

Research on Regional Cultural Characteristics in Horqin Prints

BAIJUNJU¹, Bayartur Baljinnyam², Battsooj Sukhbayar³

¹ Mongolian National University of Education, School of Fine Arts and Technology, F.AR21F729, UB, Mongolia

² Mongolian State University of Arts And Culture, UB, Mongolia

³ Mongolian National University of Education, School of Fine Arts and Technology, UB, Mongolia

Abstract: Horqin printmaking is a highly representative printmaking art school in Inner Mongolia, China, renowned for its unique regional cultural characteristics. This article aims to systematically study how Horqin woodblock prints artistically present the regional culture of the Horqin grassland. The paper first points out through a literature review that existing research mostly focuses on historical descriptions and lacks a systematic theoretical framework and an international perspective. Then, this article deeply analyzes the core manifestations of its regional characteristics from three aspects: subject matter content, visual symbols and spiritual connotations, and points out that its artistic creation is deeply rooted in the nomadic life, natural imagery and national spirit of the Mongolian people. Facing contemporary challenges, this article ultimately puts forward strategic suggestions for promoting the sustainable development of Horqin printmaking from four dimensions: educational inheritance, artistic innovation, market communication and international exchange. This research provides an important case for understanding the interactive relationship between regional culture and art forms, and offers an academic reference for the living inheritance and international dissemination of intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: Horqin Woodblock Print, Regional Culture, Cultural Representation, Artistic Inheritance, Sustainable Development.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary context of globalization, regional culture, as the core value for maintaining cultural diversity and national identity, is increasingly prominent. Art, as a sensitive carrier of culture, profoundly records and shapes the spiritual outlook and collective memory of a specific region. The Horqin printmaking of Inner Mongolia, China, originated in the middle of the 20th century. It has evolved from its predecessor "Zherimu printmaking" to the present day and has grown into one of the most representative printmaking schools in northern China. With its rich grassland flavor, bold and unrestrained artistic style and unique ethnic aesthetic taste, it has occupied an important position in the contemporary Chinese printmaking circle and is hailed as "the heroic spirit of the Horqin grassland". This study aims to systematically sort out and analyze the profound regional cultural characteristics contained in the Horqin woodblock prints, and explore how they transform the cultural genes of the grassland nomadic civilization through visual art language. Through a critical review of existing research, this article will further identify the research gaps and provide an academic perspective and theoretical basis for the inheritance and international dissemination of Horqin prints in the new era.

2. literature review

2.1. Research on Essence and Historical Development of Horqin Prints

Domestic scholars' research on the Kolchinese woodblock prints primarily focused on the clarification and definition of its historical context, artistic group, and development stages. Wu Yingchun's (2011) research was one of the early systematic achievements[6], as her paper comprehensively depicted the trajectory of Kolchinese woodblock prints from

their formation and development in the 1960s, and analyzed the influence of environmental factors on the shaping of their artistic style. E Jingyan (2015) further defined Kolchinese woodblock prints as "an artistic cluster formed in the Kolchin region after the founding of the People's Republic of China"[2], and elaborated on their artistic appearance and value, emphasizing that it is "an important component of the regional culture of the Kolchin grassland". Du Yanhong (2017) in her research clarified that "Kolchinese woodblock prints" is a concept that evolved from "Zherimu woodblock prints"[1], and clearly delineated its geographical scope centered on Tongliao City, covering the Kolchin District, Naiman Banner, and Zaruotai Banner, etc. These foundational studies provided a solid historical basis and framework for us to understand the origin, evolution, and basic artistic features of Kolchinese woodblock prints.

