

## Interpretation of the Connotation and Artistic Characteristics of Visible Cultural Forms of the She nationality in Eastern Fujian

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### Abstract

The visible cultural forms of the She nationality in eastern Fujian is the cultural image visible in the culture of the She nationality in eastern Fujian. It has important visual characteristics, including material culture such as clothing, food, and shelter, as well as visible elements in spiritual culture such as writing, behavior, and art. It is an internal expression of the unique aesthetic taste of the She nationality and an external reflection of the value system. This article elaborates on the connotations and artistic characteristics of the visible cultural forms of the She nationality in eastern Fujian from three dimensions

**Keywords:** The Nationality in Eastern Fujian; Visible cultural forms; Artistic features; Visual Symbols.

### Introduction

Culture is the symbol and soul of a nation, and an important source of national vitality, cohesion, and creativity. China is a multi-ethnic country composed of both the Han and ethnic minorities. While the Han culture has developed and flourished, the 55 ethnic minorities have created unique and profound minority cultures in China's historical practice. They are inclusive and develop in synergy with the Han culture, forming a brilliant and splendid organic body of Chinese culture, which is an important component of Chinese culture, The She nationality is one of the 55 ethnic minorities.

According to the seventh Chinese population census data, the current population of the She nationality is 740000, ranking 19th among the 55 ethnic minorities in terms of total population. Among them, there are 400000 males and 340000 females, with a gender ratio of 1.18:1. Compared to the sixth national census data, the number of people increased by 37734, with a growth rate of 5.33%. It is mainly distributed in 7 provinces including Fujian, Zhejiang, Guangdong, Jiangxi, Anhui,

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Guizhou, and Hunan. Among them, the She nationality in the eastern Fujian region has a population of 380000, accounting for about 53% of the total She population in China. It is mainly concentrated in 53 counties and cities in the eastern Fujian region, and the distribution of the She nationality in the eastern Fujian region shows a pattern of large dispersion and small settlement.

This study focuses on the settlement of the She nationality in eastern Fujian, and discusses the connotation and artistic characteristics of the visible cultural forms of the She nationality from multiple dimensions.

### **The Habitat and Connotation**

The formation and development of She culture in eastern Fujian are closely related to its natural geographical environment. The rural landforms of the She nationality in eastern Fujian are mainly characterized by low mountains and high hills, with a small number being middle mountains, mountain valleys, low hills, and plains. The settlement area has abundant biological resources and a wide variety of species. According to surveys, there are 189 families and 2163 species of plants, as well as 173 families and 979 species of medicinal plants. The She people call themselves "Shanha", meaning guests living in the mountains. Long term mountain living has led to the She nationality's daily aesthetic activities being mostly based on natural themes and materials. For example, they enjoy using various animal and plant patterns, and using flowers and fruits to make dyes. In addition, the She people have also created a brilliant She culture, mainly including She language, clothing, craftsmanship, folk beliefs, medicine, sports, etc., which is an important component of the treasure trove of Chinese culture.

The visible cultural form of the She nationality in eastern Fujian is a visible cultural image in the culture of the She nationality in eastern Fujian. It has important visual characteristics, including material culture such as clothing, food, and housing, as well as visible elements in spiritual culture such as writing, behavior, and art. It is not only the sensory extension of the She ethnic culture in eastern Fujian, but also the external continuation of national consciousness, revealing the cultural mode of the ethnic group and playing a role in explaining the cultural image of the She nationality. It is an important symbol of national identity and cultural identity. The visual consensus formed by artistic features such as decoration, patterns, and colors fully demonstrate the aesthetic taste, values, and national spirit of the She nationality. It is a cultural symbol and identification mark that is exposed in the She ethnic social and cultural environment, and is worthy of our research, inheritance, protection, and promotion.

## **Artistic Features**

The artistic features mainly refer to the distinctive features or phenomena of artistic activities or works that are significantly different from other things. The She nationality has a rich visible cultural form, which originates from the needs of group production and life and seasonal rituals. Most of it exists for the purpose of gathering and meeting the needs of ethnic members, and has significant artistic characteristics.

### **1. Practical Beauty and Symbolism**

Practical beauty is the combination of practicality and beauty of an object, which emphasizes its practical use value, functionality, practicality, and convenience, as well as its artistic and aesthetic value. It requires high artistic elements such as form, proportion, color, texture, and structure of the object.

