

# Design Transformation of Traditional Patterns of the She Ethnic Group in Contemporary Ceramic Decoration

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**Abstract:** Traditional patterns of the She ethnic group embody profound cultural symbolism and distinctive artistic value, offering considerable potential for innovative application in contemporary ceramic decoration. This study begins by examining the cultural connotations and formal attributes of She patterns and, in response to evolving trends in modern ceramic art, investigates strategies for their contemporary design translation. The findings reveal that She patterns are characterized by thematic diversity, intricate structures, and auspicious symbolism, reflecting the group's unique aesthetic philosophy. In the current design landscape, consumers increasingly seek cultural resonance and creative expression in ceramic products. By employing techniques such as motif extraction, formal abstraction, and compositional reconstruction, traditional She patterns can be reinterpreted to suit modern visual and functional sensibilities. This process not only facilitates the revitalization and transmission of intangible cultural heritage but also fosters the integration of ethnic visual language within the broader framework of contemporary ceramic design.

**Keywords:** She ethnic group, Traditional patterns, Ceramic decoration, Design Transformation, Cultural heritage.

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## 1. Introduction

The contemporary expression of traditional culture has increasingly become a core issue in the development of cultural industries. As one of China's ethnic minorities, the She ethnic group has a unique pattern system whose designs carry deep national sentiments and historical memories. In recent years, with the strengthening of cultural confidence and the rise of cultural and creative consumption, ceramic products that integrate traditional elements have become increasingly popular. Existing studies have pointed out that the use of ethnic patterns in ceramic design can not only strengthen the cultural connotations of the work but also enrich its formal language [3]. Therefore, exploring the integration pathways of She patterns with modern ceramic art helps to promote the revitalization and expression of traditional culture and provides new creative resources and impetus for development in the ceramic industry [2].

Based on the visual and cultural characteristics of She patterns and considering current trends in ceramic decoration, this paper proposes a systematic set of design transformation strategies. These strategies aim to provide a feasible design paradigm for the contemporary expression of ethnic patterns.

## 2. Cultural Basis and Visual Characteristics of Traditional She Patterns

### 2.1. Developmental Context and Cultural Connotations

Traditional She patterns have a long history, evolving from totemic beliefs to decorative art, gradually forming a unique system of visual expression. These patterns are widely applied in clothing, architecture, and daily objects, with embroidery and brocade being especially representative [7]. Overall, She patterns can be categorized into three major

types: natural, geometric, and symbolic. They reflect both nature worship and philosophical reflections on life, while conveying the ethnic group's beliefs and aesthetic viewpoints. For example, the "triangle pattern" symbolizes mountains and rivers, the "bird pattern" expresses a longing for freedom, and the "dragon-and-phoenix pattern" implies the continuity of life and family prosperity. These patterns not only embody the unique aesthetics of the She people but also carry profound cultural memory. Most patterns are closely related to nature worship and also incorporate elements of religious rituals and daily customs, together constituting an important visual carrier of She culture and serving as significant expressions of ethnic identity and spiritual inheritance.

### 2.2. Composition and Aesthetic Language

She patterns often adopt symmetrical, repetitive, and cyclic structures in composition, presenting a sense of stability and rhythm. In terms of color usage, they mainly employ red, black, blue, and green, forming strong contrasts that demonstrate the vital energy of ethnic art [10]. The lines are mostly smooth curves, with varied thickness to enhance the dynamism and rhythm of the patterns. In design, there is a tendency toward abstract refinement: symbolic and decorative patterns are formed by simplifying natural forms, highlighting the unique aesthetic expression of the She people.

### 2.3. Symbol System and Social Functions

From a semiotic perspective, She patterns constitute a non-verbal visual coding system that not only serves aesthetic functions but also has cultural transmission functions. Some typical patterns, such as the "water pattern", symbolize life and cycles, and the "butterfly pattern" signifies freedom and love [3]. These symbols also carry social differentiation functions, often used to indicate marital status, age, and identity, reflecting significant social attributes. Meanwhile, through cultural exchanges with neighboring ethnic groups such as the Han and Yao, She patterns have absorbed diverse

stylistic elements while maintaining their distinctive ethnic characteristics, constructing an open and inclusive visual system that provides rich cultural resources for modern design [3]. It is worth noting that She patterns are almost always “intentional and auspicious”; most patterns have specific implied meanings, truly reflecting the auspicious concepts embedded in She ornamentation.

