

# Strategies of Integrating Funan Wicker Weaving Art into Product Design

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**Abstract** As the Funan wicker weaving industry has developed rapidly, problems such as a single product category, a lack of innovation, and lagging design concepts exist. This paper clearly defined the core footholds of integrating Funan wicker weaving into product design—realizing cultural dissemination, empowering ideological education, and boosting the local economy. It emphasizes enhancing the cultural value of products through modern design concepts. Based on practice and research, it proposed systematic design strategies from five dimensions (refining classic objects, cross-border integration of materials, revitalizing traditional skills, optimizing interactive experience, and rooting in regional culture). It is expected to provide theoretical reference and practical paths for enhancing the market competitiveness of Funan wicker weaving, improving brand awareness, assisting local economic development, and strengthening cultural confidence.

**Keywords** Funan wicker weaving, Product design, Intangible cultural heritage innovation, Cultural empowerment

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At present, local governments across China are vigorously promoting the inheritance and industrialization development of ethnic cultures, which is an inevitable requirement for the high-quality development of China's cultural industry<sup>[1]</sup>. After a long period of evolution, China's cultural industry has formed a new business model that integrates creative culture and design services<sup>[2]</sup>. With the support of the governments of Funan County, Fuyang City, and Anhui Province, the wicker weaving cultural industry in Funan has continued to innovate and develop in recent years. The planting of *Salix integra* and the manufacturing industry of wicker products have taken shape, becoming a pillar industry in Funan. Wicker weaving art has achieved remarkable results in terms of inheritance and dissemination<sup>[3]</sup>. However, as the industry has developed rapidly, a series of problems have gradually emerged. Firstly, the cultural and creative wicker products of Funan are mainly focused on furniture and household items, with a single category and slow iteration, so it is difficult to adapt to the development of the times and the aesthetic demands of the public. Secondly, driven by economic interests, the products in the market vary greatly in quality, and copying and imitation occur frequently; the investment in innovative design is insufficient, and cultural characteristics weaken, which not only restricts market expansion but also damages brand image, resulting in the obstruction of intangible cultural heritage inheritance and the decline of industrial innovation vitality. Thirdly, local enterprises producing wicker products lack professional design talents, and production is mainly based on the manual weaving of farmers. Although they retain the original flavor of the tradition,

due to the lack of modern design concepts, the products are significantly out of sync with contemporary aesthetics.

Under this background, it is urgent to establish a new path for the design of national-level intangible cultural heritage cultural and creative wicker products of Funan. In this paper, based on the core foothold of integrating Funan wicker weaving into product design, its historical context was deeply explored, and strategies for integrating cultural empowerment and product innovation were established. On the basis of preserving the use value and experience value of the products, strengthening cultural value and recognition has significant practical significance for the dynamic protection and sustainable development of Funan wicker weaving.

## 1 Footholds of Funan wicker weaving art in product design

Funan wicker weaving art, as an advanced representative of local handicrafts in Fuyang, is an important part of regional and local cultural soft power. The vigorous development of Funan wicker weaving art and its related industries holds profound significance for promoting Chinese traditional culture, inheriting and disseminating intangible cultural heritage, and educating the younger generation. Exploring the foundation of Funan wicker weaving art in product design can provide guidance for subsequent design practices.

### 1.1 Realizing cultural dissemination

The products combine functionality and experience. The core added value lies in serving as a material carrier to convey cultural connotations and transmitting the cultural core to users through interactive experiences. The common

limitations of traditional folk handicrafts lie in their narrow audience base and weak dissemination power, making it difficult to gain widespread public recognition and gradually moving towards marginalization. Funan wicker weaving art also has such problems. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the cultural expression of wicker weaving art in product design and highlight regional cultural characteristics. Effective cultural dissemination can not only enhance the popularity of wicker products in Funan, expand the consumer group and market sales volume, but also increase the income of practitioners and help the industry achieve a virtuous cycle.

