

The Path for Cultivating Lacquer Art Talents in Universities Under the Influence of Regional Culture—Taking the Inheritance of Lacquer Art Elements from Chu Culture as an Example

Qianqian Liu

Shangqiu Normal University, Shangqiu 476000, Henan, China

Copyright: © 2025 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: As a non-material cultural heritage treasure embodying regional spirit, Chu culture lacquer art offers rich materials for cultivating lacquer art talents in universities with its unique patterns, colors, and craftsmanship. Leveraging the abundant Chu lacquer artifacts in Hubei and the market demand for Chu culture IP, some universities have initiated preliminary teaching explorations. However, challenges remain, including insufficient cultural penetration in courses, a lack of cultural literacy among faculty, practices detached from cultural contexts, and weak innovation and transformation capabilities. To address these issues, it is necessary to develop a systematic curriculum module of “Chu” Culture + Lacquer Art”, build a composite faculty team combining “techniques + culture”, establish an immersive practice system integrating “campus + society”, and create a collaborative mechanism for “talent cultivation + cultural revitalization”. This approach aims to transition from skill-based instruction to culture-based education, fostering versatile talents with both cultural literacy and innovative capabilities, thereby promoting the contemporary inheritance and industrial revitalization of Chu lacquer art.

Keywords: Chu culture; University lacquer art; Talent cultivation; Regional cultural immersion; Industry-university-research collaboration

Online publication: August 26, 2025

1. Introduction

In the era of cultural confidence and intangible cultural heritage revitalization, regional culture has become the cornerstone of art talent cultivation in universities. Chu culture lacquer art, with its dynamic totems of phoenix motifs, the color philosophy of vermilion and black, and the exquisite craftsmanship of clamping and lacquering, stands as a brilliant peak in the history of Chinese lacquer art. It serves not only as a material carrier of Chu’s regional spirit but also as a vital gene for contemporary artistic innovation. As a higher education institution located in the core region of Chu culture, it shoulders the dual mission of inheriting intangible cultural heritage techniques and cultivating professional talents. However, in the current lacquer art education, the separation of culture and techniques, as well as the disconnection between theory and practice, has resulted in difficulties for the cultivated talents to truly grasp the cultural connotations of Chu lacquer art

and meet the demands of its contemporary transformation. How to explore a scientific and effective approach to talent cultivation with Chu culture as the core influence, enabling traditional lacquer art to flourish anew in the hands of a new generation of creators, has become an urgent issue for universities to address in this era^[1].

2. Definition of core concepts

2.1. Chu cultural lacquer art elements

Chu cultural lacquer art elements represent a concentrated and tangible manifestation of Chu civilization in the realm of lacquerware art. Specifically, they refer to the cultural symbols and craftsmanship systems with distinct regional identities, extracted from lacquerware unearthed from Chu tombs and relevant documented records. Their shaping elements are characterized by vividness and exuberance, such as the ingenious fusion of avian and beast forms in the Tiger-Seal Bird-Stand Drum, showcasing the romantic imagination of the Chu people. The decorative elements encompass core patterns such as phoenix motifs, coiled dragon patterns, and cloud-thunder patterns, embodying the totemic worship and spiritual pursuits of the ancient Chu people. The color elements primarily feature vermilion and deep black, forming a color philosophy that is both contrasting and harmoniously unified, concealing the cultural connotation of “Yin” and “Yang” interplay”. The craftsmanship elements include traditional techniques such as the lightweight yet sturdy lacquered fabric mold, the delicate and full inlaid lacquer, and the ornate and refined gold painting, collectively constructing the unique artistic style of Chu lacquer art^[2].

2.2. Regional cultural influence

Regional cultural influence is an educational model that takes Chu culture as its core spiritual essence and deeply integrates it with university lacquer art education through diversified approaches. It is not a simple superimposition of cultural content but rather a comprehensive incorporation of Chu cultural spirit and lacquer art elements into every aspect of talent cultivation through curriculum system reconstruction, immersive practical experiences, and regular cultural immersion. This kind of immersion emphasizes a full-chain penetration from classroom to practice and from theory to creation, guiding students to deeply understand the aesthetic characteristics and spiritual essence of Chu culture while mastering lacquer art techniques. Ultimately, it aims to achieve an essential transformation in lacquer art teaching in colleges and universities from “mere technique instruction” to “cultural immersion for education”, making regional culture an intrinsic gene in students’ artistic creations^[3].