### 3. Trends in Contemporary Ceramic Decorative Design

#### 3.1. Technological Evolution and Artistic Expansion

Ceramic decoration design has a long history, from the painted pottery patterns of the Neolithic Age to the exquisite patterns of historical famous porcelains; its formal language has continuously evolved. With the development of technology, especially the integration of digital techniques with traditional craftsmanship, ceramic decoration has exhibited new modes of expression and breakthroughs in techniques [8]. For example, modern processes such as 3D printing, digital glazing, and laser engraving not only improve manufacturing precision but also expand the diversity and complexity of pattern presentation. On the artistic level, contemporary ceramic design places greater emphasis on personalization and cultural expression, making decorative patterns transcend functional ornamentation to become important carriers of cultural communication and aesthetic innovation.

#### 3.2. Aesthetic Demands and Market Trends

Modern consumers increasingly value cultural identity and individual expression, shifting their expectations for ceramic products from pure functionality to a comprehensive experience combining aesthetics and cultural significance. This trend drives ceramic design toward pluralistic styles and cultural integration. Ceramic works with ethnic cultural connotations and distinctive symbols are more likely to gain market recognition, and they are particularly favored by younger generations [1]. In addition, green design concepts and sustainable materials have gradually become important considerations in the ceramic industry, promoting a comprehensive upgrade of design from material selection to execution.

#### 3.3. Integration Pathways for Traditional Elements

In ceramic design, the application of traditional cultural

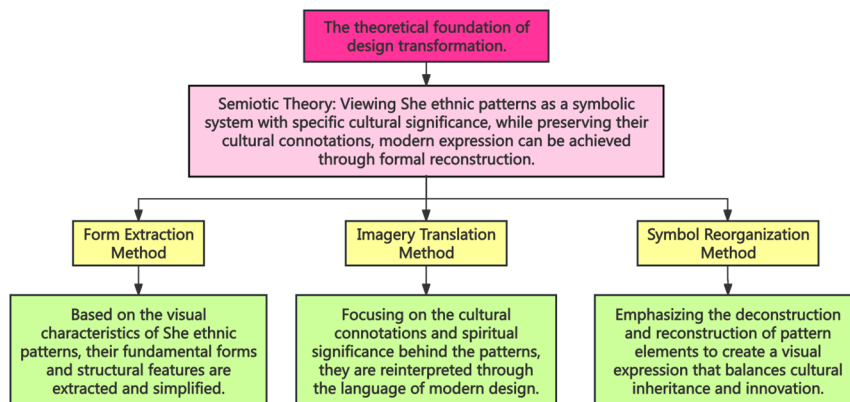
elements can mainly be classified into three approaches: direct reproduction, symbolic translation, and innovative integration. Direct reproduction involves retaining the original pattern structure and is suitable for products that emphasize cultural identity; symbolic translation updates the form while maintaining cultural imagery; innovative integration achieves unity of traditional and modern aesthetics through rearrangement and interpretation, creating a visually contemporary expression. The innovative integration approach has become the mainstream path. For example, series like “Intangible Cultural Heritage Rebirth” and “New Chinese Aesthetics” successfully combine traditional patterns with modern lifestyles, enhancing the communicative power and commercial value of the design [4].

### 4. Design Transformation of She Traditional Patterns in Contemporary Ceramic Decoration

#### 4.1. Theoretical Basis and Methods of Design Transformation

Applying She patterns to modern ceramic design requires structural reconstruction and symbolic reinterpretation guided by theory. Semiology emphasizes the cultural carrying capacity of visual language, providing a methodological foundation for the reconstruction of patterns in a modern context. By preserving the core symbolic elements and adjusting the forms of expression, traditional patterns can acquire new vitality in different contexts [6].