2.2. Research on Correlation between Regional Characteristics and Cultural Features of Kolchinese Woodblock Prints

Based on the ontological research, scholars naturally turned their attention to the intrinsic connection between the artistic style and regional culture of Kolchinese woodblock prints. Multiple studies unanimously agreed that the subject matter of Kolchinese woodblock prints is deeply rooted in the production and life of the Mongolian people. For example, their works widely depict scenes such as nomadic life, hunting, and Nadam festivals, filled with "rich regional and ethnic characteristics" (Du Yanhong, 2017)[1]. E Jingyan (2015) also pointed out that Kolchinese woodblock prints are an artistic form formed in the local people's production and life[2], conforming to the aesthetic characteristics of the local area, and are "an expression of people's attitude towards life in the Kolchin region". Beyond the surface level of subject matter, Wang Moxin's (2023) research introduced the

theoretical perspective of "cultural identity"[5], pushing the research to a deeper level. This study believes that Zaruotai woodblock prints (as an important branch of Kolchinese woodblock prints) is not only a materialized artistic form but also "an important genetic gene of grassland culture", and there is a profound connection between its colors, graphics, themes and the regional environment and common cultural concepts. This analysis from cultural symbol identity to value identity provides a valuable theoretical path for understanding the spiritual core of Kolchinese woodblock prints.

2.3. Comparative and Strategy Research on Regional Woodblock Print Creation and Transmission

Although such research does not directly focus on Kolchinese woodblock prints, its perspective and conclusions provide important comparative frameworks and methodological inspirations for this study. Many scholars have explored the universal laws of the integration of woodblock print creation and regional culture. Fan Wude (2025) and Zu Xiantong (2025) both pointed out that the woodblock prints from different regions exhibit distinct characteristics in themes[3], styles, and techniques, being the result of the nourishment of regional culture[8]. In terms of transmission strategies, Xiao Yijiong's (2025) practical research based on the woodblock print courses in township primary schools demonstrated an innovative path of dynamic inheritance of regional cultural symbols (such as ecological cultural symbols) through education[7]. Guo Qiang (2025) studied the woodblock print creation of Qingdao Art Academy[4], emphasizing the importance of "technique innovation and global communication" for promoting the integration of the local genetic elements and modernity of woodblock art. These studies jointly indicate that the contemporary development of regional woodblock prints faces the dual tasks of inheritance and innovation, requiring multi-dimensional efforts in education, creation, and market dissemination.

2.4. Summary of Literature Review

In conclusion, the existing research has laid a solid foundation for the study of Kolchinese woodblock prints: Firstly, it clearly sorted out its historical and development context; Secondly, it confirmed the superficial connection between its artistic expression and the regional culture of Khövsgöl (especially the Mongolian folk life); thirdly, some studies have begun to apply theories such as cultural identity to attempt a deeper interpretation.

However, the existing research gaps are also obvious: Firstly, most studies focus on historical description and style analysis, lacking a systematic theoretical framework to integrate and deeply interpret the formation mechanism and multi-dimensional manifestations (from themes, visual language to spiritual connotations) of the regional cultural characteristics of Khövsgöl woodblock prints. Secondly, the research perspectives are mostly concentrated on domestic and local contexts, failing to discuss it within the broader framework of global localism or international folk art dialogue, and lacking strategic thinking on its international dissemination. Finally, although it is aware of the challenges faced in inheritance, the existing research mostly remains at the level of phenomenon description, failing to systematically combine the latest cases (such as educational practices, digital media) to propose forward-looking and operational

development suggestions. Therefore, this study aims to respond to these gaps, attempting to conduct a more systematic and in-depth theoretical review of the regional cultural characteristics in Khövsgöl woodblock prints, and based on an international perspective, explore its contemporary value and future path, in order to make up for the deficiencies of existing research.

3. Manifestation of Regional Cultural Characteristics of Horqin Woodblock Prints

The artistic charm of Horqin woodblock prints lies fundamentally in their profound reflection of the unique regional culture of the Horqin grassland. This cultural representation is not merely a simple replication of life scenes, but rather achieves an elevation from reality to art through specific themes, visual languages and spiritual connotations.

3.1. Content of Theme: Grassland Life and Folklore Stories

The selection of themes in the Horqin woodblock prints is the most direct expression of its regional culture. The artists draw endless inspiration from the traditional production and life of the Mongolian people. The works extensively depict vast pastures, herds of cattle and sheep, galloping horses, and scattered Mongolian tents. These scenes are not merely simple landscape paintings; they are also a deeply affectionate record of the nomadic civilization. For instance, many works vividly depict the production activities of herders, such as herding, taming horses, milking, and moving their herds, presenting an original picture of harmony between humans and nature.

