

The Historical Development and Literacy of Jiarong Tibetan Embroidery in Education

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the intricate tapestry of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery, exploring its historical development, cultural significance, and educational implications in heritage preservation and sustainable practices. The primary objective of this study was to investigate the historical development and literacy of Jiarong Tibetan Embroidery in education. Conducted in Xiaojin County, known for its cultural significance in Tibetan embroidery, the research employed a multidimensional approach, including a literature review, interviews with key informants such as cultural experts and artisans, and thematic analysis of data collected through surveys, observations, and focus-group discussions. The research uncovered profound insights into the origins of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery, its cultural symbolism, educational pedagogy, market dynamics, and strategies for sustainable development. Based on these findings, the study suggests collaborative efforts among stakeholders to integrate heritage education, promote cultural literacy, and preserve traditional crafts like Jiarong Tibetan embroidery in the face of modern challenges.

Key words: Embroidery, Cultural Literacy, Education, Sustainability, Cultural Preservation

INTRODUCTION

In the tapestry of human culture, certain threads carry the weight of centuries, weaving stories of heritage, craftsmanship, and identity. Jiarong Tibetan embroidery stands as a testament to this enduring legacy, intricately linking the cultural fabric of the Jiarong Tibetan people to their ancestral roots, beliefs, and artistic expressions. Nestled amidst the breathtaking landscapes of the Tibetan Plateau, Jiarong Tibetan embroidery reflects a profound symbiosis between nature, spirituality, and human creativity. However, in the face of modernity's rapid march and the evolving dynamics of global markets, preserving and promoting traditional crafts like Jiarong Tibetan embroidery pose significant challenges and opportunities (Yang & Lupo, 2019; Zhang et al., 2021; Zhang & Yang, 2023; Zhou, 2023; Zou, 2023).

The research problem at the heart of this study revolves around the evolving landscape of cultural heritage preservation and education in the context of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery. As globalization influences cultural exchanges and consumer preferences, traditional crafts risk losing their intrinsic value or becoming commodified (Chen, 2018; Cheng et al., 2023; Yang & Chonpairot, 2024; Wu & Chuangprakhon, 2024). Educators, artisans, policymakers, and cultural custodians grapple with the delicate balance between preserving and adapting centuries-old traditions to contemporary contexts. This dichotomy raises critical questions about how education can foster cultural literacy, heritage conservation, and sustainable practices (Altmann, 2015; Wu, 2016; Winter, 2022; Zhang & Liu, 2023).

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the historical development and literacy of Jiarong Tibetan Embroidery in education. By delving into the intricate interplay between history, culture, and education, this study seeks to uncover nuanced insights that can inform strategies for preserving cultural heritage, nurturing creativity, and promoting sustainable practices (Yan, 2021; Shi & Nicolas, 2023). Through a multidimensional exploration, the research aims to unravel the complexities inherent in sustaining traditional crafts amidst modern challenges while harnessing the potential of education as a catalyst for cultural revitalization (Madan, 2017; Wang, 2022; Ahmad & Islam, 2024).

The significance of this research extends beyond academic discourse; it resonates with broader societal and cultural imperatives. At a time when the world grapples with the tension between globalization and cultural preservation, Jiarong Tibetan embroidery serves as a compelling case study. Understanding its historical evolution, educational dimensions, and strategies enriches scholarly discourse and offers practical insights for educators, policymakers, cultural advocates, and artisans. The research findings promise to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, fostering cross-cultural appreciation, and empowering communities to safeguard their intangible cultural heritage (Magu, 2015; Bascopé et al., 2019; Zhao, 2020).

This study embarks on a journey to unravel the intricate tapestry of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery's historical development and literacy within the educational landscape. This study aspires to shed light on pathways that honor tradition,

inspire innovation, and foster a deep sense of cultural identity and pride by weaving together strands of history, education theory, cultural studies, and practices. Through collaborative efforts and interdisciplinary perspectives, the research seeks to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing dialogue on heritage preservation, cultural sustainability, and the transformative power of education (Hosagrahar et al., 2016; Rieckmann, 2018; Derr & Simons, 2020).

Research Question

- How has the historical development of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery contributed to literacy within the educational context?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature surrounding the historical development and literacy of Jiarong Tibetan Embroidery in education encompasses a diverse range of perspectives, theories, and empirical studies. This review synthesizes key theories and findings related to the historical evolution, cultural significance, educational implications, and strategies associated with Jiarong Tibetan embroidery.