The symbolism of the visible cultural forms of the She nationality is mainly reflected in their clothing, architecture, oral inheritance, music, design art, and handicrafts. These cultural symbols convey the history, traditions, religious beliefs, and values of the She nationality in unique forms, symbols, and meanings, showcasing their unique national cultural characteristics and identity.

Symbolism refers to the representativeness and symbolic meaning that an object, symbol, or action possesses. It usually conveys or represents a specific meaning, value system, identity or cultural concept through symbols, symbols, metaphors, and other means.

Symbolism plays an important role in She culture and social life, such as the abstract characters in She ribbons, which serve as a medium for She people to express and convey their values, emotions, and thoughts. They use simple visual symbols to represent a more complex concept or meaning, thereby achieving effective communication and sharing of information.

The patterns, patterns and colors in the costumes of the She nationality in eastern Fujian, Paper Cuttings and sculpture in art, door decorations and window carvings in architecture, etc. These visible cultural symbols and cultural images are both practical and symbolic, spreading and demonstrating the unique charm of the She nationality culture.

### **2. Unique Color Language**

The color language of the visible cultural form of the She nationality in eastern Fujian is a cultural language that conveys and expresses specific meanings, symbols, and values through color symbols and visual elements. It has important significance in the traditional culture of the She nationality.

2.1 Color Style; The color expression in the visible cultural forms of the She nationality in eastern Fujian has changed with the development of historical stages.

The continuous migration of ethnic groups and the reference and imitation of other ethnic cultures such as the Han have provided more possibilities for the color language in the visible cultural forms. The analysis of color characteristics in the visible cultural form of the She nationality is based on the visual presentation of material colors and the analysis and research of intangible color culture.

Color is not only a visual perception, but also closely related to culture, emotions, and meaning. Each ethnic group has its own unique ethnic color, and the She nationality is no exception. The She people mainly choose calm and plain colors in their color choices. From ancient times to the present, pure and elegant clear colors such as black, green, and blue have always been the main background colors in the visible cultural forms of the She nationality.

Color is not only the visual manifestation of a national cultural gene, but also the external expression of group aesthetics, group cognition, and group consciousness. The clear colors showcase the aesthetic and values of the She people, who are hardworking and brave, adept at utilizing natural resources, and adept at using local materials to decorate their lives. The She people, who work at sunrise and rest at sunset, have a daily routine of going out to work. In order to meet their labor needs such as being resistant to dirt, insects, and sweat, the color choices for clothing are often black, green, and other dirt resistant colors. The materials used are fast drying and breathable fabrics such as ramie, which are the preferred choice. In long-term field investigations, it was found that in addition to dark colors being the main color of daily clothing, the clothing of the She people is still mainly black, blue, and blue in various formal occasions such as stage performances, weddings, funerals, and weddings, supplemented by colorful embroidery seen in the waist, leggings, clothing, and other areas. With the advancement of technology, the improvement of production and living standards of the She people, and the improvement of family economic conditions, modern She people pay more attention to the aesthetic value and decorative function of goods, and boldly use colors with high brightness and saturation such as red, green, yellow, and blue. These threads are woven into fabrics, and embroidered with patterns of plants, animals, and people, The connotation of the She ancestors' love for five colored clothes is vividly displayed on the black and blue background.

2.2 Typical color matching modes; "In the colorful display, there must be a main color: with one color as the main color, and other colors attached." The colors in the visible cultural form of the She nationality are mainly composed of the main color tone, auxiliary colors, and decorative colors. The main color tone is the dominant and expressive color in visual presentation, often combined with auxiliary colors to construct a complete visual presentation. The preference for color can reveal the

personality of ethnic members. The choice of dark color as the main color tone is not only rooted in the cultural genes of the She people's long history of production and life practice, but also the long-term psychological accumulation of members in the She cultural system.

Taking the She ethnic clothing as an example, the main color tone is the extensive color of the clothing, the auxiliary colors are the colors brought by embroidery patterns on the collar, clothing, skirt edges, waist, and other parts, and the decorative colors are the colors of the necklaces, bells, and inlaid accessories in the clothing. Due to the rich visual presentation of colors in the cultural forms of the She nationality in eastern Fujian, which are applied in She clothing and art creation, the color composition in cultural forms such as wood carving and architecture is relatively few and single, with weak representativeness. Therefore, the color matching mode summarized below mainly focuses on the visually rich forms of clothing, with other colors used as supplements.