The prints also focus on the rich folk activities. The competitions such as bolok (wrestling), horse racing, and archery at the Nadam Festival are the preferred themes of the artists. These works are full of movement and power, perfectly conveying the bold and courageous national character of the Mongolian people. In addition, scenes full of life atmosphere, such as folk dances, wedding customs, and festival gatherings, also frequently appear in the paintings. These themes together form a visual epic of the Khövsgöl grassland, documenting the real and vivid living conditions and cultural traditions of the Mongolian people.

3.2. Natural and Humanistic Symbol Systems in Visual Language

In terms of artistic expression, the Kolchinese woodcuts have developed a unique visual symbol system, which is deeply rooted in the local environment. Natural imagery is highly refined and symbolized. The horse is the most frequently appearing symbol, as it not only serves as a means of transportation but also represents freedom, strength and the spirit of loyalty. The eagle soaring in the sky symbolizes nobility and bravery. The yurt is not only a dwelling place but also represents family, warmth and the mobile wisdom of the nomadic culture.

The use of colors also has a strong regional characteristic. Artists prefer to use pure, saturated and highly contrasting colors. Blue symbolizes the eternal blue sky of the grassland, white represents the holy clouds and the pure khata, green represents the vitality of the vast grassland, and golden yellow implies the bountiful grassland and the warm sunlight. This color combination is not a simple imitation of nature, but an

emotional expression based on the national aesthetic psychology, creating a visual effect that is both profound and lively, both simple and passionate.

In terms of composition and technique, the Horqin woodblock prints exhibit a bold, unrestrained and rich aesthetic style. The composition often strives for fullness and richness, and the picture is full of tension. The woodcut technique is firm and powerful, with lines being concise and affirmative. It does not focus on the meticulous carving of details, but instead forms a grand and simple artistic appeal, which is highly consistent with the open-minded and cheerful national character of the Mongolian people.

3.3. National Character and Values Embedded in Spiritual Essence

Through its themes and forms, the Kolchinese woodcuts ultimately convey the profound cultural spirit and ethnic values of the Kolchinian grassland. Among them, the emotions of respecting nature and valuing life are one of the core themes. The intimate relationships between people, animals and the environment in the pictures profoundly reflect the ecological view and philosophical thoughts of "harmony between man and nature" in the nomadic culture.

At the same time, the work strongly promotes the Mongolian collective character of firmness, optimism, bravery and enthusiasm. Whether it is the full commitment of the wrestler during the bout, or the calmness of the herders in the face of snowstorms, all demonstrate a positive and upward life force. This rigid aesthetic is a tribute to the ethnic history and spirit.

Ultimately, as a form of cultural practice, the Khöchin painting also contributed to the construction and reinforcement of regional cultural identity. Through artistic expression, it enabled members of the ethnic group to feel a sense of cultural belonging and pride, and also clearly presented the unique identity of the Khöchin culture to the outside world.

4. Challenges and Suggestions

Although the Horqin printmaking has achieved remarkable success, in the contemporary context of globalization and cultural transformation, its inheritance and development are confronted with a series of practical challenges. Identifying these challenges and putting forward feasible suggestions are crucial for the future of this art form.

4.1. Current Challenges Faced by Transmission and Development of Kolchin Woodblock Prints

The primary challenge lies in the issues of the creative team and the inheritance model. The representative artists of the older generation are gradually getting older, while the younger generation takes a long time to invest in traditional printmaking creation and receives slow material rewards, which leads to the risk of a gap in the creative team. The traditional apprenticeship or group inheritance model has weakened its effectiveness in the process of modernization and urgently needs new mechanisms to attract and cultivate new talents.

Secondly, artistic language is under pressure for innovation. Some creations have problems of stereotyped themes and styles, constantly repeating past successful models, and thus are unable to fully meet the aesthetic demands of the rapidly

changing contemporary society and the emotional needs of the younger generation. How to achieve creative transformation and innovative development while maintaining regional characteristics is a core challenge.

