CHARACTERISTICS OF BATIK PATTERN OF MIAO ETHNICITY IN XIANGXI, CHINA

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Abstract: Batik is one of the most representative traditional hand dyeing art of China's minority nationalities. It has maintained distinct regional and national characteristics in the long term development process. The batik of the Miao people in Xiangxi is the carrier of the people's history and culture in the Xiangxi area, reflecting the religious worship and belief of the Miao people in Xiangxi. Batik embodies the Miao spirit in Xiangxi, with a strong sense of national identity and belonging. Firstly, by consulting relevant materials and observations, this paper consults from the history of Xiangxi Miao batik extension to Xiangxi Miao batik patterns of production. Then use the case study method to analyze that the Miao batik in Xiangxi has a unique batik pattern type, structure and manufacturing method. Besides that, it expounds on the main artistic characteristics of Miao batik patterns in Xiangxi from three aspects: pattern structure, pattern significance, and colour selection to support the inheritance and development and the complementary development of national skills. It will provide theoretical reference and a basis for further development.

Keywords: Miao Ethnicity; Xiangxi Batik; Pattern

I. Introduction

Batik is one of the ancient folk traditional printing and dyeing processes of the Chinese nation and is the intangible cultural heritage of our country(Liu.Eny.1998). As early as the Qin and Han Dynasties, the Miao people had mastered the batik technology and reached the peak in the Song Dynasty, which also had an excellent inheritance in the long-term development(Shi.Q.G.1986). Miao batik cloth contains various patterns and patterns, has a very rich cultural connotation and artistic characteristics, has a high value of exploration to provide better support for the in-depth understanding of Miao history and culture, inheritance of national skills.

The cultures around china contributed to the development of Xiangxi batik and its usage in today's fashion(Wang,M.Y.2016). The scope and field of ancient Xiangxi batik research are extensive. Due to the scarcity of research materials, the rare cultural relics in archaeology are scattered worldwide. The theoretical study of batik culture in Xiangxi can not keep up with it, which results in the collection and publication of physical picture materials, the group of history and characters, and the lack of research data. Lack of information was conducted in a classification study in Xiangxi batik patterns of China. Based on a reasonable selection of Miao batik, using historical data and image data analysis methods to conduct a comprehensive analysis of batik patterns in Xiangxi of China. In addition, a case study method was used to perform a

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detailed study on the characteristics, structure and type of traditional batik pattern in Xiangxi of China.

II. Literature Review

The study site is located in Xiangxi Fenghuang County, Hunan Province, China (Figure 1). Xiangxi has been a concentrated area of Tujia and Miao since ancient times. Xiangxi has beautiful scenery, birds and flowers, a pleasant climate, and lush vegetation, which provides an ideal natural environment and rich resources for batik production. For thousands of years, the inheritance of Xiangxi batik technology has gradually formed a regional, national cultural characteristic (Sun, J. 2017). Batik is a traditional dyeing practice of the Xiangxi ethnic minority and other ethnic communities. The beauty expressed in the different batik from various cultural backgrounds has helped transfer important cultural traits (Li, Q. R. 2013). This dyeing technique has a unique heritage and culture that spans over an extended historical time (Decker, L., Trocchianesi, R. & Vacca, V. 2019). This technique is the primary difference between the Xiangxi ethnic minority. In these traditional Chinese societies, unique national culture, national customs, and national lifestyles have been formed (Tang, F. 2009). At the same time, the inheritance characteristics of the ethnic batik craftsmanship in Xiangxi have also been developed. These characteristics mainly include the harmonious unity of nationality and region, individuality and collectivity, the integration of art and technology.

