

Tentative Discussion on the Influence of “Maritime Silk Road Culture” on “Chaozhou Embroidery Culture”

Enyu Shi

Hanshan Normal University, Chaozhou Guangdong, 521000, China

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Abstract. The “Maritime Silk Road” is a passageway of sea trade contacts and cultural exchange in ancient China. In the history, Chaozhou is an important node of the Maritime Silk Road. Chaozhou embroidery, which is an outstanding craft representative of Chaozhou, played an active role in the “Maritime Silk Road”, which has a far-reaching influence on the development of Chaozhou embroidery culture.

Introduction

The most important function of “Maritime Silk Road” is trade. It opened up the road of trade between the southern China and overseas regions and is the rudiment of international trade. The “Maritime Silk Road” already existed in Qin and Han dynasties. The earliest historical records about marine road exchanges between China and foreign countries is the *Book of Han: Annals of Geography*, which records the contacts between China and the countries in south sea at that time.

A large number of ship plates were unearthed in the area of Chengyanggang in Chaozhou; besides, the historic site of ancient mooring line processing place and many mooring lines were also found. In Ming and Qing dynasties, the main port was migrated to the “Ancient Zhanglin Port” in Dongli Town, Chenghai, which is about 20km from Chaozhou prefectural city. Since Song dynasty, Chaozhou has undoubtedly become an important node and town of China’s ancient “Maritime Silk Road Culture” based on the ancient Hanjiang Port. Thus, it is worthy of studying the status of Chaozhou embroidery, which is an important craft and major exported product of Chaozhou, in this process.

Overview of “Maritime Silk Road Culture”

The main bulk cargoes such as silk, ceramics and spices were transported through the seaway, so the later generations called the seaway connecting the East and the West “Maritime Silk Road”, and also “Maritime Ceramic Road” or “Maritime Spice Road”. Besides, the “Maritime Silk Road” covers numerous specific contents such as China’s history of port, history of shipbuilding, history of overseas trade, history of immigration, history of religion, history of state-to-state relations and history of scientific and technological culture exchange between China and foreign countries.

Background for the generation of “Maritime Silk Road”

Exchange is the nature of human. Human culture learns from and promotes each other during exchange and the pattern of joint development has been accepted by people. The school of cultural transmission theory has always argued about whether the earliest human civilization appeared in one place or many places simultaneously. However, it is unanimously accepted that human civilization reaches integration through transmission, conflict, reference and final acculturation. Thus, it can be seen that human civilization would be hindered or be stagnated without exchange. Some regions isolated from the world still have a very low cultural level due to its impeded exchange and natural development.

We know that different natural conditions and humanistic environments lead to the great difference in the products in various regions; the difference is the foundation for transactions of materials among different regions. Because of the large quantity of products, an effective transportation means is

needed. Animals could carry loads through the land silk road. Even it was time-consuming and laborious, goods could be transported. However, people in China's South-East coastal areas could only feel powerless and frustrated. Thus, opening the "Maritime Silk Road" became an inevitable need. We can see that the origin of "Maritime Silk Road" was the need of exchange of goods and materials. Besides, we also cannot neglect the effect of previous generations of rulers' energetic promotion of the development of "Maritime Silk Road" in order to consolidate their dominant positions.

Functions of "Maritime Silk Road"

Promoting immigration

There were precedents of overseas immigration thousands of years ago. The 500 young boys and girls went to Japan to search for elixir of life in Qin dynasty is an example. With the progress in marine technology, traveling across seas became a possibility. It was also a natural thing that the formation of the Marine Silk Road brought a lot of Zhongyuan people to overseas countries. Besides, the "Marine Silk Road" provided the convenience for many Chaozhou people to go to other places, so there were a sharply increasing number of Chaozhou people in the Middle-South Asia. According to the statistics, there are more than ten million of Chaozhou people overseas so that Chaozhou people's culture is characterized by "a Chaozhou in China and overseas respectively". There are respectively over ten thousand of Chaozhou people in China and overseas. Besides, The Chaozhou people at home and abroad connect and interact with each other from a far distance, and their cohesion is world-famous. Thus, it can be seen that the "Marine Silk Road" played a great role in the formation of immigration tide in Chaozhou area.