The design of wicker products in Funan needs to decompose cultural connotations into levels, deeply explore their symbolic meanings, integrate local characteristics, so that the products have both regional identification and modern aesthetics, quickly gain public recognition, and achieve wide cultural dissemination. In the information age, relying on digital technology and media to protect, inherit, and disseminate intangible cultural heritage has become an important research topic<sup>[3]</sup>. Funan wicker weaving art can break through the limitations of physical carriers and innovate the design in dimensions such as communication mode, display form, audience positioning, and effect feedback, and build a virtual and physical integrated communication channel based on digital media, thereby expanding the breadth and depth of cultural dissemination while enhancing the cultural value of the products.

### 1.2 Empowering ideological education

Currently, China attaches great importance to the construction of cultural soft power and the cultivation of cultural confidence. Funan

wicker weaving art, as a national intangible cultural heritage, is the crystallization of the wisdom of the regional culture in Fuyang, and has maintained its vitality in the development of the times. Empowering local ideological education with Funan wicker weaving culture can not only strengthen the leading role of ideological and political education but also provide an innovative path for the dynamic protection of intangible cultural heritage<sup>[4]</sup>. The empowerment paths can be carried out from two aspects.

First, suitable wicker weaving cultural resources are selected relying on communication carriers. To empower ideological education through Funan wicker weaving culture, it needs to use multiple media to achieve cultural transmission. Different types of carriers have different priorities in the selection of cultural resources. When digital carriers (posters, short videos, animated images, VR, etc.) are used as media, priority should be given to elements with strong visual impact, such as shapes and weaving techniques, so as to enhance users' immersion, deepen cultural cognition, and improve educational effectiveness. As physical products are carriers, elements such as weaving techniques, texture, and natural materials should be mainly extracted to strengthen the interactive experience of the audience and the intangible cultural heritage. The selection of differentiated elements can deeply explore the value of wicker weaving culture, trigger emotional resonance among users, and promote the implementation and effectiveness of ideological education.

Secondly, an education model integrating theory and practice is constructed based on cultural characteristics. Intangible cultural heritage inheritance is not only cultural inheritance but also spiritual transmission<sup>[5]</sup>. To efficiently empower ideological education, it is necessary to design educational methods that closely follow the characteristics of wicker weaving culture. Truly effective education is the combination of theoretical teaching and practical experience. For instance, only theoretical explanations of wicker weaving craftsmanship cannot convey the cultural core; only by personally engaging in hands-on practice can learners obtain the most intuitive cultural perception.

### 1.3 Boosting the local economy

The integration of Funan wicker weaving into product design has several advantages in empowering the local economy. Firstly, it helps to establish a cultural brand and increase products' value. Infusing wicker weaving art into product design can incorporate the core elements of local culture, break through the limitations of

traditional products that only meet the needs of use and experience, fill the gap in cultural consumption, and enhance the uniqueness and market competitiveness of products. Secondly, it promotes enterprise transformation and helps with industrial upgrading. In the past, local wicker weaving enterprises focused on scale expansion and capacity improvement, and integrating intangible cultural heritage into them can drive enterprises to transform into cultural creative enterprises, improve the cultural system, and achieve quality improvement and efficiency enhancement<sup>[6]</sup>. Thirdly, it realizes the monetization of cultural value and boosts the local economy. The cultural value of intangible cultural heritage can be converted into market economic benefits, which increases product premiums and market share, enhances enterprise revenue, drives the expansion of industrial scale, and facilitates the high-quality development of the local economy.

## 2 Strategies for the design of wicker products in Funan

The design of wicker products in Funan is the design of a cultural creative product based on the wicker weaving art. Its characteristic lies in "re-designing" or "second-level design" based on traditional weaving techniques and their derivative products. Different from graphic design and industrial design, it adds the concept of "traditional culture", and all elements are designed around this concept. Based on the preliminary analysis, the design methods of wicker products in Funan are summarized as follows.

