

# *Study on the ecological conceptions of Miao Nationality' embroidery art in Southeast Guizhou*

Wang Tie

*Anshun secondary vocational school for nationalities, Anshun, Guizhou 561200, China*

**Keywords:** Miao Nationality in Southeast Guizhou, embroidery art, ecological concept

**Abstract:** The embroidery art of Miao Nationality in Southeast Guizhou is inherited to the world with gorgeous colors, exaggerated and rough shapes and exquisite sewing techniques. It is the carrier of Miao culture and the fruits of civilization. At the same time, it is also an important part of Miao's social activities, which involves many aspects of spiritual and material life. The author analyzes Miao embroidery art in Southeast Guizhou from the perspective of ecology, and finds that the various ecological concepts reflected by embroidery art still have many places worth learning and thinking about for us to re-establish the awareness of environmental protection and ecological concepts today.

## 1. Introduction

The embroidery art of Miao Nationality in Southeast Guizhou is inherited to the world with gorgeous colors, exaggerated and rough shapes and exquisite sewing techniques. It not only records the great historical imprint and historical culture of the Miao nationality itself, meanwhile, it accumulates various values of Miao people on life and the world. Among them, the ecological value is particularly eye-catching. Nowadays, mankind continues to transform nature and create the so-called "scientific and technological civilization", which resulting in serious ecological imbalance and tragic extinction of biological species. And the voice of "protecting nature is protecting human beings themselves" is becoming stronger and stronger, we might as well rediscover and understand the Miao embroidery art in Southeast Guizhou, which is still growing and developing. Miao embroidery art reflects the ecological concept of mutual coordination and interdependence between man and heaven, earth and nature, which may arouse people's thinking on how to protect the natural ecological environment.

The so-called "ecology" refers to "the relationship between biological growth and development and its living environment" [1]. Looking throughout the Miao embroidery art in Southeast Guizhou, the ecological concept reflected mainly includes the following aspects.

## 2. Miao embroidery contains the thought of "unity of heaven and man"

One basic thought reflected by Miao people in embroidery is that heaven, earth and man are as an organic whole, which is in line with the ecological essence of "the unity of heaven and man".

In the view of the primitive Miao ancestors, the whole universe is an organic whole, and all natural things come from the same source, that is, "all things in heaven and earth are one" [2]. In

China, the universe is called as Tai Chi in Taoism. Lao Tzu said, "Tao, that is the nature, bears everything in the world. Then there are days and nights, positive and negative ions, other things having two opposite characteristics. After that there are circadian alternation, and positive and negative ions are compatible, embryonic form of materials is shaped. At last, nature evolves into the present world ". "The Yuanqi, something that has two opposite characteristics, is divided into Yin and Yang, the two opposite things in Taonism, and the interaction between Yin and Yang forms the Yuanqi of neutralization, which generates all things." [3]

In Southeast Guizhou, the symbol of "Taiji fish" appears in many embroidery works of Miao Nationality. The symbol is formed by the combination of highly reproductive fish, which coincides with Taoist thought, and the "Taiji fish" symbol enjoys the same merits with the Taiji symbol of Taoist. It can not but say that in the subconscious of the ancestors of the primitive Miao nationality, there had long been the thought of "the combination of Yin and Yang, and the transformation of all things" , and the consciousness of reproductive worship.

### **3. Miao embroidery contains the perception of harmony between man and nature**

Miao compatriots in Southeast Guizhou have lived in high mountains for a long time, lived a primitive life of slash and burn farming, and lived with nature for a long time, so they understand the survival law of living in harmony with nature. They conform to nature, coexist with nature, and make use of nature to develop in harmony with nature. Therefore, in Miao embroidery, we often see all kinds of birds, animals, insects, fish, flowers, plants and trees living in harmony with human beings.

### **4. Miao embroidery contains the idea of "all things live forever"**

Human beings have to survive and reproduce. Therefore, seeking survival and protecting children has become a problem that primitive ancestors must solve.