#### **A color scheme dominated by "black"**

Based on the analysis of color data in the previous section, it is concluded that black is the most common color in the visible cultural forms of the She nationality. Regarding the explanation of black color, the "Shuowen Jiezi" describes it as follows: "Black with red is black." The "Xiaoer Ya" says, "Xuan, black." The latest version of the "Xinhua Dictionary" explains black color as follows: black, black, dark blue, and deep black. Therefore, the black color in this article refers to black and dark blue and cyan colors that are close to black.

In the visible cultural forms with black as the main color tone, the combination of auxiliary and decorative colors presents an increasingly rich combination. Different combinations such as black+red+blue+yellow+pink or black+pink+orange yellow+grass green. As shown in the color ring diagram below, these six combinations of color schemes are the most common and popular among the collected samples.



Figure 1: Color scheme diagram groups 1 and 2



Figure 2: Color scheme diagram group 3 and 4

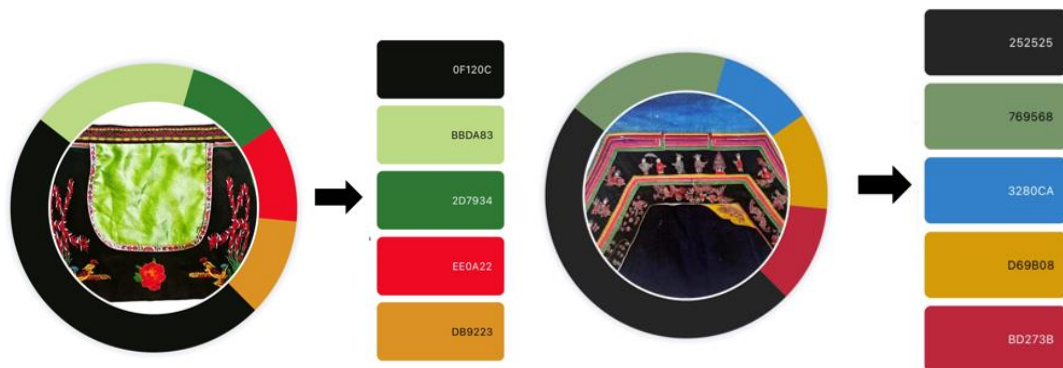


Figure 3: Color scheme diagram groups 5 and 6

### 3. Regular graphic language

In the visible cultural forms of the She nationality in eastern Fujian, the visual expression of patterns is highly representative. In existing literature and physical objects, there are over 300 patterns on She ethnic clothing and embroidery, which are the culmination of She cultural visual expression. These patterns can be summarized and organized into three categories: plant patterns, animal patterns, and abstract geometric patterns. Plant patterns include plum, peony, lotus, peach, chrysanthemum,

orchid, lily, etc; Animal patterns include fish, dragons, phoenixes, magpies, butterflies, bats, etc; Abstract geometric patterns include ten thousand character patterns, happiness character patterns, water wave patterns, cloud patterns, centipede foot patterns, and so on. The patterns are mostly based on common birds and animals, flowers, birds, fish, and insects in daily life, as well as traditional geometric patterns such as farmhouses, carriages, and horses, or hidden flowers in flowers, or combinations of birds, insects, etc. According to the pattern organization structure, it can be divided into corner patterns, continuous patterns, square continuous patterns, square continuous patterns, individual patterns, etc. Among the above patterns, phoenix patterns, butterfly patterns, happy character patterns, fish patterns, and other patterns have a high repetition rate in different visible cultural forms, among which phoenix patterns are a typical symbol in the She nationality's visual culture.