### 2.1 Refinement of classic objects: preserving the design genes and adapting to modern aesthetics

Funan wicker weaving has evolved over thousands of years, giving rise to a large number of classic objects that possess both practical and aesthetic value. They embody unique design logic and aesthetic characteristics, serving as an important source of inspiration for innovative design. The refinement of classic objects is not simply a replication; rather, it is restructured and upgraded by integrating modern aesthetics and usage requirements while preserving the core design elements, achieving an organic connection between tradition and modernity.

The refinement of classic objects follows the three-step method of "screening-extraction-reconstruction". The first step is to screen typical samples to sort out traditional wicker weaving objects (such as baskets, shovels, storage baskets, seats, etc.), prioritize classic objects with high

regional identification, distinct design features, rich cultural connotations, and suitable for modern life, and eliminate those with outdated functions and weak identification. The second step is to extract design genes, namely deeply analyzing the outer contours, proportion relationships, structural nodes, decorative details, and texture features of classic objects and condensing representative and transferable design elements and aesthetic rules. The third step is modern reconstruction design, namely employing simplification, deformation, reorganization, scaling, mirroring and other design techniques to simplify redundant structures, optimize proportion relationships, update local details, enhance the simplicity, fashionability and practicality of the products while retaining the traditional charm to adapt to modern home styles and consumer demands.

Texture patterns are an important part of wicker weaving design. Constrained by the weaving techniques, they form a unique texture with balanced density, varying depths and textures, and a strong rhythm, and exhibit aesthetic features such as symmetry and balance, rhythmic correspondence, and unified variation. In the design, classic texture patterns can be extracted and applied to the surface decoration, structural assembly and fine details of products, thereby enhancing the visual hierarchy and tactile experience of products and highlighting the beauty of traditional craftsmanship.

Taking a comfortable line-woven backrest chair as an example (Fig.1). The design retains the overall contour and structural logic of a traditional wicker weaving chair, extracts the classic warp and weft weaving textures, and ingeniously applies two-dimensional plane patterns to the three-dimensional curved backrest surface. It simplifies traditional complex decorations, optimizes seat proportions and ergonomic design, continues the natural and simple charm of traditional wicker weaving, and also integrates modern minimalism aesthetics and comfortable experience, thereby achieving the modern translation of classic forms.

### 2.2 Cross-border integration of materials: breaking through material limitations and enhancing product quality

Traditional wicker weaving products in Funan are mainly made of natural materials such as *Salix integra* and solid wood. The materials are monotonous and highly homogeneous, making it difficult to form a differentiated competitive advantage. Material innovation is the key to enhancing product quality, enriching visual layers, and increasing market recognition. It

is necessary to break through the limitations of a single material and promote the cross-border integration of traditional materials, modern materials, and eco-friendly materials to achieve complementary material characteristics, superimposed aesthetic effects, and enhanced functional value.

Firstly, traditional materials are integrated to highlight natural texture. Wicker weaving should be integrated with traditional materials such as ceramics, bamboo art, metal, and fabric. Wicker weaving is flexible and breathable, and has strong heat insulation properties, while ceramics are hard, waterproof, and smooth and delicate. Their combination can create wicker weaving porcelain tea sets, heat-insulating bases, and decorative items, and these products have practical functions and natural aesthetics. Wicker weaving is light and flexible, while bamboo is firm and tough. Their combination can create furniture, screens, and storage items, balancing the soft and tough textures. Wicker weaving is simple and natural, while fabric is soft and warm. Their matching can enhance the comfort and warmth of products, suitable for modern home environments.

Secondly, modern materials are combined to expand design boundaries. It is necessary to rationally utilize modern materials such as plastic, resin, acrylic, and metal pipes, break through the limitations of traditional material shapes, and expand the possibilities of product design. Plastic is highly malleable, has rich colors, is durable and lightweight, and can be cross-woven with *S. integra* to create products with vivid colors and unique textures. Resin is transparent and translucent, and wicker weaving patterns can be embedded in resin to make decorative paintings, lamps, and ornaments, which have natural textures and modern transparency. Acrylic has a light and simple fashion texture, and can be used as the supporting structure for wicker products, thereby reducing the weight of the products and simplifying the design, which is suitable for modern minimalist and luxury styles.

