

# Research on the Application of Manchu Embroidery Culture in Modern Design

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**Abstract:** The Manchu ethnic group holds a distinct position in Chinese history, boasting unique characteristics, religious beliefs, and regional cultures that have significantly influenced the development of Chinese civilization. This vibrant community has cultivated an ethnic minority culture with pronounced Manchu traits. The global call to preserve and highlight intangible cultural heritage resonates strongly, especially within China's diverse array of such legacies. Among these cultural treasures, Manchu embroidery stands out as a precious gem within the tapestry of Chinese traditional culture. Delving into the essence of Manchu embroidery serves as the focal point of this research. This article embarks on a comprehensive journey into the manifold facets of Manchu embroidery culture. It examines avenues for its perpetuation and practical applications in contemporary life while navigating its inheritance and evolution in modern society. Integrating Manchu embroidery into contemporary design not only upholds its authentic cultural essence but also aligns harmoniously with current trends. Consequently, this fusion enables Manchu embroidery to evolve seamlessly alongside the march of time.

**Keywords:** Manchu embroidery; Modern design; Applied research

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## 1. Introduction

Manchu embroidery stands as an emblematic craft within China, boasting a unique artistic expression and captivating visual allure that warrants comprehensive exploration. With a storied history, this embroidery tradition has birthed an array of exquisitely personalized handmade creations. However, the rapid strides of science and technology have introduced hurdles to its continuity and evolution. As generations of adept embroiderers pass away, the distinct allure of Manchu embroidery gradually diminishes. The burgeoning domain of modern machine embroidery further exacerbates this wane, posing a substantial challenge to the tradition's essence. The poignant dilemma emerges of a craft facing a dearth of successors for its cherished legacy. Shaped by historical complexities and the rapid pace of contemporary times, the traditional embroidery tapestry of the Manchu community teeters on the brink of decline, hovering perilously close to extinction.

Consequently, safeguarding and perpetuating the essence of traditional Manchu culture stands as an imperative mission. Against the backdrop of global economic convergence, preserving and fostering the quintessence of Chinese heritage assumes profound significance. Channeling the intricate embroidery patterns and techniques of Manchu into contemporary clothing adornment charts a distinctly Chinese design trajectory, fortifying the edifice of Chinese cultural heritage. Moreover, integrating embroidery technology into modern clothing not only remedies existing design deficiencies but also aligns with the evolving preferences for personalized and diverse aesthetics. This synergy between tradition and modernity not only upholds the sanctity of Manchu embroidery but also addresses the evolving tastes of a contemporary audience.

## **2. The origin and development of Manchu embroidery culture**

### **2.1. The humanism of Manchu**

The artistry of Manchu embroidery reflects the vibrant essence of the Manchu nation, deeply intertwined with their shamanic traditions. Rooted in a belief system where shamans wield mystical powers, this craft embodies a fusion of shamanism and Confucian ideals. The reverence for nature and harmony among gods, humans, and the natural world permeate every stitch and thread, encapsulating the unique aesthetic wisdom of Manchu embroidery. This treasured craft, a hallmark of traditional Chinese handicrafts, has transcended time to become a comprehensive art form. It intricately weaves together elements of national culture, historical legacy, regional nuances, and expert craftsmanship. What sets Manchu embroidery apart is its ability to not just mirror the candid spirit of the northern nomadic people but also to encapsulate profound humanistic sentiments within its designs.

### **2.2. The geography of Manchu**

The Manchu people exhibit diverse habits and lifestyles across different regions. Being historically nomadic, they thrived on horseback, conquering vast territories. Their ancestral home in Northeastern China boasted fertile black soil, while to the west stretched expansive grasslands. Enduring short summers and harsh, predominantly cold winters, the Manchus turned to embroidery during winter. This craft evolved into not just a leisure pursuit but also a means of emotional connection within families. The distinct regional nuances of Manchu embroidery stem from their unique geographic placement and the rich tapestry of ethnic groups. They favor embroidery threads in vibrant reds, yellows, whites, and greens, coupled with nuanced gray shades. This color interplay imparts a sense of solemnity, lending a profound decorative and local significance. It epitomizes the Manchu people's aesthetic sensibilities and their profound attachment to the land.

