



Analysis of the Differences in Embroidery Patterns between the Dong and Miao Ethnic Groups

LI Shirun^{[a],*}

^[a]Guizhou City Vocational College, Guiyang, Guizhou, China.
 *Corresponding author.

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Abstract

Chinese embroidery art has a long history, and each ethnic group has gradually formed embroidery culture with their own ethnic characteristics over the long history. Miao and Dong embroideries are considered as important components of Chinese embroidery. There are various types of Dong embroidery, with unique shapes and rich colors Miao embroidery is a colorful, exaggerated, and unique decorative pattern that stands out among traditional Chinese embroidery categories. Through the comparative analysis of Miao and Dong embroidery patterns, this paper summarizes the differences between Miao and Dong embroidery patterns, so that China's Folk art can be inherited and developed.

Key word: Dong ethnic group; Miao ethnic group; Embroidery pattern

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Chinese embroidery, as an important component of Chinese cultural history, carries a rich traditional culture and national spirit, vividly showcasing the social changes of thousands of years. Embroidery patterns widely use the wishes of people of all ethnic groups to avoid diseases, yearn for wealth, peace, and prosperity in real life. Throughout the long history, embroidery has become one of the manifestations of totem worship and national history.

In the long historical evolution, the Miao and the Dong people have created a unique and brilliant culture,

among which embroidery has become one of the most dazzling and typical representatives and manifestations of Miao and Dong culture due to their dazzling form and rich content. Among the many embroidery varieties in China, Miao and Dong embroideries also stand out in the embroidery category due to their unique historical cultures and national aesthetics (Zhao & Wang, 2011).

1. DONG EMBROIDERY PATTERN

1.1 Basic Categories of Dong Embroidery Patterns

Dong embroidery patterns, as a concrete manifestation of cultural connotations such as the spirit, religious beliefs, and aesthetic concepts of the Dong people, can represent the work, culture, and life of the Dong people in place of words, with dual meanings of appreciation and enlightenment. Through the continuous inheritance and updating of generations of Dong people, over a long historical evolution, Dong embroidery patterns have gradually formed with various types of animal, plant, geometric, and textual patterns representing .

1.1.1 Animal Patterns

Animal patterns are mainly formed by exaggerating and transforming common images or animals with beautiful meanings in nature, such as dragons, snakes, butterflies, etc. (Figure 1).



Figure 1
Butterfly pattern

1.1.2 Plant Pattern

The plant patterns mainly represent the patterns commonly seen by the Dong people in production and daily life. Through exaggerated deformation techniques such as coherence and symmetry, they depict the unique plants of the Dong ethnic group, such as peach blossoms, gourds, persimmon flowers, etc. (Figure 2).



Figure 2
Flower

1.1.3 Geometry Patterns

Geometric patterns use different geometric elements such as lines, circles, triangles, and squares as embroidery materials. Based on the traditional aesthetic concepts of the Dong ethnic group, regular or irregular patterns such as square and square, continuous patterns are created (Figure 3).



Figure 3
Square continuous pattern

1.1.4 Character Pattern

The pattern of Dong embroidery characters is a unique pattern formed after deformation on the basis of Dong language. The meaning is very clear and representative.

1.2 The Composition Form of Dong Ethnic Embroidery Patterns

1.2.1 Asymmetric Individual Pattern Form

In Dong embroidery, separate patterns, such as handkerchiefs and duvet covers, are usually used in square and open main positions to express the meaning,

connotation, or main idea of embroidery. In order to maximize the expressive function of patterns, Dong women have chosen a more complex asymmetric form in composition, which allows for the placement of various objects in a single pattern. This not only makes the pattern story easier to spread, increases visual effects, but also enhances its artistic value.

1.2.2 Suitable Pattern Form

In long-term embroidery practice, Dong women have found that Dong embroidery in different regions can meet their needs for suitable patterns, thereby achieving pattern filling and decoration. The most common patterns in Dong embroidery are those that are suitable for the body and those that are suitable for filling.

Firstly, it is possible to flexibly adjust the specific shape and size of the suitable pattern, which is often used in different small embroideries. Secondly, the filling is suitable for the pattern, and the embroidery parts are mainly filled in a single repeated manner, making the embroidery surface beautiful, complete, concise, and clear, adding a good sense of segmentation and balance to the space.

