

Research on Bunu Yao's Clothing

Taking Du'an and Dahua Yao Autonomous County as Example

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Abstract—The Yao is an important part of the 56 nationalities in China, and Bunu Yao is an important branch of Yao, mainly distributed in the region of Hechi, Guangxi. With the accelerated modernization process nowadays, Bunu Yao people still maintain the customs and traditions of their nation, which makes great contributions to the inheritance of the folk culture of the Chinese nation. Because the geographical location of residents is mainly in the remote mountain area, the Bunu Yao's clothing has its own features, while maintaining some similarities with the clothing of other minorities in the region at the same time.

Keywords—*Bunu Yao; national clothing*

I. COLOR AND FLORAL DESIGN OF THE BUNU YAO CLOTHING

A. Living Environment

Because of the migration of nationalities in history, most Yao people lived in the remote mountainous areas that are far away from the real world. The Bunu Yao in Duan and Dahua are the important branch of Yao nationality. In these areas, the main source of living materials is from farming, however, the tillable land is extremely rare. There is an old saying "90% mountain and 10% land", which has lasted until now. Furthermore, the limited land is "Red Earth" with strong acidity and low nutrient, which is one of the famous low productive soils. On this kind of soil, only such crops like corn and sweet potato can be planted, it is rarely possible to plant other vegetables. Such living conditions made the lives of Bunu Yao people very hard.

B. Color of Bunu Yao's Clothing

The clothing of each nation has innumerable links with history, culture and geographical location of the residents. Through the long times fitting together with the natural and cultural environment, the national clothing constantly adapted to the objective environment and developed into the mature clothing style that we see today.

The Bunu Yao people lived in the remote mountains where it is difficult to living. The hard farming life throughout the whole year has become a part of their daily lives. In the meantime, the Dayao Mountain in the Duan and Dahua Yao Autonomous County is mainly lack of water. The water supplies for production and daily life are from rain. In order to adapt to this kind of life, people made the

background color of their clothing into black, which is durable of dirt and easy to keep it clean and tidy. On the other hand, summer in the Dayao Mountain is cool and winter is cold. Influence by the local Zhuang minority people, the Bunu Yao people lived in the ventilated rail constructions, which can keep away the rain but not the wind. Therefore, to make the background color of the cloth into black could better absorb the heat of the sun. At the same time, the low profile, grave and simplicity of black coincide with the tolerance and plain of the Bunu Yao People's characteristics.

The clothing of Bunu Yao People in the early stage was mainly plain black cloth and trousers. Along with the improving of the overall social living standards, the Bunu Yao people began to pursue the enrichment of spiritual life, which was reflected in the clothing "Fig. 1". They found that the local natural dye indigo can made the cloth into different colors through the changing of the stickiness, the times of dyeing and the period of the cloth into the dye each time in the process of cloth dyeing. Black and black blue are the two commonly used colors.

According to the Yao minority tradition, people are fond of the five colored clothing. On the black background of Bunu Yao clothing, parts like the collar, slopping lapel, cuffs, hems and trouser legs are decorated with five colored lace to meet the aesthetics of the nation. The matching of the color has its special meanings. Take lace for example, red, yellow and green are used for the children to wish a healthy and strong growth; red, blue and yellow are used for the middle aged people to expect for a bright future; black, red and white are used for the old people to demonstrate the noble character and high prestige.

C. Floral Designs of Bunu Yao Clothing

Floral Design is not a necessary element of clothing; however, almost all the traditional clothing of each nation has some sort of decorated pattern. After research and analysis, it is known that the parts decorated with patterns are those parts easy to be worn out. The floral designs can help to reduce the wearing and prolong the service time of the cloth. In addition, when the material life is satisfied in a certain degree, people have spare time to do some needle work to beautify their lives. Floral designs in the clothing also reflect the aesthetic pursuit and cultural connotation of the nation, which are the distinguishing feature of the nation in difference with other nation or branch.