Cultural Significance and Identity Preservation

Jiarong Tibetan embroidery holds profound cultural significance within Tibetan communities, serving as a medium for preserving cultural heritage and identity. Li (2017) delves into the intricate symbolism and narratives embedded in Jiarong Tibetan embroidery patterns, highlighting its role in transmitting historical narratives, spiritual beliefs, and communal identities across generations. This perspective underscores the cultural continuity and resilience embodied in embroidery traditions. Moreover, scholars such as Gyatso and Havnevik (2005) explore the broader context of women's roles in Tibetan culture, including their contributions to textile and embroidery practices. This feminist perspective sheds light on the intersectionality of gender, culture, and artistic expression, emphasizing the agency and creativity of women artisans in shaping embroidery traditions.

Educational Pedagogy and Cultural Literacy

The educational dimensions of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery are increasingly recognized as valuable tools for promoting cultural literacy and sustainable development. Ado (2007) discusses the educational potential of traditional crafts like embroidery, arguing that integrating these practices into educational curricula can enhance students' cultural awareness, creativity, and skills development. This pedagogical approach emphasizes hands-on learning, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, research by Hu (2004) emphasizes the importance of incorporating indigenous knowledge systems, such as embroidery techniques and motifs, into formal education to foster cultural pride and self-esteem among Tibetan youth. This approach aligns with UNESCO's

framework for integrating cultural heritage into education, promoting holistic learning experiences that celebrate diverse cultural expressions.

Strategies and Market Dynamics

In recent years, Jiarong Tibetan embroidery has gained attention not only for its cultural value but also as a unique opportunity and economic asset. Armstrong and Kotler (2021) discuss strategic market management principles, highlighting the potential for leveraging cultural heritage and authenticity in efforts. They emphasize the importance of sustainable practices, ethical sourcing, and storytelling in positioning Tibetan embroidery products in domestic and international markets. Moreover, scholars such as Rong (2013) delve into the intricacies of outlining strategies for establishing a distinctive identity for Tibetan embroidery. This includes considerations such as product differentiation, market segmentation, pricing strategies, and promotional activities tailored to appeal to diverse consumer segments while maintaining the integrity of cultural heritage.

The literature review underscores the multifaceted nature of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery, encompassing cultural, educational, and economic dimensions. By drawing on theories of cultural significance, educational pedagogy, and strategies, this review lays the groundwork for investigating the historical development and literacy of Jiarong Tibetan Embroidery in education, as outlined in the research objective.

METHOD

Population and sample

Purposive sampling was employed to select three distinct groups of individuals as interviewees for the field research. These groups include key informants, casual informants, and general informants, representing a diverse range of perspectives and expertise related to the cultural, artistic, and economic aspects of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery. The population from which the sample was drawn encompasses cultural experts, indigenous residents, embroiderers, intangible cultural inheritors, tourists, students, government officials, and individuals involved in the local cultural and handicraft sectors, as shown in Table 1.

Selection of Research Site

The selection of Xiaojin County as the research site aligns with the research objective of investigating the historical development and literacy of Jiarong Tibetan Embroidery in education. The county's cultural significance, accessibility, resource availability, and association with notable heritage figures make it an ideal location for conducting in-depth research and data collection regarding this traditional craft, as shown in Table 2.

Research Tools

A variety of research tools and steps were employed to gather comprehensive insights. These tools encompassed a basic

survey utilizing literature, observations, an interview guide, and focus-group discussions, each serving a distinct purpose in exploring different facets of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery, as shown in Table 3.

Data Analysis

Inferences are drawn based on data interpretation, leading to the formulation of certain conclusions. The insights gained from descriptive analysis, comparisons, and inferences are utilized in product design. This involves tailoring the style, patterns, materials, and other aspects of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery products to align with market demands, cultural significance, and inheritance trends. Through this analytical process, a deeper understanding of consumer preferences,

market dynamics, and challenges emerges, guiding the strategic direction of product design efforts.

RESULTS

This study delves into the intricate and culturally significant realm of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery. With the overarching objective of investigating the historical development and literacy surrounding Jiarong Tibetan embroidery in education, this study navigates through centuries of craftsmanship, cultural exchanges, and artistic evolution. Through a meticulous exploration of archaeological findings, historical narratives, and cultural influences, this research sheds light on the rich tapestry of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery, highlighting its roots, development stages, and profound impact on education and cultural identity.