### **2.3. The patterns and meanings of Manchu embroidery**

Manchu embroidery stands as a testament to the rich heritage of the Manchu people residing in northeast China. This intricate craft boasts a storied legacy, characterized by its ethnic essence and regional finesse. Within the tapestry of Manchu embroidery lies a myriad of patterns, each bearing unique techniques and profound significance, serving as a pivotal cultural element. The spectrum of motifs within Manchu embroidery is expansive, encompassing natural landscapes, flora, and fauna, alongside characters and symbolic phrases. These motifs not only mirror the Manchu people's reverence for life but also encapsulate their aspirations for a brighter tomorrow. Among the prevalent motifs are bats, peach blossoms, butterflies, watermelons, and lotus flowers. Each motif carries auspicious connotations, with bats denoting good fortune, peach blossoms heralding longevity, butterflies symbolizing the continuity of generations, watermelons representing abundance and blessings, and lotuses embodying the essence of enduring love. Manchu embroidery encompasses a diverse

array of techniques, notably lockstitch, package embroidery, patch embroidery, cross-stitch, and damask picking embroidery. Among these, the lockstitch and package embroidery reign supreme, standing out as the most prevalent and distinctive.

Lockstitch embroidery intricately weaves vibrant silk threads through the fabric, employing fine steel needles to craft elaborate patterns that dance across the backing cloth. Meanwhile, package embroidery, characterized by its three-dimensional effect, revolves around embroidering on a base cloth wrapped around a paper-cut pattern, resulting in stunningly detailed designs that leap off the fabric. These techniques infuse Manchu embroidery pieces with a kaleidoscope of colors, inherent elegance, and a striking lifelike quality. The cultural essence woven into Manchu embroidery is a rich tapestry, echoing the manifold aspects of Manchu life—its traditions, cultural beliefs, and aesthetic sensibilities. Practical yet exquisitely ornamental, Manchu embroidery finds its place in everyday items and traditional attire, adorning an array of articles such as purses, fans, tiger hats, bandanas, cloud shoulders, insoles, covers, and bridal trousseaus. These embroidered creations exhibit the practical prowess of Manchu embroidery and encapsulate its distinctive forms and vivid imagery, serving as captivating embodiments of this unique craft. These embroidery works not only show the high embroidery skills of the Manchu people but also inherit the national culture of the Manchu <sup>[1]</sup>.

### **3. The Manchu embroidery combined with modern design**

#### **3.1. The application of Manchu embroidery techniques in modern clothing**

Manchu embroidery boasts a diverse array of stitches, notably the flat and nacreous type. Within these techniques, straight and oblique stitches serve to accentuate the water surface of landscapes and plants, evoking a serene yet vibrant effect. To seamlessly transition between elements, long and short stitches are deftly employed, infusing the scene with a natural, fluid allure, rendering the embroidered subject matter remarkably lifelike. The versatility of long and short stitches extends beyond mere transitions, serving as a guiding principle for sequential embroidery methods. These methods intricately layer colors from within, gradually unfurling outwards. As the Chinese style gains prominence, Manchu embroidery has found its place in modern clothing design. Notably, numerous public figures grace prestigious international and domestic events adorned in garments boasting Chinese national characteristics. For instance, the Cannes Film Festival frequently witnesses celebrities adorned in ethnic attire intricately detailed with precise embroidery. Among these, the vivid hues of bright yellow and red embroidery patterns stand out, breathing life into meticulously crafted motifs like the auspicious peacock plumage. The uniformity of colors, the richness of needlework, and the exquisite craftsmanship infuse the embroidery with an undeniable vitality, establishing it as a focal point of distinction. Manchu embroidery stands as a testament to traditional Chinese art and culture. It bridges the gap in contemporary design technology and showcases a unique, national artistic style that embodies China's rich cultural heritage.