Due to historical reasons, the ethnic minorities in Xiangxi have only their language and no written languages since ancient times (Ling, C. S., & Rui, Y. F. 2003). Therefore, there are few related written records and descriptions of Batik in Xiangxi, but traces of Batik in Xiangxi are still left in the process of historical development. After research and textual research, there is a place called "Indigo Workshop" in Longshan County, western Hunan Province, where indigo, the key raw material for batik, is abundant, and there are many dyeing workshops (Shen, D. X., & Fu, D. M. 2015). Until the 1950s and 1970s, there were still hundreds of dye shops in the eight counties and cities under the jurisdiction of Xiangxi. In the early years, Longshan County in Xiangxi was rich in the dyeing material required for batik-blue grass (Xin, H. L., et.al 2020). The early Xiangxi blue dyeing process was to soak the roots and leaves of batik-blue grass plant in the mountainous area of Xiangxi until it began to rot so that the blue indigo ingredient in the plant was fully overflowed. Then the homemade, homespun clothes were soaked and dyed in the dye. This is the earliest blue dye in Xiangxi. The beauty of colour in Chinese Batik is reflected in the simple beauty and gorgeous beauty of colour. Rongxi (2018) mentioned the simplicity and beauty of batik colour, which is well reflected in the batik art of Xiangxi in China. The most distinctive feature of Xiangxi batik in using colour forms is a simple blue and white colours. White flowers on a blue background or blue flowers on a white background, blue and white against each other, giving a simple and elegant beauty.
III. Methodology

This study used the Case Study Research (CSR) method, research that studies, and the “close reading” of social life they can provide (Anol, B. 2012). This research method was chosen because Case Study Research (CSR) takes an idiographic approach to research. Researchers attempt to describe a unique phenomenon holistically, accounting for as many factors as possible, emphasising detailed, contextual analysis (Mildred L.P & Michelle N. 2018). Case Study Research (CSR) tends to have a lot of data. The researcher must gain close familiarity with the data collected through multiple methods to identify categories, themes, and patterns.

The research process is divided into three main phases: (1) exploration and literature review, (2) data collection, and (3) Case study and Finding. The importance of this paper lies in the development of the research process and visual analysis of batik in Xiangxi, as they outline the steps and identify all the considerations needed to collect and analyze the data and discuss the results. The researchers need to understand the development of Miao batik in Xiangxi, which is very important for determining the characteristics of Xiangxi Miao batik. Then, through literature review, from the perspective of Xiangxi Miao batik development, find out the relevant
theories or concepts of Miao batik in Xiangxi. Next, collect and analyze the data, the visual analysis of the batik and motifs was achieved, to obtain the available information and summarize, using qualitative research to study the document's content.

IV. Results and discussion

4.1 Types of Batik Patterns of Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi

Batik is an art created with wax resist fibre. It is an ancient art carried forward from generation to the next (Legino. R. 2012). The cultural consciousness contained in Xiangxi batik pattern art is the cultural consciousness of the working people. This kind of cultural consciousness permeates batik's production process, making Xiangxi Miao traditional batik show the characteristics of various patterns and rich connotations.

First, classification is based on the form of expression. According to the difference of expression form, the batik pattern of Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi can be divided into concrete and abstract patterns (Figure 2) (Wang. T. F. 2014). Among them, the factual pattern mainly comes from the objective thing, is the intuitive reflection to the existing item, including the flower, the animal, and so on; the abstract pattern is mainly the pattern obtained after the high abstraction to the objective existence natural scene, such as the star mountain grain which comes from the star sky, the mountain and so on.

![Concrete pattern and abstract patterns](image1.png)

**Fig. 1. Concrete pattern and abstract patterns (Yang. W. B, Yang. L & Wang. Z. H, 2015)**

Second, classification based on the subject matter. According to the difference of subject matter, the batik pattern of Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi can be divided into biological class, scene class, etc (Chen, J. Tan, P. M. Li, P. Q. & Yang, Y. Z. 2015). Biological species include animal lines, plant lines, and so on, mainly from the natural animals and plants, or Miao culture in the existence of animals and plants, such as birds, butterflies, pear flowers, peach blossoms, and so on. The most representative of the scene category is the character pattern, showing the Miao daily life scene, national customs, myths and legends, etc. (Figure 3)
4.2 Analysis on the Method of Making Batik Patterns of Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi

The Miao people in Xiangxi live in the closed mountainous area, which has many disadvantages, such as the closed traffic environment, underdeveloped economy, etc. But just because of this, the batik craft of the Miao people in Xiangxi can not be impacted by the foreign culture and can be inherited and preserved in words and deeds, retaining the local and national characteristics.

