

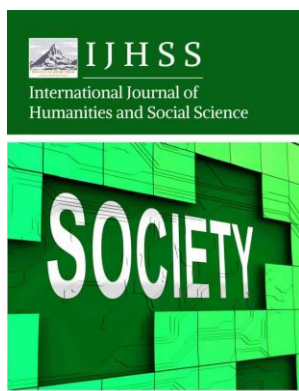
*Article*

# The Inheritance and Development of the Gold Ornament Culture of the Women of Xunpu

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**Abstract:** The gold ornaments of the Xunpu Women are the core material carrier of marine folk customs in southern Fujian. They form a "symbolic symbiosis" with the hairpin custom and are an important part of the national intangible cultural heritage. Quanzhou has attracted global attention after its successful application as a World Heritage Site. Its development is deeply tied to the Maritime Silk Road trade. It has evolved through the Han, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, integrating Islamic culture and traditional Chinese auspicious meanings, forming a unique style with maritime culture as the core. Gold ornaments, with gold hairpins, gold earrings and gold combs as the core types, have the characteristics of symbolization, life-oriented and cultural integration. They are the memory carrier, cultural identity mark and emotional sustenance of the Maritime Silk Road. However, contemporary inheritance faces difficulties such as shallow cultural connotation, faulty skill inheritance, and fragmented protection systems. In order to achieve living inheritance, it is necessary to explore its deep value through in-depth dissemination of cultural tourism, dual-track talent cultivation in schools and apprentices, integration of tradition and modern innovation, and comprehensive policy guarantees covering skills and customs, so that the memory and folk wisdom of the Maritime Silk Road carried by this intangible cultural heritage can continue to pass on vitality in the new era.

**Keywords:** Cunpu women; gold jewelry culture; intangible cultural heritage; inheritance and development; cultural and tourism

## 1. Introduction

Integration Introduction Cangpu women's gold jewelry is not only the core material carrier of southern Fujian's maritime folk customs, but also forms a "symbolic symbiosis" relationship with the custom of hairpins. The two are worn together in important ceremonies such as weddings and festivals, and together they build a visual system that identifies women's identity, and present distinctive typological characteristics and cultural connotations. In 2008, it was included in the national intangible cultural heritage list along with the "Changpu Women's Customs". In 2021, after the successful application of "Quanzhou: China's World Marine Trade Center in the Song and Yuan Dynasties" as a cultural heritage, this intangible cultural heritage has attracted global attention. From the prototype of hairpins in the Nanyue Kingdom of the Han Dynasty, "wearing colored silk through the heart of flowers", to the gold and exotic flowers brought by Arab merchant ships during the Song and Yuan Dynasties, which led to the maturity of gold ornaments, to the strict norms of "distinguishing seniority by ornaments" in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the development of gold ornaments for women in Xianpu has always

resonated with the Maritime Silk Road trade. It not only absorbs the geometric patterns of Islamic culture, but also continues the auspicious meaning of traditional Chinese. It uses "lightweight shape" and "ritual matching" to distinguish it from the heaviness of Miao gold ornaments and the religious attributes of Dai gold ornaments, and finally condenses a unique style with marine culture as the core. However, in contemporary times, with the upsurge of cultural tourism development, gold jewelry culture is facing practical difficulties such as shallow interpretation of its connotation, faulty inheritance of skills, and fragmentation of the protection system. Its living inheritance has become an urgent issue of the times that needs to be solved. Based on this, this article uses field research and document analysis as the core methods to systematically sort out the historical context and contemporary status quo of Cangpu women's gold jewelry, analyze its type characteristics, cultural connotation and differences with other ethnic groups' gold jewelry, and then focus on inheritance problems and propose targeted development strategies. The aim is to explore the deep value of this intangible cultural heritage and provide ideas for the integration of traditional craftsmanship and modern life, so that the memory of the Maritime Silk Road and folk wisdom carried by the gold jewelry of Cangpu women can continue to convey cultural vitality in the new era.