Facilitating cultural exchange

Exchange is inevitable. Transmission is universal regardless of that the origin of civilization is "monocentric" or "multi-centric". Different cultures are in mutual conflict with each other and learn from each other during the process of continuous external spreading to finally form the acculturation state, because different cultures always have common parts and different parts in them. Culture has no distinction in race. The cultures of difference races continuously get improved in the process of ceaseless mutual transmission, mutual exclusion and mutual reference. The "Marine Silk Road" made it possible for cultural exchange among different regions, provided convenience for continuous cultural collision and permeation in all regions, finally formed today's pattern that "you have me and I have you" in different cultures, and made today's culture more gorgeous, colorful and abundant.

Stimulating economic development

Trade is an important part of economy. It is obvious that the "Marine Silk Road" could facilitate the economic development. As the difference in natural conditions and traditional crafts of different regions leads to their respective strengths in product production and the large difference in production cost, domestic and overseas trade can avoid the adverse factors in the production of some products in all regions and maximize the value of product. Thus, it can be seen that domestic and overseas trade is necessary. In addition, the need of trade promoted the development of shipbuilding industry, the development of maritime technology, the construction of wharf and other facilities as well as the economic development of all regions.

Origins and characteristics of Chaozhou embroidery

Chaozhou embroidery, which is a craft with the folk cultural characteristics in the whole Chaoshan area centering on Chaozhou, is the representative of Guangdong embroidery, one of China four famous embroideries. Guangdong embroidery, Suzhou embroidery, Hunan embroidery and Sichuan embroidery are called China's four famous embroideries. Dating back to Tang and Song dynasties and flourishing in Ming and Qing dynasties, Guangdong embroidery is the treasure of the top-level arts and crafts of the country. The formation of the genre of Chaozhou embroidery was closely related to the universality of local clans and religious sacrifice as well as the prosperity in local drama, so all

regions' needs of Chaozhou embroidery also emerged at the historic moment. During the Qin-Jia period in Qing dynasty, with social, economic and cultural development, the embroidery technology in Chaozhou became commercialized; however, commodity competition urged embroiderers to study the skills diligently, learn and absorb the strengths of embroidery types in other places and integrate foreign cultures into the embroidery. In this way, the embroidery level in Chaozhou rose rapidly and formed its own distinct and stable style characteristics.

History of Chaozhou embroidery

With a long history, Chaozhou embroidery was formed based on the abundant local folk craft activities. Chaozhou was under the jurisdiction of Nanhai Prefecture in Qin and Han dynasties; in Sui dynasty, Nanhai Prefecture was changed into Nanhai County. Someone mentioned the "refined embroidery woman". The "woman" should be in Nanhai County. However, the embroidery art of Lingnan in Tang dynasty was very refined so it's natural that the Chaozhou embroidery in the same province could be more or less benefited and influenced. The *Mixed Stories Compiled at Duyang* by Su E of Tang dynasty records: in the first year of Zhenyuan period (785), Lu Meiniang, an extraordinary woman of Nanhai County embroidered seven volumes of *The Lotus Sutra* on a piece of silk; her embroidery was "distinct in points and lines and as fine as a hair".

The literature which mentioned Chaozhou embroidery first is the poem, *Poetry on the Stone Wall of Calm Lake*, by Chen Wei, magistrate of Chaozhou in the second year of Songbao period (1254). The third sentence: "Beautiful embroidery screens are on red flags and the gaily-painted pleasure-boat travels among the fragrant green lake". It means: the prefecture chief takes a gaily-painted pleasure-boat on a lake with fragrant lotus in a summer day. With the tender breeze, the delicate embroidery screens are shown under the radiance of the sun. In the Wanli period of Jiajing in Ming dynasty, embroidery had become a handicraft Women were familiar with in Chaozhou. For instance, in the *Complete Works of the Story of Lizhi and Mirror of Brothel Added in Northern Drama by Reprinting of Five-color Spring Interpolation*, a block-printed edition of Ming dynasty's Chaozhou dram in the 45th year of Jiajing period, there is a description of "Wuniang embroidery", meaning that Wuniang embroiders to divert herself from boredom, as suggested by her maidservant, Yichun, because Wuniang misses her lover, Chen San.