Specific design transformation methods include the form extraction method, the imagery translation method, and the symbol recombination method. The form extraction method, based on the visual characteristics of She patterns, extracts fundamental shapes and structures and then simplifies and refines them; the imagery translation method focuses on excavating the cultural connotations and spiritual essence behind the patterns and reinterpreting them through modern design language; the symbol recombination method emphasizes deconstructing and reconstructing pattern elements, creating innovative visual expressions while preserving core symbolic features. In addition, cultural translation theory advocates endowing traditional elements with new visual semantics in modern design, achieving a recreation of form and meaning.



**Figure 1.** The design transformation methods of traditional Yao ethnic patterns in contemporary ceramic decoration.

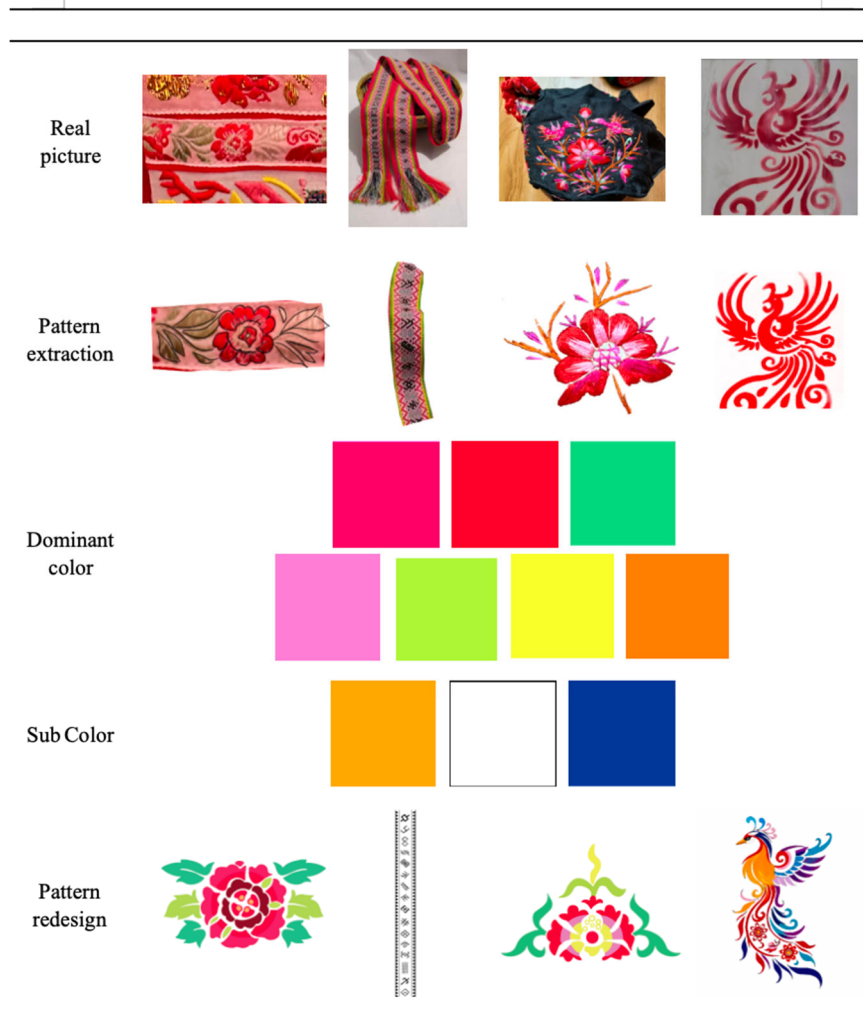
## 4.2. Abstraction and Simplification Strategies for She Patterns

Traditional She patterns are predominantly derived from nature and daily life, resulting in complex designs with rich details. To suit the concise and bright style pursued in modern ceramic decoration, these patterns must undergo appropriate abstraction and simplification [11]. This formal refinement not only enhances visual recognizability but also reduces difficulties in production processes.