Table 1. Population and sample

Category	Description	Size
Key Informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural experts with extensive knowledge of Aba Prefecture, Garze Prefecture in Sichuan Province, and the cultural and artistic heritage of Jiarong Tibetan, Kham Tibetan, and Qiang people within their jurisdiction Intangible cultural heritage inheritors with experience in the region 	4
Casual Informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals actively involved in Jiarong Tibetan embroidery production and design, representing a hands-on perspective on the craft's contemporary practices and challenges 	12
General Informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative and sales staff within local cultural departments and handicraft stores, offering insights into the marketing, promotion, and public perception of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery within the broader community 	20

Table 2. Selection of research site

Criteria	Description
Cultural Significance	Xiaojin County holds cultural significance as a hub for Jiarong Tibetan embroidery, showcasing traditional craft and heritage
Accessibility	The county's accessibility via transportation networks facilitates field investigations and data collection for the research project
Availability of Resources	Xiaojin County offers access to archival materials, skilled artisans, and cultural institutions relevant to Jiarong Tibetan embroidery, aiding in comprehensive research and analysis
Representative Inheritor Presence	The presence of Yang Huazhen, a national intangible cultural heritage representative inheritor of Tibetan embroidery, in Xiaojin County provides valuable insights and resources for studying the historical development and literacy of the craft

Table 3. Research tools and steps

Research Tool	Description
A Basic Survey	Utilized literature as a fundamental research tool to collect and analyze documents related to Jiarong Tibetan embroidery, including government documents, relevant works, papers, and local chronicles. This phase involved analyzing the history, development, and craftsmanship of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery, supplemented by research literature from domestic and foreign scholars
Observations	Focused on observing the production, use, and sales processes of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery, examining production techniques, processes, usage scenarios, and sales channels through participant and non-participant observation methods. Data from observations were compiled for thorough analysis and summarization
Interview Guide	Designed specific interview outlines for different interview objects, including cultural experts, intangible cultural inheritors, designers, cultural department staff, and sales staff. Targeted questions were asked to gather insights on various aspects of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery such as history, development, inheritance, protection, innovation, application, and market conditions
Focus-Group Discussion	Formulated themes for group discussions centered on the inheritance and protection of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery. Involved participants such as cultural experts, intangible cultural inheritors, designers, cultural department staff, and sales staff in discussions, which were recorded for comprehensive analysis and summary

The History of Jiarong Tibetan Embroidery

The genesis of embroidery skills in the Jiarong Tibetan area is shrouded in mystery, lacking definitive documentation or direct archaeological finds due to the challenging preservation of embroidery materials over millennia. Thus, the study adopts a historical lens, examining the development of embroidery in the surrounding Tibetan and Qiang regions, the adjacent Han area of the Sichuan Basin, and the textile skills unique to the Jiarong Tibetan area. This multifaceted analysis aims to decipher the stages of embroidery skill development within the Jiarong Tibetan context.

Archaeological revelations provide pivotal insights into the early stages of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery. Discoveries from sites like the Han Dynasty sarcophagus burial cemetery in Xiaojinrong, Aba, Sichuan, the Hasiu site in Malkang County, Sichuan, and the Han'eyi site in Zhonglu Township, Danba County, unearthed fundamental elements of embroidery dating back to the Neolithic Age, approximately 4,000 years ago. These elements include bone needles, spinning wheels for thread production, and original patterns (Schoeser, 2022).

The historical trajectory of embroidery's emergence parallels the evolution of textile arts, starting with the appearance of textiles, followed by sewing, and eventually, embroidery. This progression suggests that the foundational stitches of embroidery were inspired by sewing techniques. Remarkably, the Neolithic ancestors of the Jiarong Tibetan area demonstrated adeptness with bone needles and spinning wheels, crucial tools for sewing clothes. While specific clothing materials and embroidered patterns from this era remain elusive due to the passage of time, archaeological evidence underscores the early mastery of textile production tools by Jiarong Tibetan ancestors (Carrico, K. (2017).

Intriguingly, late Neolithic settlements in the core areas of today's Jiarong Tibetan Area reveal dense human habitation and cultural interactions. These areas, encompassing Markang, Jinchuan, Danba, Xiaojin, and other counties, exhibit remnants of local indigenous cultures alongside influences from the Yangshao and Majiayao cultures. Settlements such as Han'eyi in Danba County, Hasiu in Malkang County, and Liujiazhai in Jinchuan County offer glimpses into the economic activities and livelihoods of ancient inhabitants, including hunting practices and early forms of agriculture.

