

# Exploring the Role of Sichuan Institute of Nationalities in the Innovation and Inheritance of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore the role of ethnic colleges and universities, especially the Sichuan College of Nationalities, in the innovation and inheritance of Chinese painting and calligraphy. By analyzing its practice of calligraphy and painting education, this paper explores how to integrate traditional art and ethnic cultural elements in the modern education system, and thus promote the diversified development and contemporary presentation of Chinese calligraphy and painting art. The study finds that Sichuan College of Nationalities has effectively promoted the art of Chinese painting and calligraphy and provided a useful path for the dissemination, modern transformation and innovative development of traditional culture by means of its characteristic art curriculum, deepening the combination of traditional skills learning and modern art concepts, as well as tapping into and innovating the application of national cultural elements.

**Keywords:** Ethnic Colleges and Universities; Chinese Painting and Calligraphy; Innovation and Inheritance; National Culture; Traditional Art

## 1. Introduction

Chinese painting and calligraphy art, as the essence of traditional Chinese culture, carries thousands of years of history and deep cultural traditions. This art form not only integrates unique aesthetic concepts, but also embodies a complex methodology and system of thought, making it a unique form of artistic and cultural expression. [1] As Liu Kaiyun (2010) and Cui Zifan and Xu Han (2007) have pointed out, the art of Chinese painting and calligraphy is not only a visual art, but it is also a profound cultural language reflecting the aesthetic qualities and philosophical thinking of the

Chinese nation. [2] Therefore, the innovation and inheritance of Chinese painting and calligraphy is not only a need for artistic practice, but also an inevitable requirement for cultural continuity and development.

Under the background of globalization and modernization, how to preserve and inherit this unique art form while still being able to innovate and develop it has become an important topic in the academic and educational fields. Ethnic colleges and universities, as important bases for traditional cultural education, bear the important responsibility of combining excellent Chinese traditional arts with ethnic minority arts, thus promoting cultural diversity and innovation. This is not only reflected in the basic education stage, such as the introduction of calligraphy and Chinese painting courses in primary and secondary schools, but also in the overall support of the state for calligraphy and painting education, including the investment of policies, funds and resources.

Taking Sichuan College for Nationalities as a case study, this study aims to explore the role and practical path of ethnic colleges and universities in the innovation and inheritance of Chinese calligraphy and painting. Located in Ganzi Xi Zang Autonomous Prefecture, which is rich in ethnic culture, the unique geographic location and cultural environment of Sichuan College of Nationalities make it unique in its advantages and challenges in the inheritance and innovation of Chinese painting and calligraphy art. This paper will analyze how the school combines its own characteristics to promote the innovation and inheritance of Chinese painting and calligraphy art through educational practice and policy support, aiming to provide reference and inspiration for Chinese traditional art education.

## 2. Integration Strategy of Multicultural

### **Inheritance and Art Innovation**

Under the background of globalization, the inheritance and innovation of multiple cultures have become important issues in the field of cultural research and art education. As an important source of cultural diversity in China, ethnic minority regions, with their rich ethnic cultural resources, provide unique materials and inspirations for the innovation of traditional arts. Ethnic colleges and universities, especially those located in these regions, such as the Sichuan College of Ethnic Studies, have assumed an important role in passing on and promoting Chinese traditions and local ethnic cultures and arts, relying on their dual advantages of geography and culture. According to Ruda (2021), [3] by integrating traditional painting and calligraphy culture with local ethnic culture, these colleges not only preserve cultural heritage, but also promote cross-cultural artistic innovation and exchange, thus deepening the cultural identity of the Chinese ethnic community [4].

The educational practices of the School of Fine Arts at the Sichuan Institute for Nationalities are a positive response to the national policy of national culture and education. The educational strategy adopted by the Academy demonstrates a strong commitment to the preservation and innovation of traditional cultural heritage through the in-depth integration of national culture and art, and modern art and design education. This educational model not only promotes the integration of national culture and modern civilization, but also realizes the concrete implementation of the national strategy on the development of national culture.

