

Study on the Characteristics of Patterns of Hubei Yangxin Cloth Paste

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Abstract—Hubei Yangxin Cloth Paste is a national-level intangible cultural heritage, its finished products are handmade, and it is an ancient folk craftsmanship. The unadorned patterns, exaggerated random shapes, traditional composition methods, as well as bright and lively colors of Yangxin cloth paste are endowed with a high artistic value and research value. Through the analysis of the pattern characteristics of Yangxin cloth paste, this paper expresses the longing and pursuit of Yangxin people for new life, interprets the cultural connotation of Yangxin cloth paste, and provides a theoretical reference for the protection and inheritance of Yangxin cloth paste.

Keywords—Yangxin cloth paste; pattern; cultural connotation

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of Yangxin Cloth Paste

Cloth paste, also known as applique, is a form of embroidery. The girls in Yangxin rural area are taught by the elders at the age of twelve or thirteen. They learn to collage and sew, when they are married, they put the leftover materials of the wedding dresses into the husband's family and use the scraps of these clothes to form a pattern of different colors on the black or dark blue fabric backing cloth when they are pregnant. After sticking with the paste, they use the needle thread to make a variety of good-looking children's clothes and toys, also they would send as a gift to friend's family when there is a celebration. The reason for the initial reference of Yangxin cloth paste is the backward productivity and the occluded geographical environment. These objective realities have led to the unpretentious nature of this non-heritage culture. Of course, these cloth pasts are also incompatible with the local folk customs and cultures. Due to the remote location, this kind of craftsmanship embodies the aesthetic taste and simple aesthetic meaning of Yangxin working people.

B. The Origin of Yangxin Cloth Paste

The origin of Yangxin cloth paste is at least two hundred years old inferred from the inheritance pedigree. Because cloth products are difficult to preserve, cloths that have been passed down for a long time are very rare. From the various auspicious patterns that it presents so far, it should come

from the Qing Dynasty. If people take a look at the Chu culture style embodied from the cloth, it is obviously far beyond this time limit. According to the word of mouth of folk craftsmen, at least it has a history of more than 1,500 years. The Yangxin cloth paste presents the black and gold color characteristics of Chu culture. Its pattern shape contains the cultural precipitation of Chu area for thousands of years and the unique thinking mode of Yangxin women. Without sample or drawing, each piece of Yangxin cloth paste has a different aesthetic presentation. The style of Yangxin cloth paste is exaggerated and simple, and the composition is informal. It is the most primitive aesthetic consciousness in China, just like the bold style in Chu culture, from heaven to earth, without limitation but with random combination. The cultural style of Chu culture highlighted by Yangxin cloth paste has no evidence of its origin, but at least it can be asserted that it should be a long-standing folk heritage and the crystallization of the wisdom of Yangxin people.

The pattern of Yangxin cloth paste is not limited to the pattern book. All the works are different, producers made it according to their mind. The patterns are passed down from generation to generation, rough and simple. If asked about the source of these patterns, Yangxin woman will say that this is the form in their minds, which is passed down from the older generation and has been kept in mind. This is actually a reflection of the working people of Yangxin in the primitive farming life. The laborers have integrated the real things in life and the rumors they heard into the cloth paste by virtue of what they have seen and heard, and these motifs have a strong regional culture and auspicious meaning. Since the Yangxin cloth paste is made from the leftover material of the clothes, these leftover cloths have no fixed shape, and these patterns are mixed with various folk crafts, so the finished pattern has few figurative shapes, with more shapes highlighting their characteristics, or it only pursues exaggeration, not for lifelike image but for similar spirit.

C. Types of Yangxin Cloth Paste

Yangxin cloth is rich in types. According to the processed products, there are more than 30 types of practical materials. The contents are mostly animals and plants, mythical characters, beasts and auspicious patterns that are seen every day. In the production, the fine embroidery and numerous patterns form a rich system, from hat to shoe, from

children's clothing to children's toys, from bridal wedding supplies to woman's households, as well as temple futons, condolences and so on. Children's clothing and toys such as practical cloth paste skirt, bibs, various hats, vests, as well as

ornamental cloth balls, flower baskets, animal stickers and so on. As shown in "Fig. 1", there are over a dozen types of bibs found.