Finally, the limitations of the market and dissemination are obvious. The recognition of the Khöchinjin woodblock prints is mostly confined to a specific region and professional circles, lacking effective commercial transformation paths and international exhibition platforms, which restricts the expansion of its influence and its own self-sustaining ability.

4.2. Strategies for Promoting the Sustainable Development of Kolchinese Woodblock Prints

In response to the above challenges, this article proposes the following strategic suggestions. First, deepen the education inheritance system. The Kolchinese woodblock prints can be incorporated into the art education courses of local primary and secondary schools as well as universities, and special textbooks can be compiled, along with the organization of workshops. This is not only to cultivate reserve talents, but also to sow the seeds of regional culture in the hearts of young people and build a broader audience base.

Secondly, encourage diverse innovations in themes and techniques. Artists should be encouraged to maintain their connection to traditional art while also paying attention to the new changes in contemporary grassland life, exploring new themes and expressing new thoughts. In terms of techniques, they can explore integration with other art forms (such as screen printing, digital printmaking) and even other artistic expressions, to enrich the artistic expression and attract more young creators to join.

Thirdly, expand modern communication and marketing strategies. Make full use of digital media, such as establishing online digital art galleries and using short-video platforms to showcase the creative process. This can break geographical barriers and reach audiences worldwide. At the same time, actively promote the combination of print artworks with cultural and creative products, tourist souvenirs, and explore models such as art licensing to enhance their market vitality.

Fourth, establish academic discourse and enhance international exchanges. We should support more academic research, explaining the value of the Khöchin painting from a theoretical perspective. We should also actively organize the works to participate in international exhibitions and exchange activities, placing them within the dialogue framework of international folk art and printmaking art, thereby enhancing their international reputation and cultural influence. Only by taking a multi-pronged approach can Khöchin painting continue to thrive.

5. Conclusion

This study conducts a systematic and comprehensive review of the regional cultural characteristics in Horqin prints. Analysis shows that the Horqin printmaking is by no means an isolated art form, but rather a profound reflection and important carrier of the regional culture of the Horqin grassland. It successfully transforms regional culture into a unique visual art language by depicting nomadic life, employing natural and humanistic symbols, and conveying a resolute and optimistic national spirit. However, this art form is confronted with the dual challenges of inheritance and

innovation in contemporary times. This article holds that the future of Horqin printmaking not only depends on the protection of tradition, but also on whether it can achieve creative transformation and development through the education system, artistic innovation and international dissemination channels. Future research can further delve into case studies or conduct cross-cultural comparisons to continuously deepen the understanding of this unique artistic heritage and promote its wider recognition and influence on the global art stage.

References

- [1] Du Yanhong. On the Regional Characteristics of Horqin Printmaking Creation [D]. Shanghai Normal University,2017.
- [2] E Jingyan. Research on Horqin Prints [D]. Tianjin Normal University,2015.
- [3] Fan Wude. A Brief Discussion on the Integration of Printmaking Creation Practice and Regional Culture [J]. Shen Hua,2025,(19):81-83.
- [4] Guo Qiang. Inheritance, Exploration and Integration of Diversity: A 40-Year Study on Printmaking Creation at Qingdao Academy of Painting [J] Fine Arts,2025,(07):32-38+158.
- [5] Wang Moxin. The Inspiration and Manifestation of Cultural Identity in Regional Art [D]. Minzu University of China,2023.
- [6] Wu Yingchun. Research on Horqin Printmaking Art [D]. Minzu University of China,2011.
- [7] Xiao Yiqiong. Practical Research on Characteristic Printmaking Courses in Rural Primary Schools from the Perspective of Regional Cultural Inheritance: Taking the "Shelter" Series of Printmaking Courses as an Example [J]. Mass Literature and Art,2025,(14):108-110.
- [8] Zu Xiantong. An Analysis of the Artistic Characteristics and Inheritance of Chinese Woodcut Prints under the Background of Regional Culture [J]. Shen Hua,2025,(15):74-76.