## 2. The History and Current Situation of Cangpu Women's Gold Jewelry

The development of Cangpu women's gold jewelry has always been closely linked to the custom of hairpins. Its historical context can be traced back to ancient times, and it is deeply bound to the commercial exchanges and cultural exchanges of the Maritime Silk Road. In the contemporary era, it has gained new attention and inheritance opportunities with the help of intangible cultural heritage protection and cultural tourism development. As early as the Han Dynasty in the South Vietnam Kingdom, women had already had the custom of wearing flowers into garlands and tying them into their hair. This is in line with the current tradition of "hairpin garlands" among women in Xianpu, paving the way for the subsequent combination of gold ornaments and hairpins. During the Western Jin Dynasty, Arab merchant ships brought exotic flowers such as jessamine (frangipani) and moli (jasmine) to the South China Sea. These fragrant flowers were widely planted and used, providing an important material basis for the matching of gold ornaments and hairpins.

During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, Quanzhou, as the world's maritime trade center, ushered in the heyday of overseas trade. Arab merchant ships not only brought a large amount of gold, making it an important circulation material, but also promoted the collision and integration of different cultures. During this period, women's gold jewelry in Cangpu completed the transition from gilded copper to pure gold, and basic shapes such as lilac earrings and gold hairpins began to appear. At the same time, the geometric patterns in Islamic culture and traditional Chinese auspicious patterns merged with each other to form a unique gold decoration system. The frangipani-shaped lilac pendant is a typical representative of this cultural fusion. The fixed combination of gold ornaments and hairpins was also formed at this time, becoming a highly recognizable dress for Cangpu women. Its unique visual effect was very attractive at the time. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the development of women's gold jewelry in Xianpu became more mature, and strict shape specifications were formed. The gold jewelry worn by women of different generations and marital statuses was clearly distinguished. Unmarried women wear clove hook earrings, married women wear frangipani-shaped lilac pendants, and older women wear gold ingot-shaped mother's lilac pendants. The combination of wedding gold jewelry has also been fixed in form. Tortoiseshell comb, gold hairpin, and lilac pendant have become the "three golds" necessary for the bride. Among them, the tortoiseshell comb is a family heirloom, carrying the ritual sense of family inheritance. During this period, the identity function of gold jewelry became more and more prominent, becoming an important visual symbol for distinguishing seniority and marital

status. The alternating gold jewelry and hairpin dress also became a distinctive feature of Cangpu women, which has been recorded in many literati's notes [1]. Entering modern times, in 2008, "Changpu Women's Customs" was included in the second batch of national intangible cultural heritage representative projects [2]. As an important component, gold jewelry has received more systematic protection and attention. In 2021, "Quanzhou: China's World Marine Trade Center in the Song and Yuan Dynasties" was successfully included in the World Heritage List, making Xampu's "Hairpin Flower Wai" custom famous far and wide, and also bringing Xampu women's gold jewelry culture into the global perspective. At present, the inheritance of the gold ornaments of Zhangpu women has been included in the "Representative Inheritor System of Intangible Cultural Heritage" and the "Construction of Intangible Cultural Heritage Workshops" system. The Quanzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum has specially set up the "Exhibition Area of Gold Jewelry Crafts of Zhangpu Women", and some universities have also opened "Intangible Heritage Inheritance Innovation Courses", which has injected new vitality into the inheritance and development of gold jewelry culture, allowing the emotions and historical memories it carries to continue, and also demonstrating the inclusive cultural characteristics of Quanzhou.