Characteristics of Chaozhou embroidery

Chao embroidery shows distinction from other embroidery types with its golden embroidery with the golden, rough, vigorous and firm convex emboss.

Wide range of topics

Chaozhou embroidery, which shows the distinct, vivid, abundant and glorious artistic effect with full and well-balanced composition of pictures as well ardent and festive colors, includes the types such as woolen embroidery, gold embroidery, mixed woolen and gold embroidery and line embroidery, all of which have their respective characteristics. The woolen embroidery is to embroider the flat picture with velvet on all sorts of silk, silk fabric and satin by using the plain embroidery method; with the most topics of birds and ancient things etc., the woolen embroidery is mainly used as the picture card and hanging panel etc.; gold embroidery, which is also called gold and silver embroidery, is the mixed gold line and wool embroidery dominated by gold and silver lines and followed by wool. The gold embroidery involves complicated stitches including more than 60 stitches such as bridge-cross, treading stitch, pedal stitch, bottom stitch, concave stitch and accumulated drawing stitch. The "Erzhenqilin" stitch hasn't been found in other types of embroidery. The gold embroidery has the relieve-like artistic effect via the application of bottom stitch, embroidery, pasting, splicing, embellishment and other skills; line embroidery is the pure plane embroidery with silk thread.

Peculiar composition of pictures

As a folk art and a practical enjoyable product, Chaozhou embroidery was influenced by the paintings of the man-of-letters in Ming and Qing dynasties in the course of its historical development. Particularly, over the more than 100 years, with the impact of foreign artistic permeation and the

intervention of modern new artistic thoughts, Chaozhou embroidery has changed its inherent characteristic of “folk embroidery”. In the past and now, there are a group of painters engaged in the design of Chaozhou embroidery. Rooted in folk and integrating Chaozhou carving, Chaozhou painted pottery, Chaozhou puppet and other folk arts and crafts, Chaozhou embroidery has formed its overall style of full, fluctuating and changing embossment, streakiness, abundant colors, fine organization and colorfulness.

Diversified materials

The raw and auxiliary materials and crafts used in Chaozhou embroidery are also very distinctive. The materials frequently used in Chaozhou embroidery consist of gold thread, silver thread, colored thread, wool of all colors, yarn (for embellishment), cotton fiber, paper nail, silk fabric and satin etc. The basic crafts and stitches frequently used in Chaozhou embroidery include pictographic stitch, mosaic stitch, pattern stitch, bamboo-weaving stitch and pine-nut stitch etc., together with over 60 auxiliary stitches including spinning stitch and carving stitch etc. In technological process, Chaozhou embroidery emphasizes the pictographic character, texture and carving line. It involves various stitching methods and neat, tidy and clear stitches. With well-arranged shapes and clear veins, the embroidery looks very vivid.

“Maritime Silk Road Culture” and Chaozhou embroidery

The main cause for the formation of “Maritime Silk Road” was that China’s south coastal areas are mountainous with only a few plains and the internal contacts were very difficult; however, the local dukes also needed overseas resource trading to maintain their ruling. Besides, China's South-East coastal areas could sail on the sea with the assistance of monsoon in summer and winter so that the convenience of maritime road was enhanced. For this reason, there were such exchanges in many regions in ancient China’s coastal areas.

Chaozhou was an important node of the “Maritime Silk Road” so it was impossible that Chaozhou embroidery can be sold to the regions mentioned above through the “Maritime Silk Road”, which connected the embroidery art of Chaozhou closely with overseas need.