In primitive society, man seemed small and helpless in front of nature. On the one hand, the unpredictable nature often made people feel confused and frightened; On the other hand, the invasion of fierce birds and beasts always threatened human life, however, these animals were an important source of human food. Human beings not only feared it and envied it, but also must relied on it and hunted it. Therefore, people sacrificed and pleased the natural forces in various ways, hoping that all nature forces could give people sympathy, compassion and care. They placed the subject's own emotion, imagination, will and desire on animals, hoping to surpass human's own ability above animals with the help of animals, or hoping to extend the vigorous reproductive ability of animals and plants to themselves, so as to maintain the survival and continuity of themselves and even the whole species. Thus a series of dazzling and confusing reproductive worship were produced.

#### **4.1 worship for butterflies**

There is a legend about the birth of a butterfly in the Miao nationality area of Southeast in Guizhou. It has been recorded in the Ancient Songs of the Miao Nationality. Its main idea is that the maple tree was pregnant in the heart of the maple tree (mother butterfly), the tree gave birth to the butterfly, then the top of the maple tree was turned into a bird. After that, the butterfly was combined with the foam on the water, and twelve eggs were laid in the nest. The butterfly was unable to hold and hatch, so it asked the bird to help to hatch dragons, Thunder God, tigers, snakes and buffalo and so on. The last egg was a human egg, that is, Jiang Yang, the ancestor of the Miao nationality. Because butterflies had strong reproductive ability, the ancestors of the Miao nationality

hoped that their nation would reproduce like butterflies, so the motif of butterflies giving birth to people came into being, and butterflies were loved by people.

#### **4.2 worship for cattle**

Cattle is the main totem of the Miao nationality and is deeply respected and loved by Miao nationality in the area of Southeast Guizhou. During the festival, the silver horn worn by Miao girls and the ox horn on the roof of houses of Miao villages are the manifestations of worship of cattle. In the "Guzang Festival", a local festival of worshipping ancestors, cattle are regarded as the most solemn sacrifice to the ancestors, in order to pray for the blessing of the ancestors, obtaining greater wealth and making the population more prosperous and developed.

#### **4.3 worship for birds**

The Miao nationality worships birds and regards them as gods. From the legend of butterflies giving birth to people, we know that birds help butterflies hatch eggs, thus producing Miao ancestors. So, birds are worshiped and loved by Miao ancestors. Therefore, bird pattern has also become one of the main patterns with extensive use areas and rich shapes in Miao embroidery.

#### **4.4 worship for fish**

Miao nationality in Southeast Guizhou worships fish mainly because fishes have strong reproductive ability. Therefore, in the Miao areas of Southeast Guizhou, there is the custom of eating fish at every wedding, festival, marriage, house building or childbirth. The reason is that they fantasize about the strong reproductive ability and strong vitality of fish.

#### **4.5 worship for flowers and pomegranates**

Southeast Guizhou is rich in vegetation resources, especially all kinds of flowers and plants. Natural and beautiful flowers and plants have become the theme of Miao girls showing themselves. In addition, people regard the "flowering and fruiting" of plants as the same as the "marriage and birth" of human beings. Therefore, "worship flowers and pray for bearing children" have become people's yearning. Pomegranate bears many seeds, which naturally implies the meaning of reproductive worship.

### **5. Miao embroidery contains the principle of material recycling**

For Miao nationality, although the fear of death haunted people from time to time, in order to get rid of the fear of death, the ancestors of the Miao nationality always adopted a positive and optimistic attitude: "death means that people return to nature, the soul does not die and the universe lives forever." Some of them believed that the soul would return to the place where their ancestors lived before. It is said that in ancient times, the ancestors of the Miao nationality moved south from the eastern coastal areas under the pressure of war and national repression policies. Therefore, after their death, the old Miao people must bury themselves with their heads toward to the East, so as to show that the dead can return to their hometown in the East China sea. This perception of reincarnation of life and death is a simple attitude of Miao people towards life!

The traditional embroidered dress of Miao nationality is "wedding dress". This kind of dress is made of red silk or red pieces, and embroidered with golden flowers and plants. The front and back of the dress, the collar, the shoulders and the sleeves of the wedding dress are all full of flowers. This is the dress that girls wear when they get married. According to the custom, a girl only wears it

twice in her life, once when she gets married, and in this day the girl goes to the man's house and starts to live with her husband, and once when she dies. This reflects that Miao girls regard life and death as equally important. They regard all the good memories, wishes and yearnings in their life rest on this embroidered dress. At the same time, they take flowers and plants as patterns and embroider these patterns with warm golden yellow, which implies that they advocate nature, love life and they will become beautiful flowers and plants after death, that is, return to nature.