Common methods include geometrizing complex figures,

simplifying line contours, or recombining pattern structures to give the design a more modern feel. For example, natural forms can be transformed into basic geometric shapes such as triangles and circles, with the core imagery preserved, details reduced, and layout reconstructed. These approaches retain the cultural features of traditional symbols while enhancing the expressiveness and practicality of the ceramic work [5].

In practice, it has been shown that She patterns refined in this way are more readily accepted in cultural and creative ceramics, and they are particularly popular among younger consumers, reflecting a high artistic and commercial value.



**Figure 2.** Extraction and redesign of traditional patterns of She ethnic group

## 4.3. Modern Treatment of Color and Texture

References must be cited in the text within brackets in nuTraditional She patterns primarily use high-saturation colors such as red, blue, black, and green, symbolizing passion and nature worship [5]. However, in contemporary ceramic design, it is necessary to harmonize and reconstruct these colors in accordance with current aesthetic trends. An effective approach is to retain the representative colors and adjust their hue, brightness, and saturation to better suit modern design styles [5].

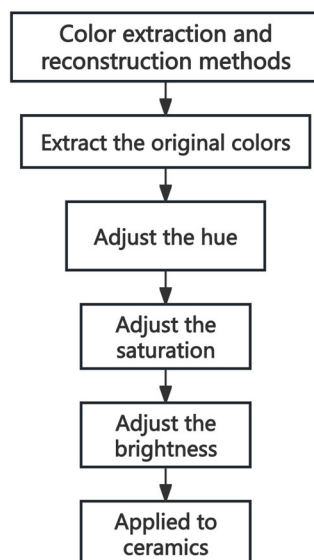
Modern ceramic color schemes often exhibit two polar trends: on one hand, a preference for low-saturation, neutral warm/cool tones that pursue simplicity and elegance; on the

other hand, an emphasis on color contrast to create visual impact. Therefore, redesigning the colors of She patterns requires striking a balance between “inheritance” and “adaptation.”

In terms of texture, the tactile qualities of traditional crafts, such as embroidery and brocade textures, can be reproduced using modern techniques like digital printing, underglaze coloring, and relief forming. This not only continues the tactile quality of ethnic handicrafts but also enriches the visual and tactile experience on the ceramic surface. For example, using inkjet printing technology to restore the complex layering of patterns makes the design more three-dimensional and vivid [5].

Overall, modern treatments of color and texture not only

enhance the artistic expressiveness of ceramic products but also strengthen their cultural identity and market competitiveness.



**Figure 3.** Color extraction and reconstruction methods

#### 4.4. Inheritance and Innovation of Cultural Connotations

She patterns contain rich cultural meanings and should not be used merely as decoration, but should convey ethnic spirit and values [9]. Modern ceramic design should delve into the stories and beliefs behind these patterns and, through contextual design, transform them into works with emotion and depth. Designs can incorporate themes such as She

festivals and myths to enhance the cultural expressiveness of the patterns. At the same time, combining elements of modern lifestyles and popular trends can broaden their forms of expression, making traditional symbols more in line with contemporary aesthetics [3].

Practice shows that designs with cultural narratives are more appealing and communicative, helping to promote the continuation and innovation of She culture in modern society.



**Figure 4.** Transforming Pattern Design into Ceramics

## 5. Conclusion

This paper systematically investigates the design transformation of traditional She ethnic patterns within the context of contemporary ceramic decoration, proposing a comprehensive set of strategies grounded in both theoretical analysis and practical methodology. The research underscores the distinctive formal aesthetics and rich cultural symbolism of She motifs, which endow them with considerable artistic value and commercial viability in modern ceramic design. Through techniques such as motif abstraction, symbolic recomposition, chromatic modulation, and narrative integration, the fusion of traditional heritage with contemporary design language can be effectively realized. This study contributes to the theoretical discourse on ethnic pattern adaptation while offering practical insights for the development of culturally inspired creative products. Furthermore, it anticipates the expanded role of digital technologies and intelligent manufacturing in future explorations of She pattern revitalization, thereby supporting the sustainable transmission and innovation of intangible cultural heritage within an evolving design landscape.

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