Title	Bib- Tiger	Bib- Tiger playing tits	Bib- Shawl with peach and pomegranate pattern	Bib- Celestial peach
Picture				
Title	Bib- Cat playing with butterfly	Bib- Gourd for riches and honour	Bib- Double lions dancing	Bib- Tiger playing with peony
Picture				
Title	Bib- Double chicken with hibiscus	Bib- Phoenix flying and lion dancing	Bib- Copper lock with lotus pattern	Bib- Lion playing with ball
Picture				

Fig. 1. Various children bibs.

II. THE PATTERN CHARACTERISTICS OF YANGXIN CLOTH PASTE

A. Classification of the Patterns of Yangxin Cloth Paste

1) *Character theme*: The traditional cultural elements contained in the graphic style of Yangxin cloth paste embody the cultural connotation of Jingchu. It not only draws on the embroidery patterns of the Chu people, but also shows the informal habits of the Chu people. It has a rich meaning and a wide variety of content systems. For the characters, including mythical characters and opera characters, exaggerated or even distorted styles are used in the single figures of Guanyin, Buddha, Children, Woodcutter, etc., as well as in a combination of multiple figures such as Liu Hai Cuts Firewood, Nezha's Triumph against Dragon King, and Seven Immortals Descend to the World. (see "Fig. 2")



Fig. 2. Fortune Boy.

2) *Animal theme*: Due to the influence of witchcraft custom of Chu people and the relatively closed geographical location of Yangxin, the animal and plant patterns of Yangxin cloth paste normally show the worship of ancient totems. For the auspicious beasts and animals, there are mythical animals such as dragon, phoenix, kylin, etc., and some regular animals with auspicious meaning of their

names such as lion, tiger, bat, carp, magpie, mandarin duck, etc. These single-pattern patterns rarely appear, often it is a combination pattern, such as Dragon and Phoenix, Kylin Sending Children, Carp Jumping Dragon Gate, Tiger Bringing Peace, Lion Playig with Balls, Mandarin Duck Playing in Water and so on. (see “Fig. 3”)



Fig. 3. Lion playing with ball.

3) *Plant theme*: Plant theme, including peach, pomegranate, orange, gourd, date, hawthorn, peony, hibiscus, peach, osmanthus, plum, daffodil, lily, rose, lotus, lotus seedpod, lotus root, lotus leaf, chrysanthemum, valerian, water grass, vines and so on. Most of the plant-based Yangxin cloth paste will not present single plant but a combination together with the animal, such as Fish Playing with Peony, or a combination of Having A Son Early. (see “Fig. 4”)



Fig. 4. Cat playing with peony and butterfly playing with gourd.

4) *Living utensils theme*: Living utensils, including bottle, pearl, gourd, sword, Ruyi, mirror, flower basket, pen, Ruyi knot, old-fashioned square table for eight people, chopsticks, teapot, tobacco bag, flower pot, wind chime, flag, lantern, copper lock, etc. (see “Fig. 5”)



Fig. 5. Lotus copper lock.

5) *Text symbols and other*: The pattern of Yangxin cloth paste is composed of various elements. Different types of cloth paste have different patterns. The pattern of Yangxin cloth paste is hardly repeated. Because it is handmade, there will be a large randomness and freedom, which contains the wisdom of the Yangxin working people; the extra fabrics are different in shapes, and the formation of the cloth paste also shows the aesthetic taste of the Yangxin people. In addition to the main shapes of characters, animals, plants, etc., there will be some words, special symbols and simple decorative geometric patterns.

The words and symbols such as Tai Chi, the eight diagrams, 卍, "寿(Longevity)", "王(King)", "贵(Valuable)", "福(Happiness)", "禄(Money)", "囍(Love)", "吉(Auspicious)", "祥(Luck)", "长命百岁(life of a hundred years)", etc.. In addition, there are some combination patterns, such as the combination of animals and characters, the combination of animals and plants, etc., which reflect the wisdom and aesthetics of the working people of Yangxin. Such as More Happiness-More Children-Long Life, Having A Son Early, Phoenix with Peony, Eight Auspicious Objects and a series of patterns with auspicious meaning.

There are also some bionic patterns, geometric patterns and so on. Auspicious cloud pattern, which is a kind of decorative pattern commonly seen in Yangxin cloth paste, is developed from the ancient Yunlei pattern, in imitation of the cloud form in the sky, embodying a desire to pursue a beautiful and auspicious life. As shown in “Fig. 6”, the auspicious cloud pattern, is made mostly to enrich the picture, representing the meaning of auspiciousness, and as a common decorative pattern in Chinese traditional culture, it is often seen in children's clothes, hats and so on.