On the black background of the clothing, parts like the collar, sloping lapel, cuff, hems and trouser legs are decorated with five colored lace, mostly in geometrical shape, simple and bright, conforming to the characteristics of Bunu Yao People. The garment pattern of Bunu Yao clothing is mainly of lace, with double cross star pattern as the major element “Fig. 1”, “Fig. 2”, and some geometrical shapes like square and long strip. On different parts, the arrangement and combination of the double cross star pattern are different, such as successive type, symmetric type, rectangle with various width, etc.. There are two schools about the origin of the double cross star pattern. One school said that the pattern represents the bright star in the sky; another said that it represents grains, which is the infinite longing for ample food and clothing of the people. In Duan and Dahua, besides the double cross star pattern, there is another type of pattern called simplified double cross star pattern, which is cross lace. Even though the simplified double cross star pattern seems only with one less line, several steps are reduced when made it “Fig. 3”. Bunu Yao people have been in the low level of productivity for a very long time, and suffered from the invasion of the strong cultural forces. They were eager to keep their own cultural tradition, while made certain changes because of the helpless reality. The simplified double cross star pattern kept the national connotation of the traditional double cross star pattern in cultural significance, but reduced the time and cost of cotton thread in a large scale, and it was more tolerable and simple.

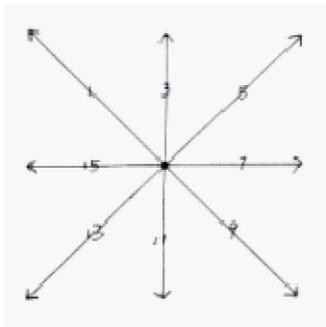


Fig. 1. Right side stitch of the traditional double cross star pattern

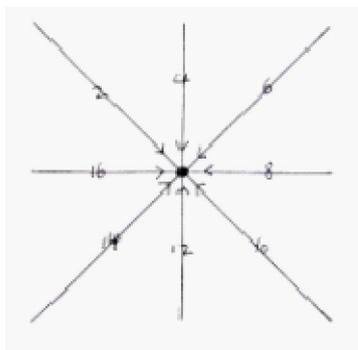


Fig. 2. Back stitch of the traditional double cross star pattern

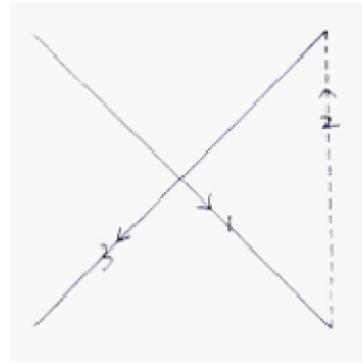


Fig. 3. Back stitch of the simplified double cross star pattern (Drawn by the author)

II. STYLE OF THE BUNU YAO CLOTHING

There are only differences between male and female costumes in Bunu Yao Clothing, no difference between old and young. The clothing mainly includes coat, trousers, shoes, and headwear and so on. From the wearing occasions, there are embroidered splendid dress and casual daily wear. The difference lies in the style of the coat, while the trousers are all wide straight-leg pants, same for male and female. Outside the trousers of the female, there is a 25 cm long pleated skirt, tie on the waist to keep the trousers from falling. “Fig. 4” “Fig. 5”



Fig. 4. Splendid dress of Bunu Yao people



Fig. 5. Casual wear of Bunu Yao people (Shooting by the author)

A. Female Clothing of Bunu Yao

The coat of the female Bunu Yao splendid dress is long sleeve cardigan, similar with the Han costumes' right overlapping part. Next to the right underarm, there are two buttons made by strips. The collar is round neck line mandarin collar, 1-2 cm high. The collar, slopping lapels and cuffs are decorated with golden strips in different color and width. Usually, there are 1-2 strips in the collar and slopping lapels, less than 3 cm wide; 8-10 in the cuffs, total width of 12cm. Because these strips look like the rail constructions, so it is called rail garment.