## **6. Miao embroidery contains the perception of ecological balance**

Themes of Miao embroidery in Southeast Guizhou are diverse and all inclusive. Most of these themes are closely related to the life of the Miao people. Among them, totems (maple, cow, bird, fish, dragon, tiger, butterfly, etc. are also regarded as totems, not only the patterns.) are most respected by people. Because totems are considered to have "blood relationship or some special relationship with clans, compatriots, tribes and even individuals, and they are deeply believed by Miao nationality that these things have a supernatural force that will protect men and women (gender) of their clans, compatriots, tribes and individuals." [4] Therefore, they are worshiped and they will not be hurt.

A very important principle in totem worship is to respect totems at ordinary times and not to kill totems. Therefore, many totems are well protected. "However, in order to obtain some characteristics of totems, such as power, wit and easy reproduction, people have to carry out collective killing totems at a certain time", [5] and then people hold totem Eucharist. "In the totem Eucharist, members of the clan and tribe should eat totems to achieve their identity with the clan group. The totem Eucharist has a certain time limit, and due to this time limit, the totem Eucharist often evolves into a festival. " [5] For example, in Leishan, Rongjiang, Congjiang and other places in Southeast Guizhou, the "Guzang Festival" of Miao and Dong nationalities is generally held once every 13 years. This will provide a time guarantee for the reproduction and growth of totems.

Miao people in Southeast Guizhou still have many taboos, such as hunting taboo and logging taboo. People believe that "all things have spirits", nature also has life and soul like people, so they treat them like people. In other words, people must coexist with different species in order to have the continuation of their own life.

In short, this kind of taboos is not only the response of the Miao people's kindness, but also the reaction of the Miao people's love for nature, life and life, which has evolved into an ecological harmony belief that respects nature, life and life.

## **7. Miao embroidery colors have strong life power**

The embroidery colors of Miao Nationality in Southeast Guizhou show the characteristics of bright, relaxed and warm. This is closely related to the production, living practice and living environment of Miao ancestors.

### **7.1 worship for black**

Southeast Guizhou is located in the plateau mountainous area, which is humid, hot and rainy, and is extremely rich in vegetation resources. People live in the mountains all year round and shuttle through the green woods, which makes people form the habit of advocating cyan, black and green. And the three colors themselves are perfectly coherent. Therefore, most of the clothes in Southeast Guizhou are still blue and black, which is known as "black Miao nationality".

## 7.2 worship for warm colors

Miao people who live in the mountains especially advocate the sun. The fiery sunshine not only brings people light and warmth, but also brings people warm feelings. Naturally, bright red and yellow have become popular colors, and they are boldly used in embroidery, forming a series of warm and beating color symbols.

## 7.3 worship for natural colors

Miao people are good at depicting nature, and the gorgeous color of their painting directly comes from nature, which comes from people's love and emotion for nature. However, due to the backwardness of technology, the colors that people can make are extremely limited. However, for Miao girls, this will not cause too many restrictions for the dexterous, and the creations of these girls are still free and free. They are especially good at the use of five primary colors, they make many beautiful embroidery works which are finished in only five colors.

## 8. Conclusion

Miao compatriots in Southeast Guizhou have been weaving a beautiful world in their own way for thousands of years. They show their love for home, life and nature, as well as their direction for a safe, auspicious and happy life through their own unique perspective and way. Through the exploration of Miao embroidery art, we have found the long lost beauty of nature again, and we also have the most relaxed mentality and the warmest emotion to face and think about the relationship between man and nature, man and man, man and society today.

## References

- [1] Yang Shihong and others(2003). *Urban ecological environment (Second Edition)*. Science Press.
- [2] Wang Tingxiang. *Moaning language*.
- [3] Liu Peilin(1995). *Feng Shui - Chinese cultural competition (Second Edition)*. Shanghai Sanlian Bookstore press.
- [4] Yang Xuezheng(1991). *on primitive religion*. Yunnan People's publishing house.
- [5]Wu Xiaodong(2002). *Miao totem and myth*. Social science literature press.