In course design and teaching practice, Sichuan Institute for Nationalities encourages teachers and students to explore how to distill and recreate the basic elements of national culture and art in order to form a design language with distinctive national characteristics and apply it to modern social life. The process not only involves a deep understanding and appreciation of national culture, but also requires students to use creative thinking to transform these elements into new art forms and design solutions. As shown in the case below, the college has successfully combined traditional culture with modern design, demonstrating the students'

creative ability and art practice skills:

#### **2.1 Modern Transformation and Innovation of Ethnic Costume Designs**

In the process of exploring the characteristics of ethnic costumes in the Ganzi region, students not only learn traditional embroidery and pile embroidery techniques, but also thoroughly study the cultural stories and symbolism behind these crafts. On this basis, and in conjunction with the concept of sustainable fashion, students chose environmentally friendly materials, such as organic cotton and recycled fibers, for their clothing designs. By combining traditional elements with modern fashion trends, such as the use of asymmetrical design and layered construction in tailoring, the students successfully created a series of garments that are both ethnically distinctive and in line with modern aesthetics and environmental protection concepts. This practice not only demonstrates the new birth of national culture in contemporary design, but also reflects the growth of students in innovative design thinking and awareness of sustainable development.

#### **2.2 Modern Application and Creative Integration of Traditional Handicrafts**

Students combine traditional handicrafts such as embroidery and pile embroidery with modern home design concepts to create a series of modern home furnishings with aesthetic and practical values. For example, the application of embroidery techniques to decorative pillows and curtains not only gives home furnishings a unique artistic aesthetic, but also preserves the temperature and story of the craft. In addition, by incorporating black pottery techniques into the design of modern tea sets, the students not only revitalized traditional craftsmanship, but also promoted the harmonious integration of tradition and modern lifestyles. During the creation of these works, students not only need to master traditional skills, but also need to understand and apply modern design principles, demonstrating the role of interdisciplinary integration in promoting innovative thinking.

#### **2.3 Innovative Presentation of Digital Art and National Culture Stories**

Students use digital media and virtual reality

technology to transform national culture stories into interactive digital artworks. For example, through photography, 3D and other technologies, users were able to experience the Xi Zang horse running festival and beauty pageant, which not only recreated the traditional rituals of the festival, but also allowed users to interact with the elements in the digital environment. This combination of technology and art not only provides new forms of expression for traditional culture, but also enhances the audience's understanding of and interest in ethnic culture. In addition, this practice provides students with valuable experience in exploring the application of new media art and technological innovation in cultural heritage.

#### **2.4 Application and Innovation of National Culture Elements in Environmental Design**

In the environmental design project, students thoroughly studied the characteristics of local ethnic architecture, such as the color painting and carvings of Xi Zang architecture, and then combined these elements with modern architectural design concepts to create a spatial design that has ethnic characteristics and meets modern functional needs. [5] For example, when designing an exhibition hall for specialty products, the students drew on the roof structure and decorative patterns of Xi Zang architecture to create a public space that is both culturally distinctive and provides comfort and leisure. This design not only reflects the respect and inheritance of ethnic cultures, but also demonstrates how these cultural elements can be incorporated into modern environmental design in an innovative way that promotes the vitality and diversity of community culture.

Through the above multi-dimensional educational practices, the School of Fine Arts of Sichuan University for Nationalities not only demonstrates its profound heritage in national culture education, but also reflects its emphasis on the cultivation of students' innovative thinking and practical ability. These innovative projects have successfully demonstrated how to combine traditional culture with modern design concepts, providing useful cases and experiences for the innovative inheritance of traditional arts.

### **3. National Identity and Self-confidence**

In the context of cultural globalization, ethnic colleges and universities play an important role in maintaining and promoting ethnic culture. As an important base for education and cultural inheritance, Sichuan College for Nationalities, through the education of traditional arts such as Chinese calligraphy and painting, not only provides a platform for ethnic minority students to deeply understand and experience their own culture, but also plants the seeds of identity and self-confidence in their hearts towards traditional Chinese culture and their own ethnic culture. According to relevant research, art education, especially traditional art education, has an irreplaceable role to play in enhancing a sense of national identity and self-confidence, and it can help students gain a deeper understanding of the unique value of their own culture, thus enhancing their pride in their traditional culture and their own cultural roots.

In the educational practice of Sichuan Institute for Nationalities, the teaching of Karma Ghazi (Chi) thangka is a prominent example. The Karma Ghazi thangka is not only one of the first national intangible cultural heritages, but also a bright pearl in Xi Zang culture.[6] The inheritance and teaching of this art form does not only stop at the level of technique, but also the level of teaching. [6] The inheritance and teaching of this art form does not only stay at the level of technique, but also goes deeper into the cultural and spiritual level. Through the study of Karma Ghazi thangka, students can not only master the drawing skills of this unique art form, but also understand the deeper meaning and spiritual core of Xi Zang culture, thus deepening the sense of identity and pride in their own national culture.