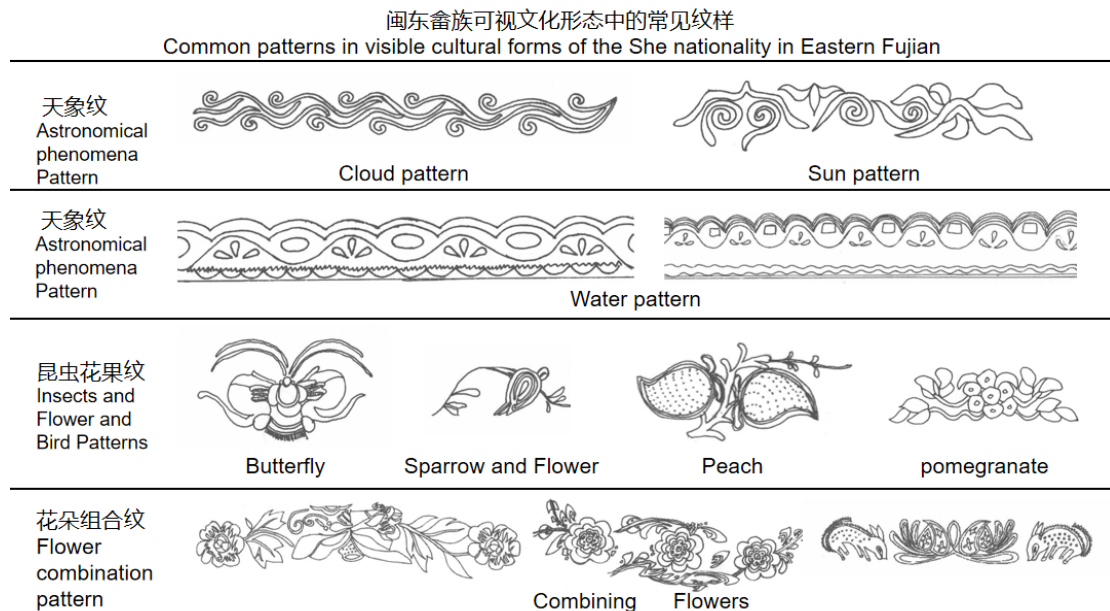


Figure 4: Common Pattern 1



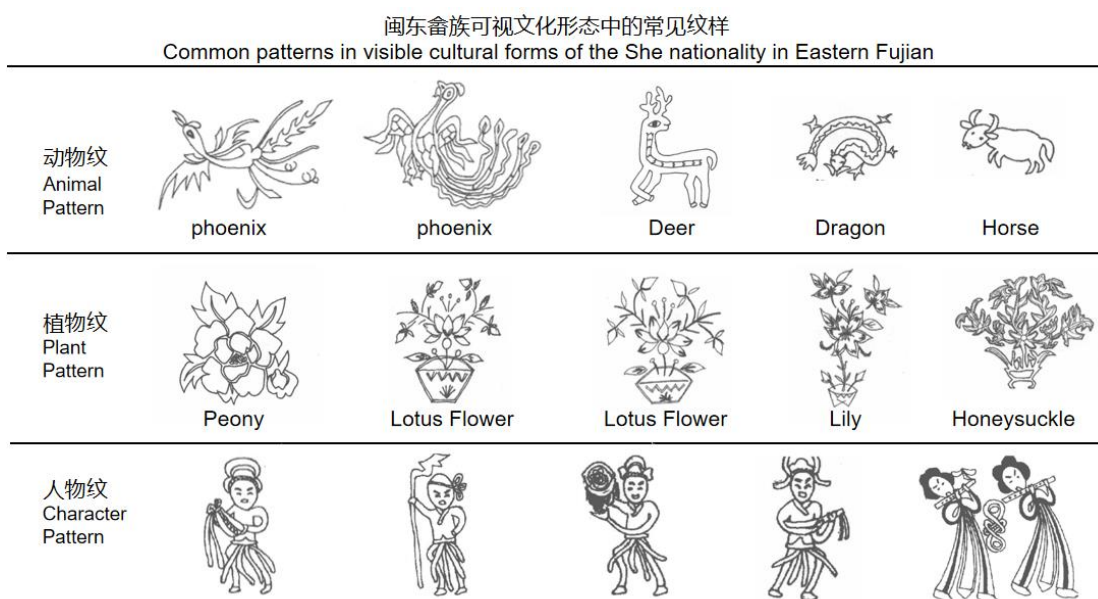


Figure 5: Common Pattern 2



Figure 6: Corner pattern

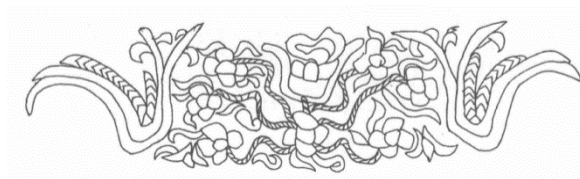


Figure 7: Flower combination pattern

These patterns use symmetrical, balanced, and rhythmic design techniques, either abstract or realistic, to combine and transform into rich and colorful styles. These repeated patterns originate from the daily life of the She nationality, and through the depiction, extraction, and expression of patterns, they strengthen the survival and collective consciousness of the ethnic group, forming a visual consensus among the She people, and forming a unique artistic language in the visible cultural form of the She nationality.