### 3. Types and Characteristics of Gold Jewelry of Chanpu Girls

#### 3.1. Types of Gold Jewelry of Chanpu Girls

The traditional gold ornaments of Chanpu girls are centered on gold hairpins, gold earrings, and gold combs. These three types of jewelry are not only fine decorative items, but also carry the collective memory of southern Fujian folk customs, cultural imprints of the Maritime Silk Road, and symbols of the life history of Chanpu women from girls to elders. Each piece contains unique symbolic meaning and emotional value. The gold earrings of the women in Xianpu are divided into different generations by style, forming a complete sequence from small earrings, lilac ear hooks to mother's lilac. The styles at each stage carry specific life expectations and cultural genes. Unmarried girls wear small hoop earrings, which are simple and smart; when they are getting married, they must wear traditional lilac ear hooks - these ear hooks are decorated with a frangipani flower and hook-shaped below, hanging by the ears like two exquisite lanterns. This frangipani is a vivid imprint of the Maritime Silk Road culture: it was originally an Arabian flower. During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, the Arab giant Pu Shougeng transplanted it to Quanzhou. Since then, it has become an indispensable flower material in the "head garden" of the women in Xianpu. Its image has been integrated into jewelry design, confirming that the Maritime Silk Road at that time not only had business exchanges, but also had frequent cultural exchanges. The naming and meaning of the lilac ear hooks are deeply rooted in the folk customs of southern Fujian: it is often customary to send lanterns on festive occasions in southern Fujian, and the lantern shape of the ear hooks continues this blessing; at the same time, "lamp" and "ding" have the same pronunciation in the southern Fujian language, which expresses the mother's good hope for her daughter to "have a child and make money", and has become a symbol of women's identity as they transition from girls to wives. When a Xunpu girl is promoted to grandma, she will change into "Mom Lilac". The lantern shape and frangipani elements are retained, but the position of the frangipani has been adjusted, and a small gold ingot engraved with auspicious patterns is added below, symbolizing a happy life and the health of future generations. Wearing mother's lilac is highly ceremonial and must be done on an auspicious day in the zodiac. The eldest grandson in the family will replace the lilac for the grandma. However, some elderly people will not wear it if their grandchildren have not had a son. This detail also reflects the remnants of the traditional concept of favoring sons over daughters.

The gold hairpin commonly known as "Bee Butterfly" in Xianpu is another piece of jewelry that carries profound meanings. Its classic shape is composed of two small bees, a butterfly and a rising crescent moon in the middle. It not only echoes the elegance of the

"garden on the head" of the Cunpu girls, but also coincides with their hard-working character - the Cunpu girls are famous for their bravery and hard work. The bees on the golden hairpin are a symbol of their hard work and hard work and wealth. The combination of butterflies and bees makes the image of the "garden on the head" full of life. As a must-have gold ornament for a bride in Xiangpu, the golden hairpin also evolves with the stages of life: in the grandmother's generation, the "crescent moon" on the golden hairpin will turn into a "full moon", symbolizing women's pursuit of perfection in their life. There is also a special type of gold hairpin that only the highest-ranking great-grandmother and grandma in the family are qualified to wear. It is a symbol of power and status. This tradition is also related to local beliefs - the golden Zen staff held by Sakyamuni Buddha is a symbol of the abbot's supreme power. In Xunpu, this type of special gold hairpin is like a "female Zen staff". Only the highest-ranking family members can wear it, demonstrating their respected status in the family. The gold comb, also known as the tortoiseshell comb, has a tan base and is inlaid with various patterns of gold ornaments. It is a "token of life" that accompanies the women of Xunpu throughout their lives. Women in Changpu always have three gold combs, large, medium and small, which are fastened in different positions according to the occasion and needs: the large comb is equipped with a gold chain and is only used on grand festivals or festive occasions. It falls off when it is done, which is both practical and meaningful; the smallest comb is fastened to the strongest core of the bun, making it stable and secure. The inheritance ceremony of the gold comb runs through the life of a Qianpu girl: after her daughter is born, her mother will comb her hair with a gold-free plain comb. This comb is often an old item passed down in the family for several generations; when her daughter gets married, her mother will send the comb to a gold shop to inlaid it with gold jewelry to "give it new life". As a dowry, he will accompany his daughter until she grows old. Until the daughter is a hundred years old, the gold jewelry will be removed and cleaned, and the comb will continue to be used to comb the hair of the new generation of Cangpu women, completing the transmission of life and emotion. In addition to cultural significance, gold combs also have practical effects - long-term use can promote blood circulation and unblock meridians. This is also an important reason why the women's hair in Cangpu is black and shiny, often as long as the knees, even though it is tied into a bun. In Xianpu, regardless of family conditions, mothers will try their best to buy these three traditional gold jewelry for their daughters. They have already transcended the scope of jewelry and become carriers of spiritual wealth. Today, there are dozens of innovative gold ornaments based on tradition, but the core cultural connotation remains unchanged.