2.3. Objectives for cultivating lacquer art talents in colleges and universities

The core objective of cultivating lacquer art talents in colleges and universities is to shape compound professionals who possess both Chu cultural literacy, exquisite lacquer art techniques, and innovative practical abilities. Such talents need to have a solid grasp of the historical context, aesthetic connotations, and core craftsmanship of Chu lacquer art, accurately capturing the spiritual essence of Chu culture and safeguarding the cultural authenticity of Chu lacquer art. At the same time, they should possess proficient practical skills in lacquer art, being able to flexibly apply traditional techniques such as “Jiazhu” (a method of making hollow lacquerware), filling lacquer, and gold painting to complete their creations. Moreover, they must possess modern innovative thinking, capable of integrating elements of Chu lacquer art with contemporary aesthetic demands and market development trends to create works that possess both cultural distinctiveness and practical value. These works should not only meet the diverse needs of modern artistic creation but also satisfy the job requirements of the cultural industry for specialized lacquer art talents, becoming the core force in the inheritance and innovation of Chu cultural lacquer art^[4].

3. Development foundations and favorable conditions for cultivating lacquer art talents in colleges and universities under the influence of Chu culture

As the core birthplace of Chu culture, Hubei boasts unique cultural resource advantages, providing a solid foundation for cultivating lacquer art talents in colleges and universities. Institutions such as the Hubei Provincial Museum and the Jingzhou Museum house a large number of precious lacquerware artifacts unearthed from Chu tombs, ranging from the Tiger-Seat Bird-Stand Drum to the Painted Wooden Figurines, comprehensively presenting the pinnacle of craftsmanship and aesthetic qualities of Chu lacquer art. Simultaneously, a group of intangible cultural heritage inheritors deeply engaged in the inheritance and preservation and transmission of Chu lacquer art are active within the province. The core techniques they master, such as “Jiazhu” mold making and gold painting with lacquer filling, serve as important carriers for living transmission. At the university level, some universities in Hubei have taken the lead in exploring the integration of Chu culture and lacquer art education. By organizing students to visit special exhibitions of Chu lacquer cultural relics, inviting inheritors of intangible cultural heritage to deliver lectures on craftsmanship, and offering specialized elective courses on Chu lacquer art, they have initially fostered a teaching philosophy focused on cultural inheritance, accumulating practical experience for subsequent talent cultivation. From the perspective of market demand, with the continuous rise in popularity of Chu culture IP, there is a growing demand for works incorporating Chu lacquer art elements in fields such as cultural and creative products, interior decoration design, and modern art creation. This not only provides lacquer art talents with broad employment opportunities but also compels universities to strengthen targeted talent cultivation, forming an initial linkage between “cultural resources, teaching exploration, and market demand”^[5].

4. Prominent dilemmas and practical challenges in the cultivation of university lacquer art talents influenced by Chu culture

Currently, the cultivation of university lacquer art talents in the context of Chu culture still faces multiple bottlenecks. There are obvious shortcomings in the curriculum system. The lacquer art courses in most universities still focus on traditional technique training, with Chu culture-related content often serving as scattered elective modules or case supplements. The lack of a systematic design encompassing “theory, techniques, and innovation” results in students having only a superficial understanding of the historical context, aesthetic connotations, and cultural spirit of Chu lacquer art, making it difficult for them to form a deep comprehension. There are also shortcomings in the cultural literacy of the faculty. While some professional teachers excel in teaching lacquer art techniques, they lack in-depth research on the archaeological background, symbolic meanings of patterns, and evolutionary logic of Chu culture, rendering them unable to effectively guide students in exploring the cultural value of Chu lacquer art elements and thus affecting the depth of teaching. Practical teaching is detached from the cultural context, often limited to repetitive technique practice in campus workshops, with insufficient in-depth interaction with Chu cultural heritage sites and intangible cultural heritage workshops. As a result, students struggle to understand the intrinsic connections between Chu lacquer art and the social sacrificial rituals and daily life of the time. Their creative works often exhibit the problem of “resembling in form but diverging in spirit”, merely replicating superficial elements such as phoenix patterns and cloud-thunder patterns, and failing to convey the spiritual essence of Chu culture^[6]. The weakness in innovative transformation capabilities is even more pronounced. Students’ application of Chu lacquer art elements often remain at the level of mechanical replication, lacking the ability to combine traditional craftsmanship, cultural symbols with modern aesthetics and market demands. This makes it difficult for them to produce modern lacquer art works that possess both cultural distinctiveness and practical value, thereby constraining the contemporary revitalization and industrial transformation of Chu lacquer art.

