

# Probe into the Symbolic Significance of Cultural Symbols and Traditional Crafts of Huizhou Lacquerware

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**Abstract:** Through the analysis of the development course and regional characteristics of Huizhou lacquerware, this paper reveals its unique artistic characteristics and the profound cultural value behind it. This paper introduces the whole process of Huizhou lacquerware from raw material selection to finished product production in detail, and discusses the inheritance status and challenges of this process in contemporary society. It is found that Huizhou lacquerware is not only a fine work of art, but also an important medium to convey the essence of China culture.

**Keywords:** Huizhou Lacquerware; Cultural Connotation; Traditional Craft; Local Folk Customs; Global Cultural Exchange.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the Tang Dynasty, after hundreds of years of development and evolution, Huizhou lacquerware has gradually formed a unique artistic language and expression. In recent years, with the increasing awareness of the protection of intangible cultural heritage, the research on Huizhou lacquerware has been paid more and more attention by academic circles. This study attempts to comprehensively analyze the cultural connotation of Huizhou lacquerware and its significance in modern society from the perspective of culturology, combining historical documents and field investigation results, in order to provide theoretical support for the protection and development of this precious handicraft.

## 2. Cultural Connotation of Huizhou Lacquerware

### 2.1. Development Course and Regional Characteristics of Huizhou Lacquerware

As an important part of traditional handicrafts in China, Huizhou lacquerware can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty, but its unique style was really formed in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Huizhou area in this period provided excellent basic materials for lacquer art with its unique natural environment and rich forest resources. With the activity of Huizhou merchants in the whole country and the growth of economic strength, the demand for artworks is increasing day by day, which promotes the prosperity and development of Huizhou lacquerware technology[1]. After the mid-Qing Dynasty, due to social unrest and the impact of foreign culture, traditional handicrafts faced great challenges, but even so, Huizhou lacquerware has been preserved and passed down to this day with its exquisite skills and profound cultural heritage.

Huizhou lacquerware not only reflects the influence of local unique geographical conditions on handicraft production, but more importantly, it reflects the essence of Huizhou culture. From material selection to design to final product, every link contains craftsmen's awe of nature and yearning for a better life. In the choice of wood, sandalwood with hard texture and beautiful texture is preferred; In terms of pattern design, traditional elements such as dragon and

phoenix, lotus throne and so on are often used[2].

### 2.2. Analysis on the Artistic Features of Huizhou Lacquerware

Huizhou lacquerware is unique in artistic expression, with distinctive local characteristics and personal style. In modeling design, Huizhou lacquerware pays attention to the combination of practicality and aesthetics, which not only meets the functional needs in daily life, but also has high ornamental value. Whether it is used for decoration or daily use of dishes and cups, you can see exquisite hand-carved or inlaid techniques, showing a very high artistic level. The use of color is also a highlight of Huizhou lacquerware. Compared with other schools, Huizhou school prefers to use black and red as the main tone, and achieve visual richness through different levels of depth changes. It is often outlined with golden lines, which makes the whole work more luxurious and elegant[3].

Huizhou lacquerware is also quite ingenious in the choice of decorative themes. On the one hand, we borrowed a lot of auspicious patterns common in China traditional culture, such as "Happy Birthday" and "Peace in Four Seasons", in order to express people's good wishes for happiness and well-being. On the other hand, there are many works reflecting local folk customs, such as pictures depicting Huizhou landscape or recreating the life scenes of ancient literati, which vividly show the rich and colorful social features of the local area.

### 2.3. The Cultural Value of Huizhou Lacquerware

Huizhou lacquerware is not only an exquisite handicraft, but also an important carrier bearing profound historical and cultural heritage. It embodies the wisdom of several generations of craftsmen, and also records the long and splendid historical memory of Huizhou and even the whole Chinese nation. Through the study of Huizhou lacquerware, we can not only understand the economic development and social changes in this area in the past few hundred years, but also get a glimpse of the changing trends of people's ideas, lifestyles and even aesthetic tastes at that time. The decorative themes popular in some specific years often reflect the prevailing values or fashion in society at that time[4]. And

some particularly complicated production techniques show the progress of science and technology in that era.