#### **4. Characteristics of the Gold Ornaments of the Women of Xianpu**

Although the gold ornaments of the women of Xianpu and the gold ornaments of the Dai people are both the peaks of metal decorative art in the southeast and southwestern regions of China, there are significant differences in cultural genes, craft language, symbolic systems and social functions between the two, reflecting the different interpretations of gold materials by marine civilizations and rainforest civilizations.

##### *4.1. The Gold Ornaments of Cangpu Women Are Symbolic and Life-Oriented*

The different gold ornaments of Cangpu women symbolize different generations, and the shapes pay more attention to daily life and folk customs. From the small earrings worn by young girls without complicated patterns, to the lilac ear hooks worn by married women, to the lilacs worn by mothers in the grandmother stage, every piece of jewelry is an important node in her life. In contrast, Dai women's gold jewelry focuses more on regional characteristics. Due to regional differences, the Dai people can be divided into Shui Dai, Dry Dai and Huayao Dai. The choice of their gold jewelry should first be adapted to the regional environment: Shui Dai in Xishuangbanna and Dehong Ruili mostly live in tropical, subtropical and other riverside areas, and their clothing and

headwear are characterized by lightness; Dry Dai in most areas of Dehong are affected by the humidity of their living environment. At a lower level, the presence of gold ornaments is significantly weakened. However, the Huayao Dai in Yuanjiang and Xinping areas live in high-altitude areas of Ailao Mountain where the temperature is relatively low. Gold and silver ornaments are mostly used to enhance the heaviness of clothing, such as decorating with nearby silver ornaments. At the same time, Dai ornaments are more used to distinguish married and unmarried women. The silver ornaments of unmarried girls are more decorative, while the silver ornaments of married women have been reduced due to the dilution of clothing colors, and have not become exclusive gold ornaments for higher generations such as "grandma". These symbols are mostly derived from production scenes in fishing villages. Elements such as fishing nets and oyster shells are abstracted into geometric patterns, reflecting the direct mapping of marine civilization on nature. The shapes of Dai gold ornaments take religious symbols as the core and build a complex cosmological system. For example, the golden ear pillar is completely plain without decoration, symbolizing the philosophical connotation of "emptiness" in Buddhism. In folk jewelry, the combination of gold and turquoise symbolizes the blending of heaven and earth, while the red color of coral beads symbolizes life and prosperity. These symbols transcend specific life situations.

#### *4.2. Cultural Integration of Women's Gold Jewelry in Xuanpu*

Quanzhou is the starting point of the Maritime Silk Road. Overseas trade developed rapidly during the Song and Yuan Dynasties. Xuanpu is located at the estuary of the Jinjiang River, and there is an endless stream of foreign merchant ships. In turn, its gold jewelry is influenced by more foreign cultures. The frangipani element of Xunpu women's gold jewelry originated from the Arab region. It was introduced to Quanzhou by Pu Shougeng through the Maritime Silk Road during the Song and Yuan Dynasties. It was later integrated into the shape design of lilac ear hooks and combined with the clothing custom of Xunpu's "garden on the head". The "crescent" shape in the gold hairpin is derived from the Islamic emblem, and is integrated with the local "bee and butterfly" that symbolizes the hard work of the Cunpu women. This not only confirms that the Maritime Silk Road during the Song and Yuan Dynasties not only had trade exchanges, but also had cultural exchanges, and also reflected Quanzhou's cultural inclusiveness as a "museum of world religions." This kind of integration of foreign culture into the expression carrier of social structures such as marriage and seniority has distinctive characteristics of "Maritime Silk Road Culture". Zhangpu women's gold jewelry is rooted in Quanzhou's maritime trade culture, and its gold jewelry system is closely connected with the fishing and farming society in southern Fujian [3]. Utensils such as gold combs and clove ear hooks are inextricably linked with the social role of the Cunpu women who do not bind their feet and work at sea, reflecting the emphasis on female productivity in southern Fujian maritime culture. Dai gold ornaments are deeply rooted in the cultural soil of Theravada Buddhism, and gold is regarded as the material carrier of "the golden body of Buddha". In Dai society, gold jewelry is not only a symbol of wealth, but also a concrete expression of religious beliefs. For example, the silver-gilt curtain headdress has the shape of a Buddhist bamboo shoot pagoda in the middle, with wing-shaped cornices and a mesh structure behind it symbolizing the illumination and protection of Buddhism; the gold hairpin flower is in the shape of a round pagoda, composed of numerous round pagodas in layers, symbolizing the practitioner's yearning for the paradise world. In Dai weddings, gold ornaments are often combined with Buddhist ritual objects. For example, the back of the Wushou flower belt is engraved with the Dai doctor's "Four Pagodas Connecting Hearts", which not only carries the family's prayers for reproduction, but also reflects the integration of religion and secularity.