Particularly worth mentioning is the "New Thangka" creation course offered by the Academy of Fine Arts, an innovative teaching mode that combines traditional Karma Ghazi thangka techniques with modern life, technology and language, giving new life to traditional art forms in modern society. Taking the student's work "Zhu De and Gedha Living Buddha" as an example, this work is not only the inheritance of traditional thangka techniques, but also a modern interpretation and artistic reproduction of historical events. Such creative practice not only reflects the students' deep understanding and mastery of traditional art, but also shows their ability in

creative thinking and modern expression. This teaching mode of combining traditional art with modern creativity not only helps to protect and pass on the intangible cultural heritage, but also stimulates students' creativity and self-confidence, and strengthens their sense of identity with the national culture. Through such teaching practice, Sichuan Institute for Nationalities has not only successfully realized the inheritance and innovation of national culture, but also provided a solid foundation for the overall development of students. In the process of learning traditional arts, students not only improve their artistic skills, but more importantly, they learn how to draw inspiration from their own cultural roots and face the challenges of the globalized era with confidence and pride. [7]

#### 4. Cross-cultural Exchange and Cooperation

In the educational context of a multi-ethnic country, ethnic colleges and universities, such as the Sichuan Institute for Nationalities, have become natural platforms for cross-cultural exchanges and cooperation because of their unique geographical location and cultural environment. These schools not only gather students from different ethnic backgrounds, but also become an important base for cultural inheritance because of their in-depth education on traditional arts such as Chinese painting and calligraphy. Through innovative heritage education in Chinese painting and calligraphy, these institutions are able to effectively promote understanding and respect among different ethnic cultures, thereby enhancing cultural integration and interaction. According to Zhou Hongyu (2004), this cultural intermingling is not only conducive to the enhancement of friendship and understanding among different ethnic groups, but also promotes the mutual learning and dissemination of cultures. [8]

A concrete example of practice is that (as shown in Figure 1) students from different ethnic backgrounds are allowed to work together on art creation projects through curriculum design. For example, a painting jointly completed by Han and Xi Zang students not only demonstrated their respective artistic strengths and cultural backgrounds, but more importantly, this collaborative process

deepened mutual understanding and respect among the students, reflecting the great value of cross-cultural cooperation. In this process, the Xi Zang students demonstrated their superior skills in line drawing, thanks to their training in thangka painting since childhood, while the Han Chinese students demonstrated their solid skills in basic modeling training. This complementary cooperation not only enriches the artistic expression of the works, but also represents a sharing of culture and skills.



**Figure 1. Classroom Transcript**

In addition, ethnic colleges and universities can also create more diversified art works by cooperating with other art fields and disciplines, such as music, dance, literature and video. Such interdisciplinary cooperation can not only inject new ideas and elements into the innovative inheritance of Chinese painting and calligraphy, but also promote the exchange and integration between different art fields. By integrating the resources of various universities and research institutions, a more open and collaborative art ecosystem will be built, which will help promote the innovative development and international influence of Chinese painting and calligraphy art.

In order to further strengthen the influence of Chinese painting and calligraphy, schools and research institutions can organize regular painting and calligraphy exhibitions, cultural exchange activities and forums, such as the "Forum on the Inheritance and Development of Painting and Calligraphy". These activities not only provide a platform for artists and scholars to display and exchange ideas, but also provide opportunities for the public to understand and appreciate the art of Chinese painting and calligraphy. [9] Through the continuous organization of these activities, it can effectively promote the collision and

fusion of artistic and innovative thinking, and contribute to the inheritance and development of Chinese painting and calligraphy art.

### 5. Perspective of Cultural Heritage Protection

In the face of the challenges and opportunities of modernization, the cultural heritage protection and innovative inheritance strategies adopted by the Sichuan Institute for Nationalities reflect a new perspective and approach. By incorporating traditional arts, such as Chinese calligraphy and painting, into its teaching system, the College not only emphasizes respect for and protection of traditional cultural heritage, but also actively explores new paths for integrating these arts with the needs of modern society. This approach not only helps to preserve the historical continuity and identity of the nation, but also gives new vitality and relevance to traditional culture.