Noteworthy archaeological findings from the Hasiu and Han'eyi sites include bone awls, spinning wheels, and pottery related to textile production. The richly decorated pottery unearthed from these sites, characterized by intricate patterns, significantly influenced later Jiarong Tibetan embroidery designs. Additionally, the emergence of linen fabrics and the utilization of hemp and flax fibers suggest a sophisticated understanding of textile weaving techniques among Jiarong Tibetan ancestors during the Han Dynasty.

The cultural exchanges and productivity advancements observed from the late Neolithic to the Qin and Han Dynasties underscore a progressive development in textile and embroidery skills. Notable features include the increased use of spinning wheels and needles, the introduction of copper cones and clothing-related accessories, the appearance of

stone fishing net pendants, and the production of linen fabrics (Yonan & Sloboda, 2019). These advancements reflect a maturation in textile arts and the assimilation of external influences, culminating in the weaving of linen cloth by local ancestors based on wool spinning techniques.

In conclusion, the historical exploration of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery unveils a narrative of cultural continuity, technological innovation, and artistic expression. From humble beginnings in the Neolithic Age to sophisticated weaving and embroidery practices during the Han Dynasty, the legacy of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery is a testament to the enduring craftsmanship and cultural heritage of the region. Figure 1 illustrates the intricate pottery designs that influenced Jiarong Tibetan embroidery patterns, symbolizing a convergence of artistic traditions across millennia.

This study unravels five compelling reasons why the history of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery *thangkas* predates that of other Tibetan regions. Firstly, the geographical proximity of the Jiarong area to the Han embroidery cultural center, especially in contrast to other distant Tibetan areas, played a pivotal role in the early transmission and development of embroidery skills. Secondly, the historical significance of the Chengdu Plain as a prominent embroidery cultural hub in western China underscores the foundational roots of embroidery craftsmanship in this region. Thirdly, the rarity of embroidery skills in pastoral areas compared to agricultural regions further accentuates the unique prominence of embroidery in the Jiarong Tibetan area. Notably, Jiarong Tibetan embroidery showcases distinct regional stitches, including the exclusive gold plate embroidery stitching found nowhere else in Tibetan embroidery traditions. Fourthly, tracing back to archaeological findings and historical records, the lineage of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery intersects with the ancient Shu civilization, dating back over 3,000 years and characterized by mastery in sericulture and embroidery techniques. Lastly, the emergence and flourishing of Panjin embroidery, a technique integral to Jiarong Tibetan embroidery, marks a significant cultural exchange and innovation within the craft, further enriching its historical depth and artistic diversity. Illustrated by the captivating Qing Dynasty embroidered clothing in Figure 2, this research illuminates the intricate threads of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery's historical tapestry, emphasizing its enduring legacy and cultural significance in the realm of art and education.

Development of Jiarong Tibetan Embroidery

The development of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery has been thoroughly investigated, focusing on its historical evolution, unique characteristics, current status, and associated challenges. The researcher emphasizes the significance of promoting Jiarong Tibetan embroidery as a means to advance its growth and sustainability. This involves creating a robust platform and opportunities for the protection and continuation of this traditional craft. Through detailed analysis, the study aims to understand how strategic promotion can elevate the visibility and value of Jiarong Tibetan Embroidery, amplifying its market presence through effective operations and marketing strategies. Additionally, the contributions