Under the wave of globalization, many traditional handicrafts are facing the risk of being lost. Strengthening the attention and support for Huizhou lacquerware and other traditional crafts is not only the recognition of its own value, but also the inheritance and development of China's excellent traditional culture. By holding exhibitions, carrying out education and training, etc., the knowledge of Huizhou lacquerware can be popularized, so that more people can understand and love this ancient and energetic art form, thus arousing the enthusiasm of the whole society for protecting intangible cultural heritage.

### **3. Traditional Craft of Huizhou Lacquerware**

#### **3.1. Selection and Treatment Technology of Raw Materials**

The production of Huizhou lacquerware is inseparable from high-quality raw materials, of which the most important is natural lacquer. Huizhou area is especially suitable for the growth of lacquer trees because of its humid climate and fertile land conditions, so it can provide sufficient and high-quality raw materials for raw lacquer. When choosing wood, we are also very particular about it. We usually choose wood with hard texture and beautiful texture, such as rosewood and boxwood, to ensure that the finished product is not only durable but also has high ornamental value. In the process of dealing with these raw materials, craftsmen have accumulated rich experience and technology. For the new paint, it needs to be filtered to remove impurities and be tinted by a specific method. Wood needs to go through many steps such as drying and grinding to ensure its stability and surface smoothness.

Huizhou lacquerware also uses gold powder, silver powder and other mineral pigments as decorative elements. In order to make these additives better adhere to the paint surface and present ideal effects, special mixing techniques and application methods are often needed. For example, spread metal powder evenly on the wet paint surface, and then polish it carefully until the luster appears. Every step in the whole process must be carried out accurately, and a slight difference may affect the quality of the final work.

#### **3.2. Analysis of Production Process**

The production of Huizhou lacquerware is a complex and delicate process, involving many stages. The first is the design stage, in which detailed design drawings are drawn according to customers' needs or artistic creativity, and the shape, size and decorative pattern of lacquerware are determined. Next, enter the tire making stage, that is, carve the selected wood into the required basic form according to the design scheme. This process requires extremely high precision, because any slight error may lead to poor painting effect in the later stage. After completing the basic modeling, it is the most critical painting procedure. This step includes primer coating, multiple overlapping and polishing of the intermediate layer. It needs to be fully dried between each paint pass and polished repeatedly until the surface is smooth as a mirror. It is worth noting that the paint solution needs to be properly mixed before each application to achieve the expected color depth and transparency.

When the basic paint layer is completed, it enters the decorative link. This stage can be achieved by painting,

mosaic and other techniques. Painting is one of the most common forms, which allows artists to give full play to their creativity and depict various vivid images on the surface of lacquerware. The mosaic rule tests the skill level even more, and forms a unique pattern by carefully cutting and splicing different materials (such as shells and jade) on the paint surface. Either way, you need great patience and concentration to ensure that every detail can be presented perfectly. Finally, polishing and shaping, using special tools to comprehensively polish the completed works until they exude a soft and delicate luster. The whole production process takes a long time and there are many procedures, but it is this attitude of Excellence that makes each Huizhou lacquerware a unique work of art.

#### **3.3. Present Situation and Challenges of Process Inheritance**

In recent years, with the acceleration of modernization and the change of social values, traditional handicrafts are facing unprecedented survival pressure. For Huizhou lacquerware, although its unique aesthetic value has been widely recognized, there are fewer and fewer people who are willing to devote themselves to this business among the younger generation. On the one hand, it is difficult to see economic benefits in the short term because of the long period and large investment in learning lacquer art. On the other hand, people's understanding of traditional culture is gradually weak due to modern lifestyle. A large number of mechanized production substitutes in the market also squeezed the space of handmade products to a certain extent, which brought greater impact to Huizhou lacquerware, which was already in trouble.