Thirdly, environmentally friendly materials are applied to practice the green concept. In line with the trend of green consumption, it is necessary to explore the application of environmentally friendly recycled materials and the recycling of waste materials to reduce production costs, reduce resource waste, and enhance the ecological value of products. Agricultural and forestry waste such as wood chips and straw are processed into recycled boards and fiber materials, and they are combined with natural wicker weaving to create green and

environmentally friendly products. Degradable bioplastics, recycled fibers, and environmentally friendly resins are used to replace some traditional materials to practice the green and low-carbon concept, meet current consumers' environmental demands, and enhance the added value of products.

### **2.3 Revitalization of traditional skills: optimizing the craft system and expanding product categories**

Traditional weaving skills are the core competitiveness of Funan wicker weaving. Revitalizing traditional skills means preserving the essence of the core techniques, optimizing and improving craftsmanship, enhancing production efficiency, expanding application scenarios, breaking through category limitations, adapting to modern market demands, and promoting the transformation of wicker weaving from traditional household items to diversified cultural and creative products.

On the one hand, traditional techniques are optimized and improved to enhance their adaptability. It is necessary to systematically review the basic techniques of Funan wicker weaving (flat weaving, oblique weaving, twisting weaving, winding weaving, knotting weaving, etc.), analyze the characteristics, applicable scenarios and limitations of each technique, and carry out targeted optimization and improvement. It is needed to simplify complex and redundant weaving steps, retain core pattern features, and improve the efficiency of hand weaving. Besides, the density of warp and weft threads and tension control should be optimized to enhance the stability of product structure and reduce deformation and cracking problems. It is necessary to innovate the combination of weaving techniques, integrate the characteristics of different techniques, create new composite textures, and enrich visual expression. At the same time, modern production techniques should be introduced to assist in production, and mechanical cutting, shaping molds, eco-friendly dyeing, drying treatment and other technologies are adopted to balance the traditional quality and market cost.

On the other hand, the application scenarios of products should be expanded, and product categories are enriched. The fixed perception that "wicker weaving=household items" is broken, and the cross-scenario and cross-category application of traditional craftsmanship are promoted. In the field of cultural and creative products, small cultural items with small shapes and affordable prices, such as wicker weaving bookmarks, pen holders, keychains,

decorative paintings, jewelry boxes, and mobile phone cases are developed and suitable for the aesthetic and consumption capabilities of young consumers. In the field of home decoration, wicker weaving lamps, screens, wall decorations, green plant racks, art ornaments, and hanging decorations are expanded to comply with modern home natural style and new Chinese style. In the field of cultural tourism derivative products, combining with the local culture of Fuyang, wicker weaving commemorative items, special storage bags, intangible cultural heritage handmade material packages, and cultural tourism gift boxes are designed to serve the cultural tourism consumption market. In the field of public facilities, wicker weaving is combined with metal and concrete to create outdoor seats, landscape flower boxes and public decorative devices, thereby integrating them into urban public space design and highlighting regional cultural characteristics.

The wood chip weaving bathtub designed by Israeli designer Tal Engel (Fig.2) provides an important reference for the cross-border innovation of Funan wicker weaving. This design breaks the boundary of weaving process application, expands the traditional weaving craftsmanship to the bathroom product field, optimizes the weaving process to improve waterproof performance, takes into account the natural texture beauty and modern practical function, breaks the category limitation and realizes cross-border innovation, providing ideas for Funan wicker weaving to expand into high-end home and customized product fields.

### **2.4 Enhancement of interactive experience: focusing on the "user-centered" principle and strengthening emotional connection**

Interactive experience refers to the sensory perception, behavioral feedback and emotional resonance formed by users during their contact and use of products, and directly affects the market acceptance of products and user loyalty. The design of Funan wicker products should adhere to the "user-centered" principle, optimize the interactive experience from the three dimensions of sensory, behavior and emotion, reduce the usage threshold, strengthen cultural perception, and trigger emotional resonance, thereby allowing users to experience the charm of intangible heritage and enhance cultural identity during use<sup>[6]</sup>.