The transmission of Karmagatse thangkas and Xi Zang thangka murals particularly emphasizes the importance of intangible cultural heritage and its new role in contemporary society. By hiring professional inheritors and combining theory and practice, the Sichuan Institute for Nationalities enables students to gain an in-depth understanding of the cultural background and techniques of these ancient arts, and at the same time encourages them to blend these traditional techniques with contemporary elements to create works of art that are both traditional and modern in aesthetic appeal. This is not only a kind of protection of traditional skills, but also a kind of innovation and development.

In addition, the college has organized various exhibitions and cultural activities, such as the "Beauty Infusion" project (as shown in Figure 2), which showcases the creative achievements of students and teachers to the general public, and which not only provides a platform for display, but more importantly raises the public's awareness of the importance of preserving traditional cultural heritage. This combination of public participation and education opens up a broader space for the living transmission of traditional culture and promotes the survival and development of cultural heritage in contemporary society.

In integrating tradition and modernity, the Sichuan Institute for Nationalities encourages

students to study in depth the cultural characteristics and artistic heritage of their own people, including traditional motifs, symbols, and colors, as well as the history, philosophy, and religion of their people. Through such in-depth study, students are able to draw inspiration from the deep background of their own national culture, and to uncover and value cultural treasures that may not yet be widely recognized. Combined with modern design concepts and innovative thinking, students try to combine traditional elements with modern expressions in their creations, such as fusing traditional lines with modern abstract art, or linking traditional stories with contemporary social issues. Such innovative attempts not only make the art of Chinese painting and calligraphy more diversified and enriched, but also increase the public's interest in traditional culture, especially attracting the attention of the younger generation.



**Figure 2. Aesthetic Immersion Site**

Ultimately, through such comprehensive and in-depth education and practice, the Sichuan Institute for Nationalities not only enables students to master the skills and spirit of traditional arts, but more importantly teaches them how to express and pass on their own national cultures in innovative ways in the contemporary society of globalization and digitization, thus contributing positively to the preservation of cultural diversity and cultural heritage in China and the world.

### 6. Guide Innovative Thinking and Create Diversified Themes and Styles

In the contemporary era where traditional art and modern expression mingle, ethnic colleges and universities, such as the Sichuan Institute for Nationalities, assume the important role of leading students to explore artistic innovation. This educational goal not only requires students to have an in-depth understanding of the traditional essence of Chinese painting and

calligraphy art, but also encourages them to develop innovative thinking and the courage to try and explore new areas of artistic expression.

In order to cultivate students' creativity, the Academy should guide students to examine traditional art with an open and tolerant mindset, encourage them to break through established artistic boundaries, and dare to utilize novel expressive techniques and materials. [10] Through such guidance, students can learn how to interpret and express the art of Chinese painting and calligraphy from a unique perspective, and incorporate their personal emotions, reflections, and observations of contemporary society into their artistic creations, thus giving their works a deeper meaning and wider resonance.

At the same time, the Academy should also encourage students to explore diversified creative themes and styles. By introducing the cultural elements of ethnic minorities, integrating the artistic characteristics of different cultures at home and abroad, and even combining cross-disciplinary knowledge and techniques, students can broaden their creative horizons and enrich their personal artistic language. Such creative practice not only shows the diversity of Chinese painting and calligraphy art, but also inspires the birth of more innovative artworks and expressions. Through such a comprehensive and in-depth educational practice, Sichuan Institute for Nationalities can effectively cultivate students' innovative thinking and artistic creativity. Based on their mastery of traditional skills, students are able to confidently explore and practice their own unique personal artistic styles, pushing the art of Chinese calligraphy and painting to new heights. Ultimately, this not only contributes to the inheritance and development of traditional art, but also injects new vigor and innovative spirit into the contemporary art world.

## 7. Summary

Ethnic colleges and universities play a key role in the innovation and inheritance of Chinese painting and calligraphy, not only deepening their respect for and study of traditional art, but also emphasizing the combination of tradition and national culture through the integration of modern art concepts and techniques, and promoting a pluralistic

presentation of culture and a sense of the times. These universities have effectively promoted the modernization and transformation of the art of Chinese painting and calligraphy and international exchanges by offering special courses, strengthening the teaching model that combines practice and theory, promoting interdisciplinary cooperation, and enhancing the protection and living legacy of cultural heritage. To further promote the innovative development of Chinese painting and calligraphy, it is recommended that policy and resource support be strengthened, the application of digital technology be promoted, an extensive platform for international cooperation be established, cross-border artistic talents be cultivated, and public cultural participation be enhanced, with a view to promoting the prosperity of the art of Chinese painting and calligraphy and the enhancement of its global influence in the context of globalization.

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