1.2.3 Continuous Pattern Form

Continuous pattern refers to an infinite and continuous pattern formed by the repeated combination and listing of one or more patterns (Mary, 2015). In Dong embroidery patterns, continuous patterns are often used at the edges and corners of large-scale embroidery, which can serve as a decorative effect for embroidery. The commonly used patterns are square and bipartite continuous pattern. Connect the “branches” and “leaves” to extend the pattern repeatedly from side to side or up and down to cover all corners of embroidery. This continuous pattern is often used in plant patterns. The square continuous pattern refers to a pattern composed of a single or multiple patterns, which are repeated and extended around, and are often used in decorative large Dong embroidery such as wall hanging and bed guards.

2. MIAO EMBROIDERY PATTERN

2.1 Basic Types of Miao Embroidery Patterns

There are various types of Miao embroidery patterns. From the content of the theme expression, there are mainly traditional patterns, natural patterns, and textual patterns.

2.1.1 Tradition Patterns

In Miao embroidery, traditional patterns mainly include Miao dragon, pomegranate, and butterfly mother, among which Miao dragon is the most distinctive. Miao Long has a variety of styles and is very common in Miao embroidery. It represents auspiciousness and prosperity, and also represents the highest aspirations and pursuits of the Miao people in their lifetime.

2.1.2 Nature Pattern

The Miao ancestors took Slash-and-burn farming as their main mode of production. Therefore, the patterns of natural patterns mainly focus on depicting mountains, rivers, flowers, and trees, expressing the admiration of the Miao people for nature and the themes that are inseparable from the real production and life of the local Miao people. The embroidery patterns of the Miao ethnic group are influenced by their customs and production and life development.

2.1.3 Character Pattern

Miao people use this pattern to express their longing for good luck and a better future life. The main character patterns are “Fu”, “Shou”, “Tian”, and so on. The most common change in Miao embroidery patterns is the character “Shou”. Both “Ruyi Shou” and “Two Blessings for Shou” express the beautiful wish of the Miao people to pursue happiness and longevity.

2.1.4 Innovation Patterns

Miao culture is a new pattern gradually created in Miao embroidery under the influence of foreign cultures. With the impact of modern civilization development on traditional culture, Miao culture cannot escape this inevitable trend. Under this subtle influence, the Miao people also applied new patterns to their embroidery, forming innovative patterns. For example, patterns such as “Carp Leaping over the Dragon Gate”, “Lion Rolling Embroidered ball”, and “Kylin Giving Birth” in Han culture are also common in Miao embroidery.

2.2 Classification of Miao Embroidery Patterns

2.2.1 Plant Pattern

The plant patterns in Miao embroidery patterns depend on the flowers and plants in our nature. Commonly used plant patterns include lotus, pomegranate, peach, orchid, and so on. In the hearts of the Miao people, especially the lotus and pomegranate flowers, they have unique meanings. Pomegranate has many pomegranate seeds, so it is often used in Miao embroidery, demonstrating the Miao people’s longing for more children and blessings. The appearance of flowers and plants such as plum and bamboo in female embroidery patterns reflects the Miao people’s pursuit of inner strength (Figure 4).



Figure 4
Flowers

2.2.2 Animal Pattern

Mythical animals and real animals are the main themes of Miao embroidery animal patterns. Dragons, cows, magpies, butterflies, etc. are commonly used patterns in their animal designs. Dragon patterns are particularly abundant in Miao embroidery animal patterns. Some Miao people use the dragon as a symbol of their totem (Figure 5). More than 20 different types of dragon patterns demonstrate the Miao people’s worship of dragons, and many Miao areas also have traditional activities of “Attracting Dragons”.



Figure 5
Coiled Dragon

2.2.3 Geometry Patterns

Scattered animal and plant patterns and geometric patterns are formed through programmatic processing. The Miao people express dense images of people, animals, and plants through abstract geometric patterns. The combination of these geometric patterns usually gives a three-dimensional visual effect. These geometric patterns also include circular patterns, moon patterns, and so on (Figure 6).



Figure 6
Geometry patterns

3. COMPARISON OF EMBROIDERY PATTERN ART BETWEEN DONG AND MIAO NATIONALITIES

Through the previous exploration of embroidery patterns between the Dong and Miao ethnic groups, we can understand that there are some similarities in embroidery

art and culture between the Miao and Dong ethnic groups. They use their embroidery art to express their thoughts and emotions, worship the family, revere the gods, and in daily life, they are indifferent to the beauty of being gentle and the natural wind. The inspiration for their creations mostly comes from the traditional customs and history of their own nation. However, they also have some differences, demonstrating their own unique cultural connotations. In the long historical evolution, the two ethnic groups' hard work, continuous exploration, and ultimately formed embroidery pattern art works with their own unique culture.