## 5. The Value and Inheritance of Cangpu Women's Gold Ornaments

### 5.1. *The Value of Cangpu Women's Gold Ornaments*

Cangpu women's gold ornaments are the material carrier of Haisi memory, and the patterns of gold ornaments contain multicultural genes. From the frangipani pattern of gold ornaments to the different shapes of gold ornaments, the imprint of the Maritime Silk Road culture can be seen. The crescent moon is the religious emblem of Islam. Integrating the crescent moon into Xianpu jewelry culture confirms that Quanzhou is a museum of world religions and reflects the inclusive, broad-minded and profound mind of Quanzhou people. Different cultures can communicate with each other and integrate with each other, and they can also accept some different folk cultures. Gold jewelry is also a living symbol of cultural identity. Different generations wear different gold jewelry, which is a perceptible visual symbol that embodies family ethics and social roles. Gold jewelry is also the emotional sustenance of the Cangpu women. It can be said that gold jewelry witnesses the life of every Cangpu person and also accompanies the life of every Cangpu person. The gold jewelry in Xianpu is not just a piece of jewelry, but also a kind of inherited spirit. This kind of emotion is integrated into it.

### 5.2. *Practical Problems Facing the Inheritance of the Gold Ornaments of Cangpu Women*

Although the gold ornaments of Cangpu women contain profound value, many problems are gradually eroding the foundation of this folk culture in the contemporary inheritance process, and the current situation of its inheritance is worrying. The first is a "shallow" interpretation of the cultural connotation. As the "hairpin flower circle" in Xianpu has become an Internet celebrity check-in symbol, a large number of foreign tourists focus on the visual effect of the flower headdress, but turn a blind eye to the gold ornaments on the head, and know very little about the cultural meaning behind it. In order to gain traffic, some cultural and tourism businesses simplify traditional gold jewelry into "photo props" and deliberately guide tourists to wear gold jewelry to pose for photos, but avoid talking about the deep connection between gold jewelry, wedding customs and family inheritance. As a result, the cultural connotation of gold jewelry is diluted and reduced to a superficial "decorative symbol". Secondly, there is the crisis of "fragmentation" of the main body of inheritance, and traditional skills are facing the dilemma of lack of successors. The production process of Xunpu women's gold jewelry is complex and exquisite, covering dozens of processes such as forging, engraving, and inlay. Apprentices need to study hard for several years or even more than ten years to master the essence. Today, the only inheritor of this skill in the village is Wang Yongyue - his family has been engaged in gold jewelry production for four consecutive generations. Faced with a long learning cycle and relatively limited income, the younger generation is more inclined to go out to work to make a living, and is unwilling to join this traditional industry. The risk of "intergenerational" in the inheritance of skills has become increasingly prominent. At the same time, changes in lifestyle have also led to the weakening of wearing customs. Young women in Cangpu prefer fashionable clothing. Traditional gold jewelry has gradually withdrawn from daily wearing scenes, causing this folk custom to lose its most basic inheritance soil. Finally, there is the issue of "fragmentation" of the protection system, with obvious shortcomings in policy and institutional support. At present, there is no systematic plan for the protection of gold ornaments of women from Xianpu. There are neither clear standards for identifying skills nor a complete inheritance guarantee mechanism. Existing policies mostly focus on the "gold jewelry making skills" themselves, but ignore the core cultural carrier of "wearing customs" behind them. When many young women no longer wear gold jewelry due to aesthetic changes, the skills lose their application scenarios, and the tradition naturally fades. In addition, the government's financial subsidies are insufficient, support policies for inheritors are absent, and there is even a lack of a professional skills training system.

