

A Study of the Costume Culture of Lisu Nationality in Myanmar

Liu Jixian

West Yunnan Normal University Lincang, Yunnan 677000, China

1051443303@qq.com

Keywords: Myanmar, Lisu nationality, Costume, Aesthetic connotation, Belief and worship, Social function

Abstract: The Lisu culture in Myanmar is formed to adapt to the climate, production and lifestyle and geographical environment of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar, and it contains the unique costume culture of the Lisu people there. Through the analysis of the costume culture of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar, the author attempted to explore the social functions of the traditional costumes of the Lisu people in Myanmar based on a better understanding of their cultural psychology and traditional belief consciousness.

1. Introduction

National costumes are the accumulation of a nation's people in their life, the crystallization of the nation's wisdom, and also an embodiment of the nation's cultural symbols. In addition to the functions of warmth and beauty, costumes can reflect the religious beliefs and social customs of the nation. As a cross-border ethnic group, the costumes of the Lisu people in Myanmar reflect their aesthetic connotations, worship and specific social standards, which regulates their behavior to a certain extent.

2. The Aesthetic Connotation of Lisu Costumes in Myanmar

People's perception of beauty is not innate, but goes through a process of development. In the case of extremely low social productivity, people's production and life were largely restricted by nature, and thus it was difficult for them to produce aesthetic awareness. When faced with an object, people will first have a practical awareness of it, and then an aesthetic awareness will follow. Specifically, after people realized the practicability of clothing, they slowly developed related aesthetic consciousness. Lisu costumes in Myanmar have undergone a long development process. The costumes of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar reflect the frankness, kindness and simplicity of this nation, as well as people's original aesthetic consciousness there. The texture, rich patterns and colorful colors of the clothing as well as exquisite ornaments present simple and natural colors. The costumes contain many ancient cultures of the Lisu people in Myanmar, and they are the creation of nature, reflecting the harmonious coexistence of man and nature. The costumes of the Lisu people in Myanmar present some characteristics in terms of color, shape and pictures. People's aesthetic ideas conveyed by the costumes are not people's imagination without foundations, but their

subjective feelings about the living environment and life practice. Costumes of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar are a reflection of the cultural characteristics of this nation, reflecting people's pursuit of a better life.

Regardless of any ethnic group, clothes are the most practical in people's lives. They can protect people's bodies and help them keep warm. In addition, people also make costumes needed for different social functions such as parties, funerals, various ceremonies and weddings. It is not enough to only study costume culture from social conditions and usage conditions, because costumes also contain the aesthetic psychology and aesthetic personality deep in the heart of a nation.

Color is an important factor in the beauty of costumes. However, a nation's color choice of its traditional costumes is not arbitrary, but has a close relationship with the people living environment and cultural history. It reflects the aesthetic habits of the nation. The Lisu people in Myanmar advocate white, black and blue, which can be mainly attributed to two factors. First of all, the admiration of these three colors by the Lisu people in Myanmar is closely related to the region and socio-economic development of this nationality. Most of the Lisu people in Myanmar live in alpine mountainous areas. The economy and technology are relatively backward there, and people basically live a self-sufficient life. The dyes they use are mainly obtained from nature, leading to the relatively simple colors. Lisu people in Myanmar love the fruits of their labor, and thus they have gradually formed a habit of dressing mainly in white, blue and black. Secondly, the advocacy of these three colors by the Lisu people in Myanmar is also closely related to their national cultural psychology. According to legend, black is the protective color of the Lisu people in Myanmar, and it has allowed them to survive and multiply for generations. Black is a symbol of the god of rain and water. Most of the Lisu people in Myanmar live in mountainous areas, generally suffering the lack of water. Water symbolizes life, and black is also a symbol of clothing symbols. It is the prayer of the Lisu people in Myanmar to the god of rain and water, and also their yearning for a happy life. Therefore, the Lisu people in Myanmar advocate these three colors.