Polygonal lines are often used to decorate animal bodies, such as the nose and body of animals, to express the texture or enrich the picture. The lines are usually childlike and unadorned, inheriting the original Chu culture style. As shown in “Fig. 7”, all kinds of Kylin's have their heads composed of polygonal lines, with different shapes to freely change into a new image while retaining their basic

characteristics. Kylin's body is also partially composed of polygonal patterns, such as the head and tail. This is the kylin image of Yangxin people from mouth to mouth, which contains the imagination and aesthetics of different working people.

Parallel lines are generally used in flowers, plants and animals. It is a fringed pattern composed of straight lines or curves. It is mostly used for decoration and to make the picture full. (see "Fig. 8")

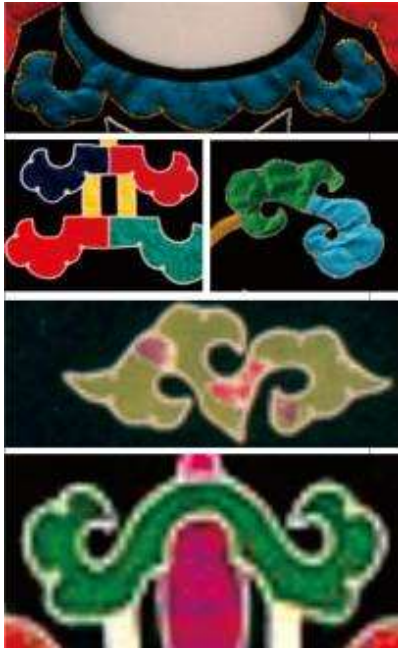


Fig. 6. Auspicious cloud pattern.



Fig. 7. Polygonal pattern.



Fig. 8. Parallel pattern.

B. Patterns Modeling Feature of Yangxin Cloth Paste

1) *Abstract exaggeration*: The modeling of Yangxin cloth paste has distinct characteristics. First of all is the abstract exaggeration of its shape. The commonly used methods of folk art are abstraction and exaggeration, different regions also have their own unique charms. The abstract and exaggerated performance of Yangxin cloth paste is expressed in the abstract exaggeration of a certain feature of the pattern, such as the tiger's head vest in "Fig. 9", the creator's deep impression is the "王(King)" on the forehead and the big eyes like the bronze bell, so in the process of artistic creation, the creator exaggerates the most recognizable part of the face, emphasizes the characteristics of the tiger's head, abstracts the pattern of the head. This is an unconscious behavior, just like the impression of a tiger in childhood is the word "王" at the top of the head, with a large mouth and a thick beard, and the creator apparently exaggerates and abstracts the tiger. This is also a manifestation of plain and simple characteristics, like a child's vague memory of things, not to describe the pattern in detail, but to enlarge its characteristics, which is one of the characteristics of Yangxin cloth paste.



Fig. 9. Tiger's head vest.

2) *Random generality*: The modeling of Yangxin cloth paste is random and general, even the image of two phoenixes in a piece of work is not the same, because the

origin of the cloth paste is subjectively made by the rural women in Hubei, who have no traced picture of the decorative patterns, use the cloth strips of the color and shape near their hand, and do not deliberately find the same pattern, and which is resulted from the local living environment and the culture edification. These patterns are all passed from generation to generation, so the pattern is more random.

During the mouth to mouth inheritance from the ancestors, the phoenix in Yangxin cloth paste cannot be separated from the basic composition, such as the head, neck, body, tail and feet. The modelings of the six phoenixes in “Fig. 10” are all different, but they retain the original features, colorful, like chicken in shape, with colorful long tail, which is presented in every possible way for each phoenix's specific modeling. The phoenix patterns in Yangxin cloth paste are mostly honest and simple, with round posture, which is influenced by the hand-made. The trunk is stiff and straight, and there is no flowing line. Each part of each phoenix has a different shape, for example the phoenix body of some phoenixes is randomly composed of cotton cloth, and that of others are carefully cut into peony flower shapes, which is closely related to personal aesthetic taste; the tails of the phoenix are not the same, some is tailored with fine texture of the feathers, and some is tailored in polygons or strips. No matter what kind of shape these phoenixes are, they are filled with the simple atmosphere of Chu art, which makes people fully feel the characteristics of generalization and randomness.