Faced with such a severe situation, how to effectively protect and develop this precious cultural heritage has become an urgent problem to be solved. The government and relevant institutions should increase their support and support the cultivation and development of lacquer artists by setting up special funds. You can also use the internet platform to promote the knowledge of Huizhou lacquerware and hold various exhibitions to attract more public attention and participate. The school education system should also pay more attention to students' education on traditional culture, and cultivate their interest in and sense of identity with China's outstanding cultural heritage from an early age. Practitioners themselves also need to constantly innovate and change, and explore new forms and new products that meet the needs of modern society on the basis of retaining the essence of tradition, so as to make Huizhou lacquerware glow with new vitality. Only with the joint efforts of all walks of life can we truly realize the sustainable development of this ancient art form.

### **4. The Significance of Huizhou Lacquerware as a Cultural Symbol**

#### **4.1. Interpretation of Common Cultural Elements in Huizhou Lacquerware**

Huizhou lacquerware is famous not only for its exquisite craftsmanship, but also for the rich cultural elements contained in its works. These cultural elements are mostly derived from auspicious meanings and historical stories in China's traditional culture, reflecting the Chinese nation's longing for a better life and awe of nature. The pattern of "dragon and phoenix in auspicious" is one of the common decorations on Huizhou lacquerware, which symbolizes good

luck and harmony between husband and wife. "Lotus throne" represents the ideal realm of purity, elegance and transcendence. There are also themes with strong festive atmosphere, such as "Happy Birthday" and "More Every Year", which frequently appear in lacquer design, and they place people's good wishes for family happiness, career success and longevity and well-being.

In addition to these classic images, which are ubiquitous in China's art, Huizhou lacquerware also pays special attention to showing the regional characteristics of Huizhou. Some works will outline the beauty of mountains and rivers through

delicate lines, which not only reflects the unique natural scenery of the local area, but also implies the literati's attitude of pursuing spiritual peace. In addition, scenes depicting social features or major events at that time, such as imperial examinations and business exchanges, can be found on lacquerware made in certain specific periods, which are important windows to understand the historical and cultural changes in ancient Huizhou and even the whole Jiangnan region. Common cultural elements in Huizhou lacquerware and their symbolic significance are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Common cultural elements in Huizhou lacquerware and their symbolic significance

Cultural Element	Description	Symbolic Meaning
Dragon and Phoenix in Auspicious Harmony	A common decorative motif often found on Huizhou lacquerware.	Symbolizes good luck and harmony between husband and wife.
Lotus Throne	Delicately outlined lotus shapes, sometimes as the main pattern or background on lacquerware.	Represents an ideal realm of purity, elegance, and transcendence from the mundane.
Fu Lu shou Xi	One of a series of traditional auspicious patterns, often used for special occasions like birthdays.	Expresses wishes for family happiness, career success, longevity, and well-being.
May you always get more than you wish for	Fish as the main motif, symbolizing "abundance every year," commonly seen during the Spring Festival.	Conveys hopes for continuous good fortune in the coming year.
Scenery of Huizhou	Some works depict the natural beauty of mountains and rivers through delicate lines.	Reflects the unique natural scenery of the area and implies the literati's pursuit of spiritual tranquility.
Imperial Examination Scenes	Lacquerware from certain periods may feature scenes depicting social features or major events, such as imperial examinations.	Serves as important windows to understand historical and cultural changes in ancient Huizhou and the broader Jiangnan region.
Business Exchanges	Depictions of commercial activities, such as merchant ships and market scenes, can also be found.	Highlights Huizhou's historical significance as a commercial center and its economic activities.

## 4.2. The Relationship between Huizhou Lacquerware and Local Folk Customs

Huizhou lacquerware is not only a fine work of art, but also a carrier of rich local folk culture. In Huizhou, a region with a long history and profound cultural heritage, many traditional festivals are inseparable from lacquerware. During the Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival and other important festivals, every household will display and use the exquisite lacquer plates and tea sets that have been treasured for a long time, so as to increase the festive atmosphere and express their wishes for good luck in the coming year. In the wedding ceremony, the bride's dowry often includes a set of carefully selected Huizhou lacquerware, which is not only a symbol of wealth status, but also represents the family's good

wishes for the new couple's future life.