The admiration of the above three colors by the Lisu people in Myanmar reflects the aesthetic habits and ideals of this nation. Their costumes also reflect their closeness to nature. The costumes of the Lisu people in Myanmar are mostly loose-bodied in style, mainly including double-breasted garments, pleated skirts, and baggy pants. These styles of clothing is gradually formed by the Lisu people in Myanmar in order to adapt to the life in the alpine mountainous area and to facilitate labor. The area where the Lisu people in Myanmar live is picturesque, which has cultivated their aesthetic psychology to love nature. Nature provides rich materials for the patterns for the Lisu costumes in Myanmar, and the Lisu people are ingenious. Based on their understanding of real life, they simplify the inexhaustible materials from nature into animal patterns, plant patterns, character patterns and geometric patterns according to their own aesthetic needs and emotions, and then use them as the harmonious decoration on their costumes. The costume patterns embody the open-minded, optimistic and positive emotions of the Lisu people in Myanmar. They also embody people's good wishes, such as peace, auspiciousness and happiness in life, showing their aesthetic culture.

The costumes of the Lisu people in Myanmar are the creation and wisdom of the people there to adapt to the living environment, and also show their aesthetics of being close to nature and the harmony of nature and man. For people, costumes are the most conspicuous thing, and thus the costumes of the Lisu people in Myanmar also has the function of standardization and social contract.

3. Belief and Worship of Lisu Costumes in Myanmar

In the late Paleolithic period, religious concepts began to sprout, but human beings were still in primitive society. In the first beginning, nature and human beings opposed and coexisted. The natural world was infinitely powerful and possessed some mysterious powers that people could not conquer. They did not have enough knowledge of the natural world and their thinking was underdeveloped then, and the early religious consciousness slowly formed in that context. Primitive religious activities, witchcraft etiquette activities, and totem worship were widespread in all primitive nations, and had great impacts on the production and life of people then. For the Lisu people in Myanmar, totem culture and religious concepts have gone through deep cultural accumulation, leaving the mark of primitive religion, which is reflected in the costume culture.

During the primitive society period, social productivity was low, and all the living materials of the ancestors of the Lisu nationality in Myanmar came from nature. In order to adapt to nature and survive better, people gradually developed nature worship in their lives. Therefore, their ancestors incorporated some of the most common things in life and some patterns that symbolized beauty and auspiciousness into their national costumes, such as flowers, fish, birds, crossbows, gourds, and images in some myths and legends. It embodied the desire of the ancestors of the Lisu people in Myanmar to be protected by the gods and their yearning for a better life.

In addition, the ancestors of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar also showed the image of wizard gods in their costumes. This consciousness was artificially added, and these costumes became a symbol of communication between people and gods/ghosts in religious sacrifices. The ancestors of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar believed that this kind of costumes was sacred and could only be worn when communicating with ghosts/gods and performing rituals. They were a symbol of the soul or some kinds of ghosts/gods that they had shaped according to their own understanding and knowledge of the world, reflecting their worship of ghosts/gods.

Like other ethnic groups, the ancestors of the Lisu ethnic group in Myanmar believed that the souls still existed after people died, and that these ghosts also had special abilities to bless existing and future generations. Therefore, costumes became important objects in sacrifice ceremonies and various funeral ceremonies, with the purpose to please the ancestors and the ghosts to win their blessing.

In the long course of historical development, the costumes of the Lisu people in Myanmar reflect not only the beliefs and worship of the nationality, but also their emotional experience and cultural psychology. In addition to many symbolic and emotional meanings, these costumes also bring together the aesthetic psychology of the Lisu people in Myanmar.

Primitive beliefs and religious culture are the expansion of the close connection between man and nature. Totemism is a product of the Lisu people in Myanmar, and it is the spiritual pillar of people in primitive society. Totemism has benefited the development of early human plastic arts. As an important part of people's lives, it has had a great impact on many art categories. Art and religion are closely related. With the continuous development and progress of human society, people's ideological consciousness has been greatly improved, and is constantly changing at the same time.