Fig. 10. Phoenixes.

3) *Childishness*: The modeling of Yangxin cloth paste is very abstract and simple, just like children's paintings; especially the animal pattern, is simplified to highlight the features, and almost has no detailed sketches, such as the kylin in “Fig. 11”, where the kylin’s flowery head, sturdy body, and leafy tail are like the children's inherent impression of kylin. The whole figure is simple and colorful,

and it tends to be childlike. It forms a romance, captures the original Chu charm, and shows the simplicity of the Yangxin people. The tiger wall hanging in “Fig. 12” is also composed of large blocks, with rough eyebrows, informal arms, bowl-shaped tiger mouth; it is colorful and has a generalized graphics, without "perfect" shape, detailed description, but just this kind of abstract and juvenile expression presents the quaint and original features of Yangxin cloth paste, highlighting the childishness.



Fig. 11. Kylin.



Fig. 12. Tiger head wall hanging.

C. The Structure Law of Yangxin Cloth Paste Pattern

1) *Symmetric equalization*: Symmetric equalization is the most common composition form in Chinese embroidery. It can give people a stable, tidy and generous psychological impression. In Yangxin cloth paste patterns, the shape of the tiger head and lion head are usually formed in a symmetrical manner, and the whole pattern will have different colors, but the pattern conforms to such a law, including such combinations as wall hanging 1 and wall hanging 2, which also follow the symmetry principle. The shape of the peony at the bottom of the wall hanging 1 and the shape of the phoenix on both sides are symmetrical; the figure similar to the Eight diagram in the middle is also mirror-symmetrical, and the whole picture presents a balanced aesthetic. The dragon pattern on both ends of the wall hanging 2, and the decorative patterns in the upper middle are symmetrically and evenly arranged, which shows the creative ability and aesthetic taste of Yangxin women. Secondly, for the

balanced composition, the lion patterns of wall hanging 1 and wall hanging 2 are all based on the principle of the same quantity and different shapes. Although the principle of symmetry is not used in all shapes, the whole picture is balanced and full, with the pursuit of visual and psychological balance. (shown in “Fig. 13”, “Fig. 14”)

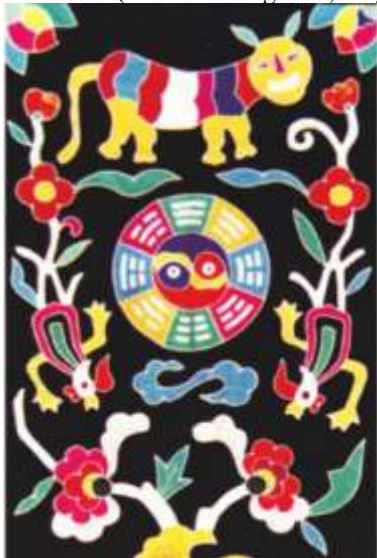


Fig. 13. Wall hanging 1.



Fig. 14. Wall hanging 2.

2) *Repetition form*: Many decorative patterns in Yangxin cloth paste are repeated, such as auspicious cloud pattern and flower pattern, which not only deepens the impression of the viewer, but also makes the work more full and rich. These recurring flower patterns and auspicious

cloud patterns form the law of form beauty, which has a certain impact on people’s psychology and can form a perfectly unified whole. As shown in “Fig. 15”, the characters in the children's vest are placed in the bottom with a repeated translation method, which enhances the festive atmosphere of joy and makes the whole picture have a balanced and calm feeling. The image of the pattern is also randomly embroidered on the vest sleeves and the sides of the chest in a repeating form. The repetition of these ornaments gives a unified aesthetic, each form has a slight change, or is distinguished by different colors, in order to bring unity in changes, the whole shape is full of vitality.



Fig. 15. Eight diagram vest.

3) *Multi-point perspective*: Part of the embroidery in the Yangxin cloth paste is in a flat pattern, with the multi-point perspective method used, including both the focal perspective method and the scatter perspective method, such as this tiger head bib, from which you can both see the front and the back side of the tiger, with its logic not emphasized, and the scatter perspective used to show the shape of the entire tiger. And the kylin-phenix-peony bib is based on the perspective relation of the near big and far small, visually highlighting the peony flower, narrowing the two kyilins and two phoenixes. The peony flower vines grow and fill the whole picture, while the phoenixes and kyilins complement each other. The picture is well-defined and vivid. (see “Fig.16”, “Fig.17”)



Fig. 16. Tiger head bib.