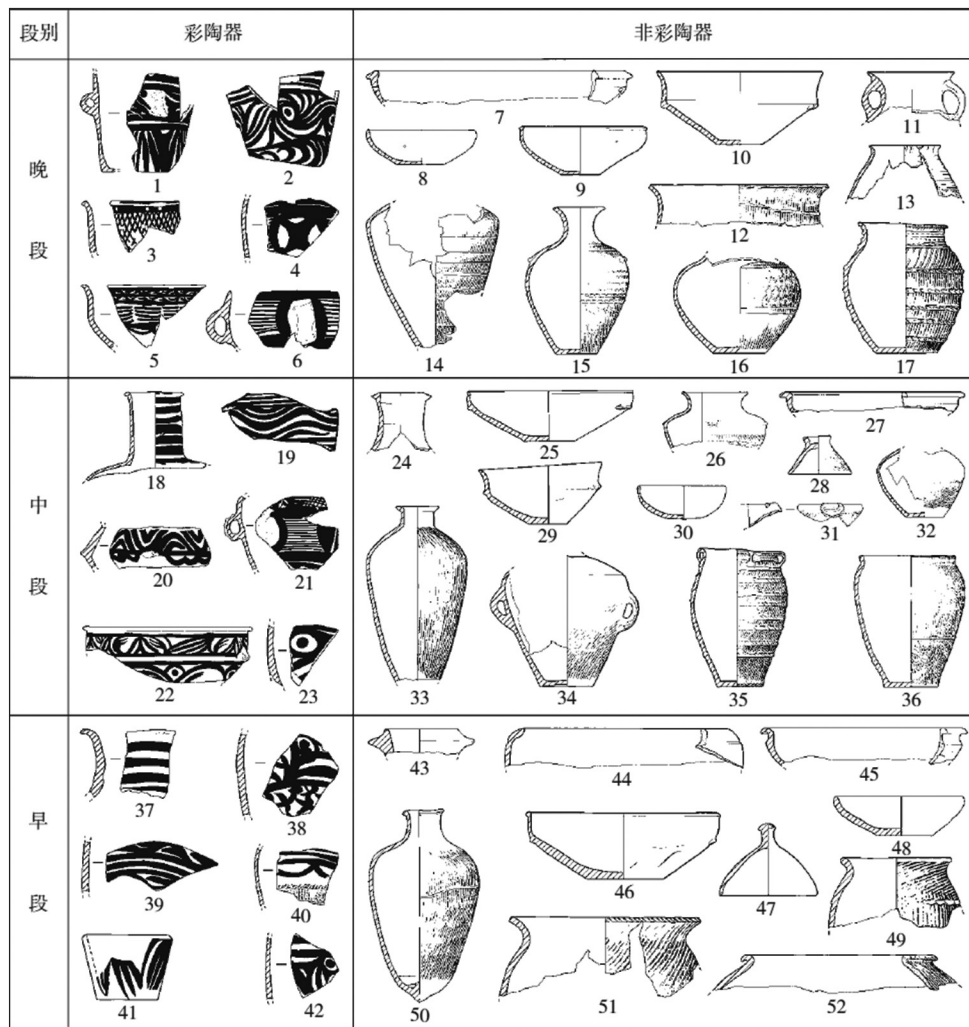


Figure 1. Some typical pottery of the Liujiashai site
Source: Ren Ruibo and Chen Wei (2022)



Figure 2. Qing Dynasty embroidered clothing from folk collections
Source: Feng Yang, from fieldwork in April 2023

of esteemed inheritors like Yang Huazhen are examined to understand how their efforts in innovation and dedication contribute to the broader market influence of traditional craftsmanship. Collaborative efforts with Yang Huazhen’s team will provide firsthand insights into the challenges and

prospects encountered by practitioners, offering targeted guidance for the future advancement of Jiarong Tibetan Embroidery. This comprehensive approach aims to deepen our understanding of the role promotion plays in safeguarding and advancing traditional cultural heritage, making meaningful contributions to the ongoing legacy and progress of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery.

The globalization of markets has intensified competition, presenting challenges to traditional crafts worldwide. In this context, establishing a competitive Jiarong Tibetan embroidery becomes essential not only for economic benefits but also for cultural preservation and international recognition. Yang Huazhen, a national intangible heritage inheritor of Tibetan weaving and embroidery craftsmanship, exemplifies the excellence and potential within Jiarong Tibetan embroidery. Her extensive experience, achievements, and social influence make her a compelling subject for studying the development of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery. Yang Huazhen’s dedication to cultural preservation, talent training, innovation, and market integration has not only revitalized traditional skills but also contributed significantly to social and economic development. Her efforts have helped transform Tibetan and Qiang weaving and embroidery from



Figure 3. Photo of Yang Huazhen
Source: Feng Yang, from fieldwork in April 2023

endangered to thriving, from local heritage to international recognition. Through her innovative approach and collaborative efforts with international partners, Yang Huazhen has not only empowered rural women but also pioneered new directions for the preservation and development of intangible cultural heritage. Figure 3 shows a photo of Yang Huazhen, capturing her role as a key figure in the promotion and development of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery.