The length of the splendid female dress is only to the navel, and the trousers are high waist wide-legged pants, with decorations of strips on the bottom. In the waist, there is a pleated skirt of 30 cm long, to keep the trousers from falling. The upper part of the pleated skirt is many pleats sew by the hand stitch, and the lower part dispersed naturally. When dressing the pleated skirt, two long Haxi should be dressed around the waist. By winding the Haxi for two rounds, the four ends of the two Haxi, with lace on them, will be under the bottom. After dressing these, an 80 cm long apron should be added to the waist, cover the waist to under the knees. The design of three layers of cloth, waist of trousers, pleated skirt and apron muffle around the waist aimed to fight against the cloudy and cold climate in the high mountain region, which will better protect the lower abdomen of women. This is one of the reasons that Bunu Yao women rarely suffered dysmenorrheal or other gynecological diseases.

In comparison, the daily casual wear of Bunu Yao women is much simpler, with coat and trousers, no rail decoration. The background cloth is mainly of three colors, black, black blue and dark blue.

B. Male Clothing of Bunu Yao

In comparison, the male clothing of Bunu Yao women is much simpler. The coat is still long sleeve cardigan, buttoned by four buttons, no cover on the pocket, and the length is to the crotch. The trousers are the same as the female, tied with a long cloth stripe on the waist. The reason for the simplicity of male cloth mainly lies in the fact that the most Bunu Yao men cherish women very much, taking the responsibility of all the dirtiest or hardest jobs. Therefore, the clothing of male was durable for dirt and simple, and the clothing of female began to be colorful with the development of material life.

C. Headwear of Bunu Yao

The headwear of Bunu Yao is composed of Haxi, silver hairpin, silver flower, beads and white headscarf. In Bunu Yao, there is a tradition of wearing a white headscarf in native cloth whether male or female. The headscarf is usually two meters long, 30-40 cm wide, with embroidery pattern on the two sides and tassels on the sewing line. After winding the headscarf, the embroidery pattern will just be in the forehead. The headscarf of males has a different type like lambdoidal suture, grand wheel, winding flattop, etc..The women always comb a bun before the headscarf. The most

precious is the Haxi. The whole suit of Bunu Yao clothing has 4 same Haxi, two on the waist and two on the head.

Haxi is fine and beautiful, made of black or dark blue native cloth, 6-10 cm wide and 2 m long. The two ends of Haxi embroiders with the double cross star pattern of red, yellow and white, and 12 colorful cotton threads stitches on the edge evenly, representing the beautiful life in 12 months. It is said that the pure color cloth in the middle of Haxi represents the Haxi River, and the two sides are stars. Bunu Yao people use Haxi to express their longing for happiness and pursuit for the bright future "Fig. 6" "Fig. 7".



Fig. 6. Bunu Yao Haxi (Shooting by the author)



Fig. 7. Young people Wearing Haxi (From Hechi life website)

D. Shoes of Bunu Yao People

Like many minorities, Bunu Yao people in Duan and Dahua have their own tradition of making shoes. No matter male or female, old or young, they all prefer the native cloth shoes made by their own family, walking on the red earth day after day. The sole of Bunu Yao shoes is made of 5-6 pairs of insoles, and the vamp is made by black or dark blue native cloth. Some clever and skillful young ladies also may add some lace to her wedding shoes. Made after match the feet, adding the cloth sole, these shoes are very light and comfortable, receiving the welcome of the whole group.

III. MAKING SKILLS OF BUNY YAO CLOTHING

The ability to make a nation's clothing best reflects the artistic skill of the nation and the feeling of people toward

life. The Bunu Yao clothing combined dyeing, tailor and sew, and embroidery together, containing profound national flavor.

A. Dyeing

Before liberation, Bunu Yao people mashed the plants to get the juice, and paint the juice onto the cloth. After continuous trying and improvement, they began to boil the mixture of plants and lime with boiled water, painted the mixture onto the cloth when getting thick, making the dye immerse into yarns in a high temperature. In this way, the color of the cloth is more even, and the color fastness is higher.