Fig. 17. Bib with kylin-phoenix-peony pattern.

D. Color Personality of Yangxin Cloth Paste Pattern

The color use of Yangxin cloth paste is mainly influenced by the Chu culture. The Chu people favor black and red color. The black has a mysterious and silent feeling, and is resistant to dirt and washable, and when adding the most common blue in ordinary people's life, it formed the main color tune of Yangxin cloth paste. Judging from the pattern of Yangxin cloth paste, the blue and black fabrics with the solid color background can bring out other colors, and the pattern contrast is more intense. For the specific color matching of Yangxin cloth paste, the producers will "apply color according to the type" as followed in traditional painting, and will "choose color from mind", or use the cloth strips what is convenient at hand, with great randomness, which is related to the social environment at the time and the romantic Chu culture. These cloth pastes have been processed by local women, added with a more lively feminine color to highlight the features of Yangxin cloth paste.

In terms of color matching style, the most intuitive feature of Yangxin cloth paste is "black lacquered with golden dots", with scarlet and black as the main tone, which confirms the effect of Chu's art pursuit of "stunning color", deeply influenced by the art of lacquer ware in Chu. The black color of the lacquer ware is used as the base color of Yangxin cloth paste, so the pure black hand-made cotton is selected as the base color, to make the overall appearance of the cloth paste original and magnificent, and the colorful leftover fabrics are used flexibly for combination and color matching, and the color vision system with Chu State's artistic features is inherited, making the cloth paste dignified yet light, decent yet gorgeous.

III. THE CULTURAL CONNOTATION OF YANGXIN CLOTH PASTE

A. The Influence of Regional Culture

Yangxin cloth paste is a good interpretation of the cultural connotation of Jingchu, with generous and informal modeling, bold color application, black lacquer and golden dots, which all are inextricably linked with the geographical location of Yangxin. Yangxin has belonged to Chu since ancient times and is adjacent to Wu, therefore, it has the title of "head of Wu and tail of Chu", and in the relatively remote location and closed environment, it has followed Wu and

Chu cultures well. Judging from the physical appearance of the cloth paste in the Yangxin area, the pattern is primitive and childish, the color is strong and intense, all the cloth paste show a strong sense of Chu style, which is really amazing.

B. The Inheritance of Folk Custom

The raw materials of Yangxin cloth paste are made from local materials and made from the leftover material of the clothes. Due to the economic backwardness, in order to be frugal, durable and washable, the base fabric is mostly black and dark blue. The themes are derived from the everyday life of rural life, and the patterns are mostly from the worship of nature and totem. For example, the tiger head, lion, kylin, phoenix, etc., which often appear in the cloth pastes, are all for expelling of evils. Unmarried women wear delicate shawl ribbons of all kinds of colors, which are ancient customs, in order to marry a good family. The married bride wears a more beautiful shawl, and the bridal room is decorated with a dazzling array of cloth pastes, which fully reflects the inheritance and continuation of the folk culture in Yangxin cloth paste.

C. Pray for Auspicious

The women in the Yangxin area convey their strong emotional sustenance and humanistic feelings with their own needles and threads. After they are pregnant, they made all kinds of children cloth pastes with the leftover materials they brought to husband's family when they got married. From a practical point of view, these children clothes and toys play the vast majority of Xinyang cloth pastes, these are the blessings of a mother to their children, driven by this kind of emotion, the good fortune, the disaster relief, and the good meanings are fully displayed on the cloth pastes. Other practical things in life, such as wall hangings, cushions, and hanging nets, all contain the good wishes of Yangxin women to gain wealth and good fortune, pray for long life and more offspring. Through this local art — Yangxin cloth paste, people can understand the reasons for its vitality and the accumulation of the thoughts, customs and culture of a nation.

IV. CONCLUSION

Yangxin cloth paste is a kind of folk art with both practicability of relief effect and artistry. It inherits the simple and persistent Chu culture style and reflects the industrious and wise Yangxin rural women's pursuit of beauty in a poor life, the yearning for colorful life, the joy of harvest and the happiness of the family. This paper hopes to find out its characteristics and laws through the deep study and analysis of Yangxin cloth paste's patterns, brings corresponding theoretical help to the inheritance and development of Yangxin cloth paste together with its cultural connotation, so that Yangxin cloth paste culture can be carried forward.

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