All these have put gold jewelry inheritance in the predicament of "water without a source, a tree without a root."

## 6. Solutions to the Problem of Inheriting Gold Jewelry of Women in Xianpu

At the level of cultural communication, gold jewelry culture should be integrated into the entire process of cultural tourism experience to achieve "immersive popularization" [4]. When tourists participate in the "Hairpin Flower Wai" experience, professional folklore interpreters are arranged to simultaneously explain the knowledge of gold jewelry, focusing on explaining the connection between the frangipani in the pattern and Mazu's belief, the cultural origin of the crescent element, and the corresponding wedding meanings of different gold jewelry; the "Changpu Gold Jewelry Culture Festival" is held regularly, through on-site demonstrations of gold forging skills, gold jewelry cultural relics exhibitions, folk melodrama, etc., allowing tourists to intuitively experience the production charm and cultural connotation of gold jewelry have shifted from "taking photos and checking in" to "in-depth experience". At the talent cultivation level, it is necessary to establish a dual-track training system of school cooperation and apprenticeship inheritance. Promote the cooperation between local colleges and universities in Quanzhou and Zhangpu Village to open elective courses and research camps related to Zhangpu metalworking skills, and invite inheritors such as Wang Yongyue to teach in schools, allowing young students to systematically learn technical knowledge and cultural background; at the same time, restore the traditional "apprenticeship system", provide special subsidies to inheritors, encourage them to recruit young apprentices, and ensure that the essence of the skills is passed on from generation to generation through oral transmission and practical training [5]. In addition, we guide traditional craftsmen to cooperate with young designers to integrate modern aesthetics and consumer demand on the basis of retaining core traditional elements such as frangipani and crescent moon, simplify redundant shapes, and develop lightweight jewelry, so that gold jewelry can not only conform to the wearing habits of young people, but also continue cultural genes.

At the level of policy protection, it is necessary to build an all-round protection mechanism of "skills + customs". The government should increase financial investment and set up a special fund for the inheritance of gold jewelry for women in Xianpu, which will be used for inheritance subsidies, skills training, cultural relic repair, etc.; it should formulate identification standards and rating systems for gold jewelry production skills as soon as possible to clarify the core norms for skill inheritance; at the same time, "gold jewelry wearing customs" should be included in the scope of intangible cultural heritage protection, and the daily application scenarios of gold jewelry should be reshaped through support for folk activities and guidance for young women to wear them [6]. Only by allowing the skills to be passed on, the culture to have an audience, and the inheritance to be guaranteed can the gold jewelry of Cangpu women truly break through the difficulties and continue its cultural vitality in the new era.

## 7. Conclusion

With the "Chunpu Women's Custom" being selected as a national intangible cultural heritage and the Quanzhou Maritime Silk Road Heritage being listed on the world list, this ancient culture has ushered in new opportunities for inheritance and development. However, it also faces practical challenges such as the dilution of cultural connotation, faulty skill inheritance, and fragmentation of the protection system. Inheriting the women's gold jewelry of Zhangpu is essentially the material carrier to protect the Maritime Silk Road civilization, the spiritual core that continues the folk customs of southern Fujian, and the cultural link that maintains the value of women's lives and family emotions. From in-depth science popularization in the cultural tourism scene to dual-track training between schools and apprentices, from the innovative integration of

traditional skills and modern design to the systematic protection of "skills and customs", every initiative is to cherish and activate this heritage.

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