Cultural integration enriched the connotation of Chaozhou embroidery

In Ming dynasty, the embroidery craft of Chaozhou gradually formed its unique style and a professional production area during the integration. In Qing dynasty, embroidery became more popular in folk society of Chaozhou and stepped into its prosperity in late Qing dynasty and early Republic of China. As shown in data, there were over 20 embroidery stores with Chaozhou embroidery, nearly 10 drawnwork shops operated by Chinese businessmen and over 10 drawnwork shops founded by foreigners in Chaoshan area. While Chaozhou embroidery was sold overseas through the “Maritime Silk Road”, foreign culture also integrated into Chaozhou embroidery craft to enrich the connotation of Chaozhou embroidery culture.

Most of Chaozhou embroidery products were exported to Europe. Thus, it can be seen that China’s Chaozhou embroidery also had a great influence on Europe. Bushell, a famous British artist in the 19th century, wrote in his *Chinese Art*: “Chinese people are good at flower and bird embroidery, which is especially the expertise of Guangdong people...”. After the integration of western culture in this process, Chaozhou embroidery found a better sale in European countries. From the perspective of transportation convenience, it is reasonable to transport Chaozhou embroidery products to foreign countries through the “Maritime Silk Road”.

Export sales of Chaozhou embroidery facilitated the local economic development

Previous generations of imperial courts actively guided the foreign sales of products in the China's South-East coastal areas for the purpose of getting silver. In order to meet the overseas need, Chaozhou embroidery as important local artware was put into mass production. For a period of time, there were embroiderers everywhere in Chaoshan area. Some families even relied on their income

from embroidery as their primary source of income. Thus, the contributions of the development of Chaozhou embroidery to the local economy are evident.

“During Qianlong’s reign, there were over 20 embroidery stores in Chaozhou and they were near Tianditian, Bushu Street and Kaiyuan Temple outside the city. Embroideries were exported to the South Sea Islands etc. In Xianfeng period, the annual export value of Chaozhou embroidery reached more than RMB 10,000,000.” The “Maritime Silk Road” opened a vast market for the embroidery industry of Chaozhou, offered a development space, and thus facilitated the sustainable development of Chaozhou embroidery industry.

The development of Chaozhou embroidery drove the development of local culture

The reason why Chaozhou embroidery dominated by foreign sales can be prosperous for a long time is that its products can comprehensively meet the cultural needs of various nations in the style, design, decoration and packing requirements. The integration of foreign elements has enriched the connotation of Chaozhou embroidery culture and exerted a far-reaching influence on Chaozhou culture. Great efforts have been made to comprehensively build the close relationship between Chaozhou embroidery and international market and to meet the needs of various regions. Besides, the embroidery culture characterized by foreign sales in the blood of generations of “embroiderers” cannot go unnoticed. From another perspective, this is also a significant contribution that the “Maritime Silk Road” made to the development of Chaozhou culture.

Conclusion

The strategic partners of the “Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century” are not limited to ASEAN but lead the line with a point and lead the area with a line to increase the contacts with coastal countries and regions, link the market chain of ASEAN, South Asia, west Asia, North Africa, Europe and all other economic plates, develop a strategic cooperation economic belt for the South China Sea, Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean, and consider the economic and trade integration in Asia, Europe and Africa as the long-term goal of development. ASEAN, which is the crossroad and an unavoidable way of the “Maritime Silk Road”, has a wide political foundation and a solid economic foundation together with China, so ASEAN will become the first goal of development of the new “Maritime Silk Road” strategy. Besides, the strategy of “Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century” complies with both sides’ common interests and requirements.

The proposal of development strategy of “Maritime Silk Road Culture” has provided a very rare opportunity for the development of Chaozhou embroidery. With the guidance of the country’s construction of development strategy of the “Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century”, we must strengthen the exchange and cooperation of embroidery cultures between China and Foreign countries, help those engaged in embroidery industry abroad to learn the development history of embroidery, clarify China’s status of the root of embroidery culture, accept the outstanding contributions made by Chaozhou embroidery in the course of embroidery development, enhance the research on Chaozhou embroidery culture, continuously enrich the cultural connotation of Chaozhou embroidery, raise the technological level of Chaozhou embroidery, improve the popularity and reputation of Chaozhou embroidery, facilitate the great development of embroidery industry in Chaozhou and promote the great prosperity of economic culture in Chaozhou.

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