From the pen holder and inkstone in the study to the screen ornaments in the living room, all of them reflect the cultural taste and life interest of the owner. Especially in the Ming and Qing dynasties, with the rise of Huizhou merchants and their extensive influence in the whole country, Huizhou lacquerware gradually became a status symbol. Even today, despite the great changes in lifestyle, many people are still willing to collect a few exquisite and elegant Huizhou lacquerware as home decoration, not only because they are beautiful and practical, but more importantly, the spiritual connotation of pursuing quality life behind them. The relationship between Huizhou lacquerware and local folk customs is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The relationship between Huizhou lacquerware and local folk customs

Aspect	Description	Cultural Significance
Festival Use	During important festivals such as the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival, every household displays and uses exquisite lacquer plates and tea sets that have been treasured for a long time.	Adds to the festive atmosphere and expresses wishes for good luck in the coming year.
Wedding Customs	In wedding ceremonies, the bride's dowry often includes a set of carefully selected Huizhou lacquerware.	Serves as a symbol of wealth and status, and represents the family's good wishes for the new couple's future life.
Daily Life Items	From pen holders and inkstones in the study to screen ornaments in the living room, Huizhou lacquerware plays an important role in daily life.	Reflects the owner's cultural taste and life interests.
Status Symbol	Especially during the Ming and Qing dynasties, with the rise of Huizhou merchants and their extensive influence across the country, Huizhou lacquerware gradually became a status symbol.	Demonstrates the economic power and social status of Huizhou merchants.
Modern Home Decor	Even today, despite significant changes in lifestyle, many people still collect a few exquisite and elegant pieces of Huizhou lacquerware as home decorations.	Not only because they are beautiful and practical, but also because they embody the spirit of pursuing a quality life.

### 4.3. The Role of Huizhou Lacquerware in Global Cultural Exchange

With the accelerating process of globalization, cultural exchanges between countries in the world are becoming more frequent and in-depth. As a handicraft with China characteristics, Huizhou lacquerware plays an increasingly important role as a bridge in the international arena. It has attracted the attention of countless foreign friends with its unique artistic charm. Whether participating in international exhibitions or as a national gift, Huizhou lacquerware can always win wide acclaim for its exquisite workmanship, rich colors and profound cultural heritage. This cross-cultural communication not only helps to enhance mutual understanding and respect between different ethnic groups, but also opens up a new path for Chinese excellent traditional culture to go global.

On the other hand, in the process of participating in the global market competition, lacquerware-sending enterprises are constantly absorbing the essence of other civilizations, thus promoting their own development and innovation. In recent years, some artists have tried to integrate modern design concepts into traditional lacquer art, creating novel works that not only retain the classical charm but also conform to the contemporary aesthetic trend. This exploration not only broadens the application field of Huizhou lacquerware, but also injects new vitality into this ancient skill. Through the exchange and cooperation with craftsmen in other countries and regions, Huizhou lacquerware can learn more advanced technology and management experience, which is of positive significance for improving product quality and expanding market share.

## 5. Conclusion

Through the multi-angle discussion of Huizhou

lacquerware, this paper systematically shows its unique charm as a traditional cultural heritage of China. From the development process, Huizhou lacquerware has gone through the process from germination to maturity, and in this process, it has formed distinctive local characteristics and personal style. Through the analysis of its artistic characteristics, we realize that Huizhou lacquerware not only pays attention to practicality, but also pursues the unity of aesthetics and culture. Thirdly, the traditional technology of Huizhou lacquerware is introduced in detail, the importance of material selection and treatment technology is emphasized, and the complete production process is analyzed. The article points out that the value of Huizhou lacquerware as a cultural symbol lies in that it can reflect the historical memory and social changes of Huizhou and even the whole Chinese nation, and it is also an important bridge to promote cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries.

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