at that time, so neither the brother nor the sister found a person on the island. In order to allow them to live normally on Hainan Island, the sister painted patterns on her face so that her brother could not recognize who she was. She married her brother, allowing their descendants to continue to grow on Hainan Island. In Hainan Li Nationality, tattooing is an extremely important thing and also an extremely chaste thing. Li people often choose a proper day to go to the tattoo and also carefully select a right time for tattooing <sup>[4]</sup>. They generally tattoo in the fall and often choose “Long Day” (A timing method; 12 days for a reincarnation and each day was named after an animal) to carry out this behavior. However, the tattoo must not be printed in the “Chong Day” in the tattoo culture of Li Nationality. This is because Li people believe that, if they tattoo on the “Chong Day”, the tattoo design on their face will be like a worm crawling on the face and unclean things like bacteria will lead to tattoo on the face to festering. In Li Nationality, different Li ethnic groups have different tattoo designs that are exclusive to themselves. This is because the people of Li Nationality hold that the unique tattoo design on their faces can help them to find out the members of the same ethnic group after they die. However, along with the constant changes of Li Nationality and the influence of some new elements of the society, many young Li women are reluctant to tattoo on their faces. Therefore, this unique Li tattoo culture is slowly receding, and the people with this skill are becoming fewer and fewer.

### **3.3. Clothing culture**

Hainan is an island that can produce hemp and kapok, and thus the clothing of Li people is often made of hemp, cotton, tree fibers, silk, etc. Sometimes toxic trees are used to weave and make clothes. Males and females of Li Nationality generally dress differently, and there are many differences in their traditional clothes. Males usually wear a headband, while females generally put various silver hairpins when they attend a large gathering. Males of Li Nationality usually wear a blouse with no collar, while females wear a black karasilis with round collar. Males of Li Nationality usually do not wear too many decorations, but females often carry a lot of jewelry, such as silver necklaces, bead bells on the chest, silver bracelets, and so on. There are sometimes black headscarves on their head.

Sometimes, Li people wear silver ornaments and colorful feathers <sup>[5]</sup>. This is mainly because people of Hainan Li Nationality like silver decorations and feathers with certain characteristics.

### **3.4. Food culture**

Food culture is often formed under the influence of the environment, and different environments create different food styles. To a certain extent, the diet of the Hainan Li Nationality is also caused by its unique environmental factors. They often eat food from the mountains and seafood, and their taste is unique in some aspects compared with us. People of the Li Nationality especially like glutinous rice, especially the “Shanlan Xiangnuo”. Li people often mix glutinous rice with pork and some other ingredients to make zongzi in different shapes (round, triangular, etc.) and different tastes (with egg, with meat, etc.). A variety of Zongzi form the “Shanlan Xiangnuo” that people of Hainan Li Nationality are particularly fond of <sup>[6]</sup>. They also like areca nuts especially. People of Li Nationality believe that chewing areca nuts and tobacco together can protect their spleen, stomach and teeth, and they also hold that the juice of areca nuts can drive locust away. Therefore, many Li people like to keep some areca nuts in their belts, so that they can chew them anytime and anywhere. The third one is “Nan Sha” (a kind of pickle), a dish used that the Li people use to entertain guests. To get “Nan Sha”, Li people stir some wild vegetables and some meat together and then put them in the earthen jar. After one month or even one to two years of fermentation, it can be taken out to entertain guests.

Sometimes Li people also eat rats. Whether it is a voles or any other breed of rats, the Li people can peel off the skin, remove the internal organs, and eat it after it is barbecued. Therefore, many people think that the food of Hainan Li people is somewhat strange, and sometimes they cannot adapt to the food.

## **4. Refinement and transformation of the cultural elements of the Hainan Li Nationality**

In modern society, it is necessary to extract some elements unique to the nationality, in order to let more people pay attention to the national customs and national culture. This is because, in some cases, directly bringing the culture of a nation in design cannot make the designed items adapt the current society, and people may not be interested in the culture. Therefore, it is significant to extract unique cultural elements of the target nationality from the traditional culture, process them and help them adapt the current society, so that more people will pay attention to these cultural elements. Therefore, in order to make the Li culture be applied into the digital application of modern design, it is necessary to refine its culture and find out the unique cultural elements of this nationality.

### **4.1. Extraction and conversion of symbols of traditional Li clothing**

In the cultural extraction of Hainan Li Nationality, the most important thing should be highlighted is its clothing culture. There are often different totems in the daily clothes of the Li people. It is feasible to extract totems on the clothes, process them and then apply them in modern design to make some unique totems dedicated to Hainan Li Nationality. This will allow people to think of the clothing culture of Hainan Li Nationality when they see these totems, and then they may do corresponding search to understand and pay attention to the Li culture.

### **4.2. The extraction and transformation of the symbols of Li folk culture**

Among the social folk culture symbols of the Li Nationality, the tattoo is the folk culture with the most unique characteristics of this nationality. This is because the Li Nationality has many branches, each of which has its own tattoo design, and different designs have different meanings. People can carry out relevant research and extraction according to their own needs and find the styles that are suitable for their own design. When using these tattoo designs, they can also deepen their understanding of the Li culture, which will allow more people to pay attention to and understand the Li culture, helping to achieve the better integration of the unique cultural elements of the Li culture into the digital application of modern design <sup>[7]</sup>.

## **5. Digital application of the traditional elements of Hainan Li Nationality in modern design**

### **5.1. Information interaction design with the theme of Hainan Li folk customs**

In modern society, technology has become indispensable for people in their daily life. Computer networks have entered people's lives, and information interaction products are becoming more and more respected in the society today. Therefore, it is feasible to carry out corresponding information interaction design according to the unique folk customs of Li people and take the advantage of some information interaction platforms to make related cultural information interaction products of Li culture, so that more people can notice and become interested in this culture. Information interaction products focus on the content of information interaction. Therefore, relevant producers are expected to have a deeper understanding of the Li culture, which also guarantees the inheritance of the Li culture to a certain extent <sup>[6]</sup>.

### **5.2. Providing inspiration for graphic design or visual communication design**

People mainly use the unique cultural elements of traditional culture in modern design. To make the design more attractive and unique, it is necessary to carry out some related research. In this process, some national cultures can provide inspiration for designers to create unique design <sup>[7]</sup>. Therefore, it also provides some inspiration for visual communication design and adds some unique colors to the digital design of modern design.

## **6. Conclusion**

With the continuous renewal of human civilization, science and technology are constantly innovating and improving, while ancient traditional culture is constantly being forgotten by people. In order to adapt to the new social situation and let traditional culture take root in people's daily life, it is important to refine and process traditional culture, find out the traditional cultural elements, integrate them in the current digital age or combine them with modern design concepts, so as to create a unique traditional culture that is proper to us. This will help people understand the characteristics of our country, make them be proud of our cultural construction and generate their sense of belonging, so that they will be more willing to contribute their own strength to promote the development of our country.

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