5. Pathways for cultivating lacquer art talents in universities under the influence of Chu culture

5.1. Developing a systematic curriculum module combining Chu culture + lacquer art”

Developing a systematic curriculum module that integrates Chu Culture + Lacquer Art” requires constructing a progressive system that spans from cultural cognition to practical innovation, breaking free from the limitations of traditional courses that separate techniques from culture. The foundational theoretical module serves as the cornerstone, using an “Introduction to Chu Culture” to elucidate the Chu people’s worldview and life consciousness, utilizing “The History of Chu Lacquer Art” to trace the craft’s evolution from the Warring States period to the Qin and Han dynasties, and employing “The Aesthetics of Chu Lacquer Patterns” to analyze the totemic symbolism of phoenix motifs and the rhythmic principles of cloud-thunder patterns, enabling students to grasp the spiritual essence of Chu culture through theoretical study. The technical training module focuses on craft inheritance, setting core techniques such as the Chu-style jia-zhu (cloth-moulded) lacquerware’s “thinness akin to cicada wings”, the fine gold-painted detailing of phoenix motifs “as delicate as hair strands”, and the harmonious contrast of vermilion and black hues “balancing strength and softness” as specialized courses. These are taught through a collaborative effort between intangible cultural heritage inheritors and university instructors, where inheritors demonstrate ancient methods like “base application—lacquering—painting”, and teachers elucidate the material science principles and aesthetic logic underlying the crafts, ensuring that technical transmission remains authentic yet theoretically grounded^[7]. The innovative design module strives to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, with courses like “Modern Transformation Design of Chu Lacquer Art Elements” guiding students to refine pan-chi (coiled dragon) patterns into jewelry motifs, and “IP Development of Chu Culture-Themed Lacquer Art Cultural and Creative Products” exploring the creation of tea sets and stationery using Chu lacquer techniques, integrating traditional elements into contemporary lifestyle contexts. The interdisciplinary integration module further expands boundaries by collaborating with history majors to interpret the connections between Chu lacquer and sacrificial systems, partnering with archaeology majors for practical activities like “restoration of lacquerware fragment patterns”, and working with marketing majors to analyze audience demands for Chu lacquer cultural and creative products, ultimately forming a complete training chain of “cultural foundation-building—technical rooting—innovative boundary-breaking—interdisciplinary fusion”^[8].

5.2. Building a composite faculty team combining “techniques + culture”

Building a composite faculty team that combines “techniques + culture” necessitates advancing through a three-dimensional approach of “strengthening foundations through in-house cultivation, addressing gaps through external recruitment, and enhancing synergy through collaborative mechanisms”. For teachers on campus, focusing on the dual enhancement of cultural literacy and scientific research capabilities, this study regularly organized participation in Chu culture archaeological research activities, where they delve into the Jingzhou Museum and tomb sites of the Chu State to engage in the organization of lacquerware cultural relics and the tracing of their craftsmanship origins. Thus selecting teachers to join intensive training courses for inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, immersing them in the cultural connotations of core techniques such as Chu-style Jiamu” (a lacquering technique) and “Tianqi” (lacquer filling). We encourage teachers to apply for scientific research projects related to Chu lacquer art, conducting research on themes such as “the symbolic system of Chu lacquer patterns” and “the contemporary revitalization of traditional crafts”. Meanwhile, we invite experts in Chu culture research to conduct regular on-campus training, deepening teachers’ understanding of the spiritual essence and artistic characteristics of Chu culture through specialized lectures and case studies^[9]. In terms of integrating external resources, we have established a “Residency System for Inheritors of Chu Lacquer Art Intangible Cultural Heritage on Campus”, inviting inheritors to reside in studios long-term and impart the essence of ancient techniques through hands-on teaching. We also hire museum researchers and Chu culture scholars as part-time teachers to teach theoretical courses and guide scientific research projects, filling the gap in cultural research among teachers solely focused on techniques. On this basis, we form an interdisciplinary “Teaching Team for Cultivating Talents in Chu

Lacquer Art”, promoting regular collective lesson planning among on-campus teachers, off-campus experts, and inheritors. Together, they develop syllabi, create school-based teaching materials, and guide student creations, fully integrating their respective technical strengths, cultural accumulations, and research capabilities to form a closed-loop teaching synergy of “theoretical explanation—craft demonstration—innovation guidance”, providing teacher support for high-quality talent cultivation^[10].