Xiangxi Miao batik pattern production method is relatively simple, only drawing patterns need to consume a lot of time. Wu, T.J. (2018) found that in practice, it is necessary to prepare the materials to be used when drawing patterns in advance, and soak the cloth with plant ash to facilitate subsequent drawing and dyeing; After dissolving the beeswax, control the temperature of beeswax to stabilize at 100-130°C for a long time, use the tools such as stones and bamboo sticks to complete the general composition and to position on the local cloth, or use the nail to carry out the operation, and dip the beeswax into the local fabric to implement the pattern drawing; In the dyeing process, due to the blocking of beeswax, the cotton fibre is sealed, and the dye solution can not seep in. When the beeswax liquid solidifies on the surface of the cloth, it is transferred to the dyeing vat (including indigo dye) and left standing for about 30 minutes; then the fabric is salvaged for oxidation fixation; But in the process of turning, because the cloth surface is wrinkled, cracks are formed on the surface of the pattern, causing the dye liquid to enter from the tiny cracks, and finally forming the "ice crack" called "batik soul", which is a kind of uncanny natural texture effect "The "ice cracks" vary from thick to thin, from curved to straight, from sparse to dense, from virtual to real, which is difficult to imitate. After repeated soaking, the dyeing of homespun cloth is completed; The floating colour on the surface of dyed textile is cleaned by cold water and then transferred to a clear water pot for heating to remove the wax.(Figure 4)

Generally, beeswax can be observed floating on the surface of the liquid for about 50 minutes and can be reused after being fished out; After complete dewaxing, take out the dyed cloth, rinse and dry it before further processing. (Lin, J. 2017)
4.3 The Main Art Characteristics of Batik Patterns of Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi

Many decorative patterns of Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi are the product of Miao people's spiritual belief and desire and also the true reflection of Miao people's natural living environment. The Miao people living in Hunan mainly live in the Wuling mountain area. They live close to mountains, are mainly engaged in economic farming, and have little contact with the outside world (The Compilation Committee of Fenghuang County. 1988). Most of the things they can see are natural objects. Cultural usage also is unique and helps identify the differences between people from different regions (Negara. T. D. W. 2017). When people want to remember history and inherit culture, they have their own ideology to express, so a large number of meaningful patterns and graphics appear (Hao. Y. L. 2018). The batik patterns in Xiangxi are well preserved and integrated with the national spirit, national aesthetic consciousness, and the essence of traditional patterns handed down from generation to generation, forming the unique style of batik in Xiangxi.

(i) Pattern structure

From the point of view of pattern organization structure, the batik pattern of Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi mainly shows the artistic characteristics of regularity and rhythm. It produces the visual aesthetic sense of order by relying on the change of order and degree (Xiang, Y. X. 2018). Under the influence of wax painting tools, the batik patterns of Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi are generally based on the online outline. The coarse lines and fine lines are arranged in an orderly manner, resulting in formal beauty and rhythm. (Figure 5) This sense of rhythm gives the Miao batik line pattern in Xiangxi a more vital organization, combined with the repeatability and interlacing of the line pattern, and the rhythm of the batik pattern is stronger, which promotes the Miao batik pattern to have a unique artistic charm.

The batik pattern of the Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi has very obvious regularity in the whole composition, which is embodied in the following aspects: first, in the batik pattern of the Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi, geometric designs (including square, triangle, circle, etc.) are prevalent. Second, the skeleton shape of the batik pattern of Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi is more precise. In a
complete batik cloth, including the theme pattern and auxiliary pattern, the pattern has its bone, more balanced, symmetry, promote the whole pattern more regular and orderly (Liu, L. 2013).

(ii) Pattern implications
Miao decorative patterns are tangible and intentional, and each group of patterns can be interpreted into a small story in modern language. It is not only closely related to the long history and culture of Miao but also has a unique regional cultural atmosphere, with the mysterious color of Xiangxi. It is also the expression of the Miao people's positive and optimistic attitude towards life since ancient times (Zhang, W. N. 2008).