At the sensory interaction level, a multi-sensory immersive experience should be created. Visually, color matching should be optimized. That is, the natural original color of *S. integra*

is used as the main color, and is combined with low-saturation moandili color system and natural earth tones to balance natural simplicity and modern minimalism. Texture contrast is enhanced, namely strengthening visual layers and three-dimensionality through different weaving textures with varying densities, concavities, protrusions, and thicknesses. Besides, it is necessary to simplify product design, remove redundant decorations, and highlight the beauty of wicker weaving lines and natural forms. Touchingly, high-quality *S. integra* is selected, finely polished and treated for pest and anti-corrosion to avoid sharp edges and roughness, while the soft and fine texture of the natural fibers is retained. The weight of a product should be reasonably controlled to balance stability and portability and enhance the comfort of holding, touching, and leaning. Audibly, the weaving process and structural design should be optimized to reduce the noise generated by product shaking and friction, thereby creating a quiet and comfortable usage environment.

At the behavioral interaction level, the functional design should be optimized according

to users' habits. The behavioral habits, usage pain points, and preferences of users of different ages, genders, and usage scenarios are surveyed to simplify the product operation process and reduce the learning cost. The opening and closing structure and the separation design of wicker storage products are optimized for categorizing and storing items. For wicker furniture, the ergonomic design is optimized to fit the human sitting posture and leaning position and enhance the comfort of prolonged sitting. The grip size and portability design of small cultural products are optimized for daily carrying, playing, and giving as gifts. It is necessary to pay attention to detail design, reinforce wear-resistant parts, optimize corner and edge rounding treatment, design anti-slip bases, reserve cleaning channels, improve durability and ease of maintenance, reduce usage pain points, and enhance the usage experience.

At the emotional interaction level, it is necessary to strengthen cultural connections and evoke emotional resonance. The cultural connotations, regional stories, and craftsmanship spirit of Funan wicker weaving are integrated into the design of products, thereby endowing

products with emotional value and storytelling ability. Specifically speaking, local folk elements, natural landscapes, and intangible cultural heritage patterns are extracted to weave them onto the surface of products to convey regional cultural emotions. The handcrafted traces and subtle texture differences are retained to convey the warmth of the artisan's craftsmanship, which is different from the coldness of industrial products. Series and themed products are designed to build cultural experience scenarios, so that users can feel the charm of intangible cultural heritage, understand cultural connotations, and form emotional identification and cultural belonging.

The winning work of Red Dot Award Winter Eyewear in 2019 is a typical case of interaction experience innovation (Fig.3). This design breaks through the traditional structure of glasses, and uses flexible knitted materials to create the frame, so this product has features of lightness, flexibility, and resistance to deformation. The interaction methods are diverse and flexible, and they can be worn as glasses, hair bands, necklaces, bracelets, etc. to adapt to different usage scenarios. This design breaks



Fig.1 Comfortable line-woven backrest chair



Fig.2 Design of the weaving bathtub



Fig.3 Design of Winter Eyewear

the single-use boundary of the product, brings novel, interesting, and personalized interaction experiences to users, stimulates their usage interest, and provides important reference for the interaction design of wicker products in Fuyan.

### 2.5 Rooting in regional culture: deeply exploring the genes of Fuyang and enhancing cultural recognition

The vitality of intangible cultural heritage lies in its regional uniqueness. The core competitiveness of Funan wicker weaving lies in its deep integration with the regional culture of Fuyang. Innovation design is not simply about shape and material combination; rather, it involves delving into the core of Fuyang's regional culture, integrating local cultural symbols, folk connotations, historical memories, and spiritual traits into the design of products, making the products become carriers of Fuyang culture and distinct from other regional wicker products, and enhancing regional recognition and cultural uniqueness.