3.1 Pure and Simple

Composite patterns are important patterns in Miao embroidery. Taking the dragon pattern as an example, the dragon in Miao embroidery does not have a standard pattern as the image of the dragon pattern. Although the dragon pattern of two ethnic groups are generated through people's abstract thoughts and are composed of various animal images, representing a mysterious power, it is a god that can satisfy people's wishes. The image of Miao embroidered dragons is more diverse. The head, body, tail, and even limbs of a dragon have rich changes, including the head of a bird, the body of a snake or silkworm, and the tail of a fish (Figure 7).



Figure 7
Dragon pattern on the left and butterfly pattern on the right

There are dozens of butterfly patterns in Miao embroidery, such as those with human faces, butterfly bodies, and butterfly wings, as well as those with long wing feathers; Some people have faces, hands and feet, two wings on their backs, and various shapes of patterns such as butterfly bodies and bird feet (Figure 8). Miao embroidery likes to embroider patterns on embroidery products, often so full that the original fabric color of the fabric cannot be seen. One of the reasons why their embroidery products are often fully embroidered is that they have content in their pattern design, or represent a story or a scene in mythology. Miao embroidery usually involves embroidering objects with patterns, so embroidery products are often too full to see the original fabric color of the fabric. The content on embroidery, or a story, or a scene in mythology, also causes Miao embroidery to be frequently filled.



Figure 8
Human head and dragon body

Compared with Miao embroidery patterns, Dong embroidery patterns have a simpler and softer image. Dong embroidery likes to make small pieces of embroidery first, and then assemble them into large pieces. The pattern does not directly cover the entire embroidery like Miao embroidery. Dong embroidery is generally divided into small pieces, with few large patterns, thus lacking the plot of Miao embroidery. Although they are both dragon and butterfly patterns, the main images of the Dong dragon and butterfly patterns are basically as shown in Figure 9. Although the size and shape of the patterns may change in some details during the specific embroidery process, because it needs to adapt to the shape of the embroidery or the sudden inspiration of the female embroidery, the overall outline basically continues the Paper Cuttings samples left by predecessors. The Dong people only embroider dragons and butterflies in simple, childish lines and do not combine them with other Fauna. The snake body, shrimp eyes, ox head and other graphic features are not very different from the dragon and butterfly in the eyes of ordinary people (Figure 10). They expressed these images clearly through embroidery. Dong women's embroidery emphasizes the coordination of decoration rather than storytelling. Small pieces of embroidery fill the corners of embroidery, which is more shocking than large-scale Miao embroidery. The small patterns of Dong embroidery are more detailed and pleasing to the eye.



Figure 9
Dong Ethnic Embroidery Pattern



Figure 10
Fish and Dragon Playing with Beads

3.2 Implicit and Rational

Dong embroidery expresses a “the Golden Mean”. They don’t need exaggerated shapes, gorgeous colors, or complex patterns. Everything is controlled by this ‘degree’. The shape of Dong embroidery patterns is relatively less exaggerated, the colors are relatively less bright, the contrast is relatively less strong, and silver

jewelry is relatively less complex, demonstrating a sense of rationality among the Dong people. From an aesthetic perspective, it can be seen that no matter which pattern is used, it exhibits the same purity and lightness as water. In short, the sophistication, immaturity, implicitness, or broad-mindedness presented by Dong embroidery patterns are all gifts of this land, a love for nature, and an inner burst.

Miao embroidery showcases the unique charm of Miao culture. It expresses the romantic feelings of the Miao ethnic group through exaggerated or realistic embroidery patterns, or strong color combinations. This emotion has a unique heritage that is in line with culture, and it also demonstrates the unique aesthetic power of Miao women, full of fantasy and beauty.

4. CONCLUSION

China is a Multinational state. The development of different ethnic cultures has promoted the prosperity of Chinese national culture. We can excavate rich ancient culture from traditional folk embroidery culture.

The message and their unique ethnic aesthetic emotions showcase a unique historical civilization of the nation. Through the analysis and comparative study of the embroidery patterns of the Dong and Miao nationalities, it is of great significance and value for inheriting the traditional folk art culture, preserving the Intangible cultural heritage, and carrying forward and absorbing the essence of national culture

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