B. Tailor and Sew

Like many traditional costumes, the Bunu Yao clothing is in plane structure, with simple straight cutting. When cutting, the cloth is a cross structure took the front and back midcourt line as the center axis, and the shoulder-sleeve line as the level. The clothing can be tiled in a horizontal level. It is better to use the whole cloth, mainly cutting in to rectangle. There is much space in costumes cutting in this way, unfit to the body, and looked very loose. The coat of Bunu Yao clothing is straight collar with slopping lapels. When tiled, the right and left fronts face with each other. When dressed, the two crossed and covered in some parts, forming the slopping lapels. The trousers are made of four same rectangles, with no design of the crotch and waist, wide and orderly. The clothing was all hand sewed. The commonly used stitches are interlock stitching, back stitching and willow stitching.

C. Embroidery

The embroidery of Bunu Yao is lace. According to the historical material, the lace of Yao group has been popular before the Han Dynasty. With tight layout, elegant pattern and accurate stitch, the embroidery of Bunu Yao has high collection value. Therefore, Mr. Shen Congwen, researcher of clothing, praised the lace of Yao group as the first class lace in the world. The lace of Bunu Yao is made in the native cloth, embroidered several small cross with colored threads to form certain pattern. There are cross pattern and double cross star pattern in the embroidery of Bunu Yao.

IV. ACCESSORY OF BUNU YAO

There are many kinds of accessories for Bunu Yao people. However, the Bunu Yao people in Duan and Dahua have been struggling to afford things for themselves for a very long time. Most of their efforts were dedicated into production, putting aside the pursuit of spiritual aesthetics. The accessories are only a silver bracelet, beads and smoke pipe, etc.

A. Silver Bracelet and Necklace

The Bunu Yao ladies always have all the silver bracelets with them, mostly on hands, and a small number at the back of waist. These bracelets are mainly smooth or twisting round. Even on the bracelet, the simple Bunu Yao people

rarely made complicated pattern. The reason lies in their characteristics and the influence of productive level.

Bunu Yao people regarded the moon god as the god. They believed that moon is the incarnation of Miluotuo, the first ancestor of Bunu Yao people. In order to commemorate the first ancestor, the Bunu Yao women in Duan and Dahua wear the moon shape smooth silver necklace on their neck, keeping the ancestor in mind. Different with other branches of Yao group, which necklace is silver full circle, the necklace of Duan and Dahua is connected by cotton stripes next to the neck. That is to say, only a large part of necklace is made of silver. According to the local old people, this is because during the migration of the four major family names, the necklace was cut in a very small part in order to get food.

B. Beads

Colorful beads and silver necklace form comparison with the dark coat, adding special grace to the Bunu Yao clothing. In the beginning, the beads begin by boiling, drying in the sun and removing the peel of the plant seeds, painted white beads with color and then string. Beads made by the natural material are easily to be affected with damp, became mildewed and damaged by worms. So they are replaced by plastic beads. The beads of Bunu Yao people are usually made of 8-10 single beads, hanging naturally below the chest and above the belly "Fig. 8".



Fig. 8. Beads of Bunu Yao people

C. Smoke Pipe

Smoke pipe is the accessory the Bunu Yao men and women are fond of. Usually, ladies tie the smoke pipe, knife and other silver accessories in the waist. In festival, when meet the gentlemen they love, the Bunu Yao ladies will take out the cigarettes in the smoke pipe, and send to the men "Fig. 9". Therefore, the silver smoke pipe is also called the love token between Bunu Yao men and women.



Fig. 9. Smoke Pipe of Bunu Yao people (Shooting by the author)

V. CONCLUSION

Bunu Yao is an important branch of Yao group, and its clothing is also a precious treasure in the traditional culture of the Chinese nation. In the unification of multiple histories, Bunu Yao people inevitably lived together with people of other groups, which exerted influences between clothing. With the accelerated modernization process nowadays, how to protect the splendid culture is an important subject of the whole society. This is not only related to the carrying forward of traditional culture, but also the responsibilities we shoulder for our ancestors.

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