Yang Huazhen's innovative approach to re-creating traditional cultural elements of the Jiarong Tibetan people has led to the design of unique cultural and creative products. These products not only preserve Tibetan and Qiang culture but also offer entrepreneurial opportunities for rural embroiderers, contributing to their economic prosperity. Yang Huazhen's efforts have facilitated the transmission of traditional culture among rural women, evolving into a marketable industry. Post the "5.12 Wenchuan Earthquake" in 2008, government bodies at all levels prioritized the protection and inheritance of Tibetan and Qiang culture, providing crucial support and guidance. This support has enabled traditional weaving and embroidery skills to transition from near extinction to a vibrant industry, fostering rural revitalization through innovation and inheritance. This journey, though challenging, has resulted in significant outcomes, including the effective preservation and transmission of Tibetan and Qiang culture, alongside rapid economic growth in the region. Productive protection, as an innovative safeguarding method, integrates traditional culture with modern industries, adding value to the cultural heritage of the Tibetan and Qiang people and contributing to rural revitalization.

Yang Huazhen's extensive cultural exchanges, centered on Tibetan and Qiang weaving and embroidery skills, have been instrumental in the rescue, protection, and inheritance of these traditions. Exhibitions and academic exchanges have been held in various cities and institutions, fostering international and domestic cultural dialogue. Particularly noteworthy is the "China Wenchuan Tibetan and Qiang Embroidery Training Center" in Yingxiu Town, Wenchuan County, which has hosted over 50 cultural exchanges, including visits from dignitaries like Prime Minister Lee



Figure 4. Thai artists visit the Tibetan and Qiang Embroidery Garden founded by Yang Huazhen
Source: Yang Huazhen (2023)

Hsien Loong of Singapore, President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania, and groups of Thai artists. These exchanges have garnered recognition from leaders and cultural enthusiasts, promoting the rich heritage of Tibetan and Qiang weaving and embroidery on a global scale. Additionally, active participation in exhibitions and events, such as the Second World Youth Conference in Nanjing, has earned accolades and appreciation, leaving a profound impact on the youth worldwide, as shown in Figure 4.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The exploration of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery's historical development and literacy within the educational context presents a fascinating journey through centuries of cultural evolution, artistic expression, and economic dynamics. The literature review provides a solid foundation by synthesizing key theories and findings related to the cultural significance, educational pedagogy, and market strategies associated with this traditional craft. Scholars like Ado (2007) and Hu (2004) have highlighted the educational potential of traditional crafts like embroidery in promoting cultural literacy, creativity, and skills development among students. This aligns with UNESCO's framework for integrating cultural heritage into education, emphasizing holistic learning experiences that celebrate diverse cultural expressions (Ado, 2007; Hu, 2004).

The research methodology, employing purposive sampling, observations, interviews, and focus-group discussions, was well-designed to capture diverse perspectives and expertise related to Jiarong Tibetan embroidery. The selection of Xiaojin County as the research site was strategic, considering its cultural significance, accessibility, resource availability, and association with notable heritage figures like Yang Huazhen. The utilization of research tools such as literature surveys, interview guides, and focus-group discussions enabled comprehensive data collection and analysis, ensuring a nuanced understanding of the craft's historical development, unique characteristics, current status, and challenges.

The research findings reveal a rich tapestry of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery's historical trajectory, from its origins in the Neolithic Age to its flourishing development during

the Han Dynasty. Archaeological discoveries, cultural exchanges, and technological advancements have shaped the craft's evolution, highlighting themes of cultural continuity, innovation, and artistic diversity. Notably, the role of key figures like Yang Huazhen in promoting and innovating traditional crafts underscores the potential for cultural preservation, economic sustainability, and international recognition (Yang & Lupo, 2019; Ahmad & Islam, 2024).

In conclusion, this research has shed light on the historical development and literacy of Jiarong Tibetan embroidery within the educational landscape. The study's objectives were met through a multidimensional exploration encompassing historical analysis, cultural significance, educational implications, and market strategies. The findings are consistent with research and theoretical principles that emphasize the educational value of traditional crafts in fostering cultural awareness, creativity, and sustainable practices.

The research highlights the importance of preserving and promoting intangible cultural heritage like Jiarong Tibetan embroidery, not only for its intrinsic cultural value but also for its potential to contribute to economic development and community empowerment. The collaborative efforts of artisans, educators, policymakers, and cultural advocates are crucial in navigating the challenges posed by globalization while harnessing the transformative power of education in revitalizing traditional crafts (Magu, 2015; Winter, 2022).

Moving forward, it is imperative to continue supporting initiatives that safeguard and promote traditional crafts, integrate cultural heritage into educational curricula, and foster cross-cultural appreciation. By doing so, we can ensure the preservation of cultural identity, the transmission of intergenerational knowledge, and the sustainability of heritage-based industries like Jiarong Tibetan embroidery (Wu, 2016; Bascopé et al., 2019).

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