**4. Interpretation of visible cultural forms of the She nationality in eastern Fujian;** Each ethnic group has its own cultural personality. Internally, it represents the characteristics of a nation, influencing and constraining its way of thinking, behavioral habits, and style of dealing with people; Externally reflecting the style of a nation, influencing the impression of other ethnic groups on it, and influencing their mutual relationships. The cultural personalities of different ethnic groups are mainly



determined by their production, lifestyle, and environment. The main scenery of the She ethnic history gallery is the wandering and migration, with slash and burn farming combined with hunting, supplemented by income collection. This production and lifestyle endow the She people with a cultural character of combining hardness and softness. The visible cultural form of the She nationality in eastern Fujian has gradually become an expression of daily life experience and social relationships, which is not only an extension of senses but also a continuation of internal consciousness.

#### 4.1 The traditional concept of adapting to local conditions

The formation and development of visible cultural forms are the insights formed by the ancestors of the She nationality in their survival practice and social development, and the process of formation is in line with the ancient beliefs, ecological ethics, values, etc. of the ethnic group. As an emotional and visual symbol that interprets the inner thoughts of the She nationality, the visible cultural form of the She nationality reflects to a certain extent the creation concept and value orientation of interdependence between ancestors and natural ecology.

The She nationality is an ancient nation, and using local materials has given the ancestors of the She nationality a deeper understanding of materials in nature. Extracting natural dyes from plants and practicing bamboo weaving skills deep in bamboo forests, in daily production practice, from emphasizing practicality to emphasizing aesthetics, constantly exploring the externalization of visual presentation of creations based on technical characteristics, has formed a unique visual cultural symbol of the nation.

What you see is what you get, which is one of the core driving forces of visual presentation in the early cultural activities of the She people in eastern Fujian. The selection of theme elements is mostly based on the material observation and realistic restoration of nature by our ancestors. Due to living in deep mountains for a long time, there are often birds and animals that roam around. In a dangerous and difficult living environment, it is inevitable to engage in a game with nature. Different types of birds and animals, as well as patterns from different celestial phenomena, such as cloud patterns and water patterns, are also frequent visitors to their decorative patterns. They are good at observing and recording animal images from different perspectives. These diverse patterns of birds and animals are often reflected in daily necessities such as She ethnic clothing.

Under the influence of the concept of creating things according to local conditions, the wisdom and intentions of the She people are reflected from simple imitation to accurate description, from concrete to abstract, from the expression of real objects to the transformation of different cultural forms. The long-term struggle of

life has formed a special national cultural memory, which presents the textual information of the survival thoughts and emotions of the She people through different cultural forms and patterns.

#### 4.2 The concept of coexistence between humans and nature

The concept of symbiosis is the most important natural concept expressed in the visible cultural form of the She nationality. Due to the lack of written records in the history of the She nationality, the expression of cultural forms is limited. In visual presentation, they are mostly related to the animals and plants in their living environment. They believe that self and nature are symbiotic and integrated. The depiction of animals and plants in nature and the cultural forms created in production and life practice, such as tea picking songs and bamboo pole dances, are full of a close emotional connection between humans and nature.

Among the shapes of numerous animals and plants, the phoenix is one of the symbols of She culture, as well as the ethnic belief and worship of She people. The visual image of the phoenix often appears in the visible cultural forms of She people. The reason for this worship comes from the "Legend of the Loyal and Brave King" of the She nationality. According to the legend, the birth of the three princesses of Emperor Gaoxin brought a magical scene of a hundred birds facing the phoenix, and they are hailed as the embodiment of the phoenix, the female ancestor of the She nationality. As a representative of She ethnic women, they have been loved and worshipped by the She nationality for generations. Therefore, the She nationality regards their women as the embodiment of the phoenix, possessing noble qualities of diligence, kindness, intelligence, and beauty, thus forming the unique custom of "worshipping the phoenix and respecting the women" of the She nationality. In the ethnic cognition of the She nationality, the phoenix is a symbol of auspiciousness, beauty, luck, and nobility. Cultural expressions related to the phoenix include the "phoenix costume" worn by She women when getting married, the "Phoenix Festival" on the 15th day of the first lunar month every year, and the "phoenix egg" dowry at the time of marriage. In the worship and belief of the phoenix, it also reflects that the ancestors of the She nationality, like many other ethnic groups, experienced a long period of worship for birds. The early people believed that birds could spread their wings and fly high in the sky, and their wings were an important medium for communication between humans and gods in heaven and earth. The phoenix is the king of a hundred birds in Chinese mythology and is also regarded as the bird of Chinese spirit. It is the fusion and deification of the sun worship and bird totem of primitive ancestors. Phoenix is a visual thematic symbol in She culture, supported by the concept of symbiosis. It is a means of identifying with the self of She members in a

specific environment, integrating their experience, imagination, and emotional factors.