5.3. Establishing an immersive practice system combining “campus and society”

To establish an immersive practice system combining “campus and society”, it is necessary to break down barriers between on-campus training and social resources, constructing a full-chain practice platform that encompasses “traditional inheritance—modern innovation—practical refinement”. On-campus practice scenarios are upgraded in two ways: on one hand, we create a Chu Lacquer Art Inheritance Studio”, accurately replicating the layout and atmosphere of Chu lacquer workshops, equipped with traditional materials such as wooden mold-making tools and natural lacquers, allowing students to immerse themselves in honing ancient techniques like “Jiamu” and gold painting in an antiquated environment; on the other hand, we establish a Chu Lacquer Art Innovation Laboratory”, introducing modern tools such as digital design software and 3D printing equipment to help students transform Chu lacquer patterns and color elements into design schemes that align with contemporary aesthetics, achieving a collision and fusion of traditional crafts and modern technology^[11]. This study has established in-depth co-construction of off-campus practice bases, collaborating with the Hubei Provincial Museum and Jingzhou Museum to create research and study bases. We organize students to participate in activities such as simulated Chu lacquerware restoration, pattern rubbing, and observation of lacquerware fragments at archaeological sites, enabling them to closely engage with the cultural codes behind these cultural relics. We have also co-constructed industry-education integration bases with local intangible cultural heritage workshops and cultural enterprises, allowing students to deeply participate in real projects. They follow the entire process of Chu lacquer cultural and creative products, from creative conception and sample production to market promotion, accumulating practical experience that aligns with industry needs. Driven by projects, we facilitate the practical implementation of learning by regularly organizing university-level and provincial-level lacquer art design competitions centered around Chu culture themes. We guide students to create works based on themes such as Chu mythology and allusions, Dragon Boat Festival folklore, and modern life scenarios. This study actively organized students to participate in offline events such as the Chu Culture Festival and Intangible Cultural Heritage Expo, enabling them to test their creative achievements through work exhibitions and industry exchanges. This enhances their comprehensive abilities in cultural expression and market alignment, truly achieving a leap in capabilities from “classroom learning” to “practical application”^[12].

5.4. Establishing a synergistic mechanism of “talent cultivation + cultural revitalization”

To establish a synergistic mechanism of “talent cultivation + cultural revitalization”, it is essential to form a virtuous cycle of “outcome display—cultural dissemination—industrial transformation”, enabling mutual empowerment between the cultivation of lacquer art talents in universities and the contemporary revitalization of Chu culture. In terms of work display, we regularly organize characteristic events such as the “Chu” Folk Custom-Themed Lacquer Art Exhibition” and the “Modern Design Exhibition Featuring Chu Lacquer Elements”. We not only set up on-campus exhibition stages but also leverage new media platforms such as the university’s official website, WeChat Channels, and Douyin (Chinese TikTok) to launch short video series like “Behind the Scenes of Chu Lacquer Creation” and “Pattern Interpretation”, expanding the reach of work dissemination. Meanwhile, we actively encourage students to participate in domestic and international lacquer art expos and intangible cultural heritage innovation competitions, enabling lacquer artworks infused with Chu cultural genes to step out of the campus and enhance the visibility and influence of Chu lacquer art through industry exchanges^[13]. In terms of cultural dissemination, we encourage students to form Chu Lacquer Art Cultural Dissemination Teams” and conduct “Chu” Lacquer Pattern Handicraft Classes” in primary and secondary schools, popularizing the cultural connotations of phoenix and bird patterns, as well as cloud and thunder patterns, among young

people. We also organize public lectures and intangible cultural heritage experience workshops in communities and rural areas, guiding the public to experience simple lacquer art making and facilitating the transition of Chu lacquer art from a “niche art” to “public recognition”. Industry-university-research collaboration, on the other hand, focuses on value transformation. It has jointly launched the Chu Lacquer Cultural and Creative Development Project with local cultural enterprises, guiding students through the entire process from creative conception, such as extracting patterns from lacquerware unearthed from Chu tombs to design cultural and creative jewelry; sample production, market research, to brand promotion. This approach not only transforms the creative achievements of students during the talent cultivation process into culturally competitive products for the market but also provides students with internships and entrepreneurial incubation support, achieving a synergistic effect of “cultivating one talent, incubating one project, and revitalizing one culture”^[14].