Although the influence of religion is slowly diminishing, the precious heritage of totem culture still exists in contemporary society. The costumes of Lisu people in Myanmar are the most important symbol of the spiritual civilization and material civilization of this nationality in different historical periods. These ethnic costumes have a long history and carry the fine traditions handed down from generation to generation, inspiring every Lisu people in Myanmar to keep in mind the excellent history, culture, moral requirements and living customs of their nation. Therefore, the Lisu people in Myanmar have carefully taken care of the clothing culture of their ethnic group since ancient times. So far, they still maintain the unique styles of their national costumes, showing their splendor in their daily lives.

4. The Social Functions of Costumes of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar

National costume is a cultural symbol that members of the Lisu people in Myanmar have a common in terms of identity, distinguishing them from the people of other ethnic groups. The Lisu people in Myanmar have a strong sense of inheritance and a strong collective consciousness. Individuals who do not conform to traditional norms will be rejected. As a tangible norm and an external symbol of an ethnic group, the costumes of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar add cultural signs to the costumes of the Lisu people. The costumes not only identify the different branches of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar, but also distinguish this ethnic group from other ethnic minorities, which plays a very important role in ethnic identity.

In addition to the role of ethnic identity, the costumes of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar also play a role in identifying social roles. In a group, the gender role of an individual can generally be seen from his/her costumes. Generally speaking, most Lisu men in Myanmar wear baggy pants and plain-color garments, with few decorations and simple styles. Most women wear right-side-lapel garments or double-breasted garments, and black trousers or skirts, with a variety of dress styles. Females attach great importance to the workmanship of decorations, and they are also very particular about wearing them. Men and women have different values, and their costumes are also different. The costumes of the Lisu people in Myanmar can also reflect the wearers' occupation and age. The approximate age and marital status of a Lisu person can basically be reflected in his/her costumes. They wear different costumes according to their division of labor in the society, and regulate the way of their costumes according to their own age and ethnic rules. Costumes are a standard style, marking a symbol of the individual identity of the Lisu people in Myanmar.

With the differentiation of social classes in human society, human culture also presents a class color. As a culture carrier, costumes also show the status of the wearers to a large extent. This role of clothing is also reflected in the costumes of the Lisu people in Myanmar, and they are also divided into hierarchical societies. For example, the costumes' materials, colors and styles of the top leaders of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar must follow particularly strict regulations. As a symbol of status, costumes standardize individuals' social behavior and strengthens their class status.

signs are divided into linguistic ones and non-verbal ones in communication studies, and clothing belongs to the latter. Costumes are a symbol of cultural communication, and they carry many cultural meanings in human society. First, the costumes contain the religious beliefs, life customs and cultural system of the Lisu people in Myanmar, and reflect their aesthetic standards. Second, the costumes also reflect the social hierarchy and ethical systems there.

In short, the costumes of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar are an emotional symbol of the Lisu people. They reflect the aesthetic appeal of the Lisu people, carry their traditional religious beliefs, and reflect their cultural psychology. At the same time, they also reflect the constraints and value judgments of the Lisu Nationality in Myanmar, and thus have a strong normative function.

References

- [1] Zhong Zhixiang. *Study of Myanmar* [M]. Yi Wen Publishing Military, 2001.
- [2] Li Mou, Jiang Yongren. *An overview of Myanmar culture* [M]. Peking University Press, 2002.
- [3] Durban Shuoying. *Myanmar Cultural History (Burmese version)* [M]. Yangon: Yemin Bookstore, 1968.
- [4] Su Mengning. *Burmese Traditional Culture and Customs (Burmese version)* [M]. Yangon: Myawaddy Press, 1991.
- [5] Wu Dengka. *Myanmar Cultural History (Burmese version)* [M]. Golden Duck Printing House, 1966.