The batik pattern of the Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi contains the rich emotion of the Miao people in Xiangxi (Xiong, Z. & Wu, T. Jin. 2020). It can be said that the corresponding pattern has vital symbolic significance and national cultural connotation. The common batik patterns are mainly geometric patterns, animal patterns, and plant patterns, which contain the following national ideology and culture:

First, geometric pattern. This type of pattern is generally abstracted from concrete objects. Taking vortex patterns as an example, some scholars believe that vortex patterns come from natural water patterns, symbolizing nostalgia and reverence for ancestors, and some scholars believe that vortex patterns come from the long drums and cattle heads used in the Miao "drum sacrifice", mainly representing "protection".

Second, animal lines. The batik patterns of Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi include fish, dragon, butterfly, bird, etc. Some of the most frequent batik bird patterns in Xiangxi Miao Ethnicity are the sparrow, magpie, swallow, and so on, or some self-made bird patterns that can only see the bird type but cannot distinguish the species. From the perspective of Miao culture, these bird lines generally contain the connotation of ancestor worship. Referring to the ancient ballads of the Miao Ethnicity, we can see that the creatures hatched by birds include the ancestors of the Miao Ethnicity, Jiang Yang, so the Miao people think that birds have kindness to the people. In addition, bird lines also symbolize the cultural connotation of many children and many blessings. (Figure 6)
Third, plant lines. Different from the typical plant pattern of Han Ethnicity, the plant pattern of batik pattern of Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi usually comes from common flowers such as pear flower, peach blossom, daisy. And the corresponding flowers are described truthfully, reflecting the simple cultural consciousness of the Miao people and showing the interest of life. (Figure 7)

(iii) **Color selection**
Xiangxi Miao batik pattern color can be divided into blue and white, color these two types. The blue and white batik pattern mainly includes the delicate line pattern and the thick line pattern; This delicate line pattern based on blue and white batik is exquisite and the artistic value is higher (Wang, X.X & Tang, L.H, 2019). The blue-and-white batik-based pattern has a long history, with a robust, simple and elegant style, and these line patterns in the actual production process must use the secondary filling to achieve the drawing.
Although batik cloth with red, yellow, and green bottom white flowers can be made under the current technological conditions, these colour batik cloths are still rare compared with blue bottom white flower wax cloth. Even in the traditional process, these colour batik clothes do not exist, mainly limited by the pigment's colour temperature. Only indigo dyeing can be better realized in cold water, and it is not easy to lose colour. At the same time, other plant dyes can only be dyed in high-temperature hot water; Because beeswax will melt, it can not guarantee the integrity of the pattern. Usually, Xiangxi Miao people will add other colours to the corresponding batik patterns by relying on the paste cloth, embroidery, flower picking, pleating, and other processes to form colour contrast and further enrich the pattern colour batik cloth.

V. Conclusion

To sum up, Xiangxi Miao batik cloth contains various patterns, including abstract patterns, concrete patterns, and so on, can also be refined into geometric patterns, animal patterns, plant patterns, and so on, with extremely rich national cultural connotations and artistic characteristics. The corresponding pattern has strong regularity and rhythm, a precise skeleton shape, regular and orderly pattern organization, and rich emotion of Miao people in Xiangxi, which has the artistic characteristics of simplicity and generosity. Relying on the study of the creative attributes of the batik pattern of Miao Ethnicity in Xiangxi, it can provide more robust support for understanding the history and culture of Miao Ethnicity and inheriting national skills. Xiangxi batik pattern inherits culture through design and innovation and is a creative activity living in the present. When creating, we should respect the symbolic and expressive meanings of the decorative patterns of the ethnic minorities in Xiangxi, inherit their "spirit" rhyme, grasp the pulse of the times, create new national forms, and abide by the contemporary design concept of "pursuing cultural connotation," to make the works have nationality and times, rather than copy and paste the traditional national symbols.

References