#### **3.2. The inspiration for modern design concepts**

The vibrant patterns and vivid hues in Manchu embroidery exude dynamism and vitality. This distinctive artistic style serves as a wellspring of inspiration for contemporary design. By distilling elements from Manchu embroidery's rich palette and intricate designs, one can infuse clothing patterns and color palettes with an ethnic flair, crafting stylish ensembles. Moreover, the materials and techniques employed in Manchu embroidery are equally exceptional. Traditionally, artisans utilize a medley of fabrics like cotton and silk, accentuated by opulent threads of gold and silver. Through an array of intricate stitches such as picking and locking, they weave together a tapestry of decorative brilliance. This kind of exquisite craftsmanship can provide new ideas

for modern handicraft design. In modern handicrafts design, the production process and materials of Manchu embroidery can be used to create modern handicrafts with traditional flavor <sup>[2]</sup>. The form and composition of Manchu embroidery are rich in variations and beauty. For example, in traditional Manchu embroidery, symmetry, continuity, repetition, and other compositional techniques are often used to form a unique compositional style, which is also widely used in modern design. In modern design, we can draw inspiration from the compositional techniques of Manchu embroidery and use them in packaging design, advertising design, etc. to create a design effect with a strong visual impact <sup>[3]</sup>.

### **3.3. The promotion of creative inspiration**

As economic development progresses, the aspirations for spiritual enrichment among people continue to evolve. Their discernment regarding food, clothing, shelter, and transportation has become more refined. Consequently, clothing serves not only utilitarian purposes but also demands attention to its aesthetic appeal. The pursuit of superior creativity becomes pivotal, as it breathes life into designs, rendering them visually arresting. Amidst the dynamic shifts in popular culture, an intriguing endeavor lies in harmonizing traditional Chinese cultural elements into contemporary design. For instance, infusing Chinese embroidery elements into Western patterns exemplifies a fusion that exudes both classical charm and modern flair. Similarly, integrating these elements into modern Chinese garment embroidery unites the grace and intellectuality of ancient Chinese women with the contemporary essence of independence, confidence, and assertive style among women in today's generation <sup>[4]</sup>. This infusion offers a fresh and distinctive theme to creativity, irrespective of the taken perspective.

### **3.4. The implications for life**

Embedded within the essence of traditional Manchu culture, Manchu embroidery embodies the profound wisdom and mastery passed down through generations. Its integration into contemporary life not only serves as a custodian and advocate for this distinctive ethnic heritage but also propels the evolution of the Manchu embroidery culture industry. Renowned for its kaleidoscope of colors, distinctive motifs, and elevated artistic allure, Manchu embroidery enriches everyday essentials, bestowing upon them an elevated aesthetic. Beyond mere ornamentation, the intricate patterns and techniques of Manchu embroidery serve as a wellspring of inspiration for modern product design. By seamlessly infusing these elements into clothing, home decor, and various domains, products endowed with national character and unique flair are crafted, catering to the diverse market needs. The burgeoning Manchu embroidery industry fosters a ripple effect, stimulating associated sectors such as raw material supply, the crafting of embroidery implements, and cultural souvenir trading. This, in turn, catalyzes local economic growth, elevating the standards of living for residents. Moreover, as a custodian of intangible cultural heritage, safeguarding and perpetuating Manchu embroidery holds paramount significance. Its integration into daily life fosters a heightened consciousness and appreciation for our intangible cultural legacies, serving as a stalwart in their preservation. This application of Manchu embroidery culture bears multifaceted significance, acting as a torchbearer for national heritage, enriching contemporary design landscapes, and nurturing local economic vitality. Simultaneously, it stands as a guardian of intangible cultural treasures. Thus, advocating for the resurgence of Manchu embroidery in modern society is imperative.

## **4. The use of Manchu embroidery in modern design**

### **4.1. The costume design**

Manchu embroidery stands as an integral facet of traditional Chinese handicrafts, steeped in a rich history and cultural legacy. Its influence extends gracefully into modernity, where Manchu embroidery elements infuse



a distinctive ethnic essence into contemporary fashion. The fusion of these traditional artistic motifs with the realm of fashion design, particularly in cheongsam, hanfu, and ethnic-style garments, amplifies the significance of these timeless ensembles within Chinese culture. In the realm of cheongsam design, Manchu embroidery breathes new life by embellishing traditional patterns with elements like flowers, butterflies, dragons, phoenixes, and more. This infusion accentuates the cheongsam's ethnic allure and visual impact, bridging heritage with modernity. By seamlessly integrating Manchu embroidery elements with contemporary fabrics, cuts, and designs, designers can honor tradition while embracing contemporary aesthetic ideals. Moreover, beyond the realm of customary attire, Manchu embroidery finds versatile expression in modern clothing design. The seamless incorporation of Manchu embroidery into everyday fashion staples infuses these with a touch of cultural richness. Furthermore, innovative designers merge Manchu embroidery with cutting-edge technology, such as integrating LED light strips, illuminating the embroidery patterns, and enhancing their allure, especially in nocturnal settings.

