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ECOLOGICAL DESIGN CONCEPT IN TRADITIONAL CHINESE TEXTILE CRAFTS: AN EXAMPLE OF THE YAO ETHNIC GROUP

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The traditional clothing of the Yao ethnic group in China has always been characterized by a strong ecological awareness of protecting the environment, conserving resources, and eliminating excess textiles. Through their daily actions, the Yao people embody the concept of reducing waste, using old materials for new purposes, and making the most of resources. These ideas reflect the Yao people's advocacy for a frugal, green, and healthy lifestyle, which aligns with the current international trend of ecological design. Therefore, studying this traditional concept can provide valuable references and guidance for current design practices.

Key words: *Traditional Textile Crafts; Ecological Design; Chinese Yao Ethnic Group; Sustainable Development; Design Value.*

INTRODUCTION

The Yao people have been influenced by their natural experiences and ecological practices in the process of clothing selection, production, use, and development, with a primary consideration for practicality and ecological factors of clothing materials [1]. As a migrating ethnic group, the Yao people are distributed in the southern mountainous areas of China. There is a Chinese saying that "there are no mountains without Yao people in the Nanling Mountains, high mountain Yao, half-mountain Miao, and Han people living on the plains, while the Zhuang and Dong people live in mountain basins." Among the Gaoshan Yao people in Hezhou, Guangxi, women's clothing is usually accompanied by a large embroidered apron on the chest [2]. This kind of apron is thick and durable, reducing wear and tear on the body and clothing during mountain labor. Among the Baiqu Yao people in Nandan, Guangxi, there is a method of making clothes by "folding cloth". This method does not require cutting the fabric, and the pants can be formed by folding [3]. Even if there is wear and tear during use, it can be refolded and reused, which is in line with the concept of sustainable development.



PURPOSE

The aim of this study is to focus on exploring the frugal, green, civilized, and healthy lifestyle and wisdom accumulated by the Yao ancestors, in order to discover the concept of sustainable development and ecological design in Yao clothing and apply these concepts to design practices. Through such research, we can have a better understanding and excavation of the positive role of Yao clothing in ecological textile crafts, and provide deeper knowledge and references for design practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research has found that Yao clothing is unique to the Yao ethnic group. From an aesthetic point of view, it is the product of the Yao people's cognition, pursuit, creation, and worship of beauty. As the Yao people are a mountainous ethnic group, their aesthetics have obvious mountainous ethnic characteristics, demonstrated by the use of natural materials and simple shapes. Yao clothing usually adopts five colors: green (blue), white, red, black, and yellow, and the fabrics are often made using methods such as indigo dyeing and wax printing (fig. 1, 2).



Fig. 1. Yao costumes in Hezhou



Fig. 2. Baiqu Yao Folded Pants

Embroidery is commonly used to decorate the chest, back, cuffs, trouser legs, and waist of the clothes to beautify the overall appearance. At the same time, different branches of the Yao people have different preferences for materials and colors. The traditional dyeing method (fig.3) used for Yao brocade creates a concave-convex texture on the surface, with mostly red, white, and yellow colors. Among the Baiqu Yao people in Nandan, Guangxi, they are skilled in embroidery and breed a local species of silkworm called "golden silkworm". They use a unique method to collect silk, which involves placing the silkworms that are spinning silk on a smooth wooden board and allowing them to spin freely. When the silk layers accumulate to form a cloth, they can obtain a whole piece of silk fabric.



In addition, the traditional handmade production method of Yao clothing involves many complex steps, including preparing materials, weaving cloth, dyeing, embroidery, cutting, and embellishing. These steps may require dozens of procedures, especially for ceremonial clothing used in weddings, which may take several years to complete.



Fig. 3. Traditional Resin Dyeing in Baiku Yao Ethnic Group

CONCLUSIONS

The ecological design concepts in traditional Chinese Yao textile crafts mainly include using every part, repurposing old materials, making the most of resources, and using natural materials. These concepts are accompanied by rich shapes and patterns, colorful color combinations, mysterious auspicious patterns, unique headwear accessories, artistic imagination, and cultural functions that carry moral and ethical values. These are all valuable cultural resources that modern design can continuously draw from.

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