Living in mountainous areas for a long time, animals and plants have always been close friends of the ancestors of the She nationality. In addition to the expression of the phoenix in visible cultural forms, the symbiotic view between the She people and nature is also reflected in the imitation, extraction, and application of animal and plant shapes. For example, in the diet, black rice is made by soaking the leaves of the Wuren tree, and yellow rice dumplings are made by wrapping the leaves of the yellow grass into a pillow shaped tube. These foods are not only made from natural ingredients, but also bring a natural fragrance to the rice. Even today, black rice is still known as a healthy diet that nourishes the spleen and kidneys, brightens the eyes and hair, and has become an important food for entertaining guests in various festivals and celebrations. Not only is it the mature use of nature's culinary wisdom by the She nationality, but it is also a cultural symbol that She members are proud of.

The traditional farming method of slash and burn requires extremely high practicality in the She ethnic costumes. The symbiotic concept is reflected not only in graphic designs such as patterns and embroidery, but also in practical components such as leggings and waist blocks. The use of clothing colors is also related to their living ecological environment and the ethnic tradition of advocating practicality. Wearing animals and plants in the natural world in the form of visual patterns is a symbol of spirit and psychology, as well as a symbol of culture. It is a schema for expressing and interpreting culture.

#### 4.3 The Visual Consensus of She People

The visible cultural forms of the She nationality is a common visual consensus formed by members of the ethnic group in the long process of social interaction to identify their identity. These visual symbols are disseminated through specific material objects and cultural expressions such as folk activities. Visual consensus refers to the consensus among members of a cultural group on the meaning and interpretation of visual expressions, symbols, and images. Visual consensus is of great significance in cultural inheritance, artistic expression, symbol system, and plays an important role in the inheritance and dissemination of visible cultural forms of the She nationality.

In ethnic minority villages in eastern Fujian, things related to the She nationality can be quickly distinguished from visual images such as houses, handicrafts, and clothing, which is the embodiment of the personality of the She ethnic visual symbols. These symbols make up for the lack of She ethnic writing and form a unique visual consensus among the She people. These visual consensuses are reflected in different cultural forms, not only expressing the She people's longing for a better life,

but also fully reflecting the rich and romantic imagination and creativity of the ethnic group.

## Conclusion

The visible cultural forms created by the She nationality in their long state of no writing are explicit cultural styles from the depths of the ethnic history and culture. They are not only the material and spiritual expressions of the life experiences of ethnic members in the long history, but also the symbol system that promotes the collective centripetal force and cohesion of the ethnic group. As a visual language for social dialogue, they are used to facilitate communication within and outside the ethnic group, and it continues and inherits the historical culture and national spirit of the She nationality.

The visible cultural form of the She nationality in eastern Fujian includes both visually visible artistic forms and invisible elements in cultural activities such as customs and rituals. Throughout the country, compared to some populous and culturally developed ethnic groups, the visible cultural forms of the She nationality may not be very broad and rich, and the visual artistic presentation may not be as rich and colorful. However, the unique regularity in the visible cultural forms of the She nationality carries intuitive meaning for revealing the social psychological structure of the She nationality, providing viewers with a channel to understand their ethnic society, and is the external visual language of the cultural connotation of the She nationality. From the perspective of others, the ethnic culture of the She nationality is visually presented through visible cultural forms. From the perspective of the ethnic group, the symbolic symbols in visual art are their aesthetic and internalized expression of ethnic consciousness. The color, pattern, decoration, and ritual customs in the visible cultural forms of the She nationality are the unique ethnic language that sets them apart from other ethnic groups.

The cultural forms created by the She nationality, such as clothing, artifacts, architecture, music, dance, etc. Constitute a visual symbol cluster of consensus within and outside the She nationality, forming an effective and condensed concrete combination, constructing a visual expression framework for the She nationality. These visible cultural forms are the common visual emotional symbols of the She nationality, with commonalities and differences among them. They are not only intuitive, but also the psychological schema of the She nationality, still full of emotional imagination.

These cultural forms presented in different visual forms are still being inherited and disseminated in the eastern Fujian region to this day.

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