#### **4.2. The design of household goods**

As an integral facet of traditional Chinese handicrafts, Manchu embroidery is increasingly garnering attention and finding applications in contemporary home furnishing designs. Its intricate elements are being skillfully integrated into various items, ranging from pillows, curtains, and tablecloths to bedding, reflecting a fusion of cultural heritage and modern aesthetics. In the realm of pillow design, Manchu incorporates motifs like flowers, butterflies, dragons, and phoenixes, emblematic of this embroidery style. These not only enhance the visual appeal but also infuse a pronounced ethnic essence. When it comes to curtain design, Manchu embroidery lends itself either as a comprehensive pattern or intricate detailing. Entire curtains might boast elaborate motifs of flowers and birds or delicate Manchu embroideries can grace the curtain edges, evoking a distinctive artistic ambiance within homes. Tablecloths and bedding also witness the artistry of Manchu embroidery, adorning spaces with depictions of flora, fauna, and natural elements. These designs infuse homes with a serene and natural allure, enriching the living environment. Expanding beyond furnishings, Manchu embroidery finds itself adorning various home decorations. It breathes cultural richness into interior adornments like wall paintings, hangings, and screens, infusing spaces with a profound artistic and cultural resonance. Even in the design of lamps, Manchu embroidery's elegance finds expression in decorative patterns. Whether on bedside lamps or other fixtures, the familiar motifs of butterflies, flowers, and other intricate designs from Manchu embroidery impart a distinct ethnic allure, enriching the ambiance. The integration of Manchu embroidery into contemporary home designs goes beyond mere embellishment. It is a harmonious blend of tradition and innovation, enriching spaces with its cultural legacy and artistic finesse.

#### **4.3. The design of fashion accessories**

With the increasing emphasis on fashion and cultural nuances, traditional handicrafts like Manchu embroidery have found an expanding niche within fashion accessory design. This embroidery artistry is finding its way into an array of accessories, from handbags and shoes to hats and beyond. In handbag design, the fusion of Manchu embroidery's intricate flowers and graceful butterflies is seamlessly woven into the patterns and hues of the bags, infusing them with a distinctly personalized touch. The canvas of the upper or even the sole of the shoe is adorned with Manchu embroidery motifs—flowers, avian depictions, lush foliage—imbuing the footwear with an ethnic allure and an elevated artistic flair. As for hats, Manchu embroidery patterns are incorporated as whimsical adornments—perhaps a playful arrangement of flowers or butterflies, merging with chic geometric shapes and tassel embellishments, thereby bestowing a singular ethnic essence and a high fashion appeal to

the headwear. The infusion of Manchu embroidery does not limit itself to these accessories alone but extends to a myriad of other fashion elements, including jewelry and timepieces. Designers can intricately incorporate Manchu embroidery's folk motifs like lotuses and fluttering butterflies, infusing these accessories with a rich cultural heritage and an artistic finesse. Even in the realm of watches, envisage the integration of Manchu embroidery either as dial patterns or within the straps, infusing these timepieces with a personalized touch and a profound cultural resonance. The amalgamation of this revered embroidery artistry with contemporary fashion elements promises an ensemble that is both individualistic and steeped in cultural significance.

## 5. Conclusion

Manchu embroidery stands as a cherished national intangible cultural heritage, holding immense significance in research and preservation. For centuries, embroidery has symbolized the intricate tapestry of wisdom and civilization woven by the Chinese people, with each stitch carrying a profound cultural heritage. Within Manchu embroidery lies a profound embodiment of the aesthetic ideals and spiritual essence of the Manchu community. Its strategic development and utilization hold substantial economic and social implications. Recently, both domestic and international designers have skillfully woven embroidery elements into Chinese designs, infusing them with distinctive cultural depth and substantial global appeal. Consequently, recognizing the looming threat of the dwindling number of successors and the impending extinction of Manchu embroidery, it becomes imperative to devote substantial attention to its plight. Safeguarding and fortifying the legacy of Manchu embroidery emerges as an incredibly significant responsibility—one that demands reinforced protection and diligent stewardship.

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