Firstly, Fuyang's intangible cultural heritage should be integrated to create a composite cultural value. Fuyang has multiple intangible cultural heritages such as paper-cutting, Yingzhou flower-drum, Jieshou color pottery, Linquan brush, and Huaihe wicker weaving. The cross-border integration of Funan wicker weaving with other intangible cultural heritages is promoted to achieve cultural accumulation and value multiplication. The classic patterns of Fuyang paper-cutting (flowers, auspicious patterns, and folk designs) are presented through weaving, embroidery, inlaying, laser engraving and other techniques on the surface of wicker products, making them have both weaving texture and the charm of paper-cutting. Combining with Jieshou color pottery, weaving wicker is used as the framework and pottery is used as the decoration to make tableware, tea sets, and incense holders, which integrates simplicity and elegance. Drawing inspiration from the ink and brush ink conception of Linquan brush, simple and freehand wicker weaving products are designed to showcase Eastern aesthetics, disseminate Fuyang intangible cultural heritage, and expand the influence of local culture.

Secondly, the regional symbols of Fuyang are refined to enhance regional recognition. The unique natural landscapes, landmark buildings, folk elements, and agricultural culture of Fuyang are extracted as design symbols and integrated into the shape, patterns, and color design of products. The outlines of Fuyang's landmark buildings such as Wenfeng Pagoda, Kuixing

Tower, Yingzhou West Lake, and Baili River are simplified and transformed into weaving patterns or product shapes. Natural landscape elements such as Huaihe Wetland, rural scenery, planting bases of *S. integra*, and Huaihe fishing boats are extracted to design natural-themed series of products. Fuyang's agricultural culture, folk festivals (such as the Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival lanterns, and agricultural harvest) and Huaihe culture stories are explored, and auspicious meanings and cultural connotations are integrated into the design of products, giving the products regional cultural memories, and allowing users to recognize "Fuyang wicker weaving" at a glance.

Thirdly, cultural experience scenarios are constructed to deepen cultural identification. It is necessary to extend from the design of a single product to cultural experience construction, create an integrated model of "product + culture + experience", allow users to fully experience the charm of Fuyang culture and wicker weaving. To design thematic product series, focusing on themes such as "Huaihe ecological culture", "agricultural craftsmanship culture", and "intangible cultural heritage transmission culture", furniture, cultural products, decorative products, and tourism supporting products are created to build a complete cultural scene. Wicker weaving intangible cultural heritage handicraft experience packages are developed, and simple materials, tools, and making tutorials are provided to allow users to personally experience weaving skills and feel the warmth of craftsmanship. Combining with cultural tourism scenic spots, intangible cultural heritage exhibition halls, and cultural creative districts, a wicker weaving culture experience area is created, and Fuyang cultural spirit is transmitted through product display, skill demonstration, interactive experience, and cultural explanation, thereby enhancing users' cultural belonging and identification.

In summary, based on tradition, oriented towards modernity, rooted in the region, and user-oriented, the innovative design of Fuyang's wicker weaving products should be systematically advanced from five dimensions: design, material, technique, experience, and culture. On the basis of meeting practical functions and market demands, it is necessary to enhance cultural expression and emotional resonance, promote the upgrading of Funan wicker weaving from a traditional handicraft to a modern cultural product industry, and achieve the dynamic inheritance and sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage.

## 3 Conclusion

Integrating Funan wicker weaving art into product design is an inevitable choice for the dynamic inheritance of intangible cultural heritage and also an important path to empower local culture, education, and economic development. Currently, Funan wicker weaving industry is facing difficulties such as a single product category, insufficient innovation, superficial cultural expression, and low market recognition. It is urgently needed to take cultural dissemination, ideological education, and economic empowerment as the core value basis to promote product innovation and upgrading. Through five strategies (refining classic objects to preserve the design genes, enhancing product quality by cross-border integration of materials, revitalizing traditional skills to expand product categories, enhancing interactive experience to strengthen emotional connection, and rooting in regional culture to highlight local characteristics), the cultural value, market competitiveness, and brand recognition of wicker products in Funan can be effectively improved. Meanwhile, it will help with the dynamic inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, the high-quality development of the industry, enhance local cultural confidence, and promote the integration of excellent traditional Chinese culture into modern life.

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