6. Conclusion

The cultivation of lacquer art talents in universities under the influence of Chu culture is, in essence, a two-way journey of cultural inheritance and innovation. When systematic courses lay a solid foundation in culture and techniques for students, when interdisciplinary faculty inject depth and vitality into teaching, when immersive practice provides a practical stage for growth, and when collaborative mechanisms open up channels for the transformation of achievements, Chu lacquer art ceases to be a static cultural relic in museums but becomes a vibrant cultural symbol that can integrate into modern life and meet market demands. This cultivation path not only nurtures professionals who safeguard the authenticity of culture and possess innovative capabilities but also promotes the contemporary revitalization and dissemination of Chu culture, achieving a symbiotic relationship between talent value and cultural value. Looking ahead, only by continuously deepening educational reforms and strengthening university-local collaboration and industry-university-research integration can the thousand-year legacy of Chu lacquer art thrive and shine anew under the nourishment of university education^[15].

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Wang Y, Wang S, 2024, Research on the Development Path of Lacquer Art Cultural and Creative Products under the Regional Culture of Jilin Province. *Screen Printing*, 2024(6): 83–85.
- [2] Ao D, 2025, Research on the Innovative Design of Regional Intangible Cultural Heritage Cultural and Creative Products under the Background of Cultural and Tourism Integration: Taking Yangjiang Lacquer Art as an Example. *Shanghai Packaging*, 2025(4): 74–76.
- [3] Wang M, 2023, Research on the Practical Path of Inheriting and Developing Modern Lacquer Art to Promote the “Intangible Cultural Heritage” Culture of Xinyang Folk Customs. *Art Appreciation*, 2023(23): 43–46.
- [4] Li W, Xu W, Yin M, 2023, Research on the “Activation” and Dissemination of Chengdu Lacquer Art in the Context of New Media. *Tomorrow’s Fashion*, 2023(6): 161–163.
- [5] Wu S, 2022, Methods for Protecting Lacquer Art Culture and Constructing the Value of Lacquer Art Works in the New Era: Taking Fuzhou Lacquer Art Culture as an Example. *Nature and Science*, 2022(27): 6–8.
- [6] Zhang F, Zheng T, 2024, Research on the Innovation of Aesthetic Education Work in Colleges and Universities Based on Intangible Cultural Heritage: Taking Lacquer Art Workshops as an Example. *Nature and Science*, 2024(18): 78–80.
- [7] Zhang L, 2025, Exploration of Strategies for Developing Digital Teaching Materials for Lacquer Art under the Background

- of Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance. *Journal of Tonghua Normal University*, 46(05): 25–30.
- [8] Quan M, 2025, Research on the Training Mode and Development Strategies of Lacquer Art Talents in Private Colleges and Universities: Taking the School of Art at Guangdong Peizheng College as an Example. *Nature and Science*, 2025(13): 100–102.
 - [9] Chen P, Li C, Chen S, 2024, Research on the Development Path of Fuzhou Lacquer Art Cultural and Tourism Products under the Background of Industry-Education Integration. *Textile Reports*, 43(03): 129–131.
 - [10] Dong H, 2023, Research on the Inheritance of Traditional Lacquer Art in the Design of Modern Cultural and Creative Products in China, thesis, Nanchang University.
 - [11] Qing F, Xie B, 2023, Integration and Innovation of Yi Lacquer Art and Miao Silver Ornament Forging Techniques in the Context of Industrial Revitalization. *Tiangong*, 2023(04): 29–31.
 - [12] He D, 2024, Exploration of Strategies for Integrating Ningbo Lacquer Art Culture into University Talent Cultivation. *Chinese Culture Daily*, 2024-01-19.
 - [13] Zeng T, 2022, Research on the Inheritance Path of Heilongjiang Intangible Cultural Heritage Lacquer Art. *Journal of Heilongjiang University of Technology (Comprehensive Edition)*, 22(12): 148–152.
 - [14] Zhao Z, Li L, 2022, A Dream Followed by Red Lacquer, a Legacy Carried Forward—A Review of Lacquer Shines with Gold: Ningbo Intangible Cultural Heritage Lacquer Art and Its Inheritance through University Education. *Chinese Lacquer*, 41(03): 14–16 + 45.
 - [15] Wan J, 2020, Research on the Modern Apprenticeship Model for Lacquer Art Talent Cultivation Based on the Living Inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Journal of Ningbo Polytechnic*, 24(06): 26–30.

Publisher's note

Whioce Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.