



Study on the Fish Patterns of Rongjiang Miao Batiks

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Abstract

The history of Miao batik has a long history, and the Miao people, who do not have words, use batik patterns to write their history, which is why Miao clothing is called "history on the body". With the different geographical distribution of the Miao people, the narrative of batik patterns also has its own characteristics. Based on field research, interviews with folk artists and relevant literature review, this paper analyzes the themes and symbolic connotations of Rongjiang Miao batik fish motifs, reveals the historical and cultural connotations of Rongjiang batik motifs, and summarizes the visual aesthetic characteristics of Miao fish motifs. Another focus of this paper is to interpret the formal beauty of the patterns in depth by using the aesthetic analysis methods of compositional elements, compositional forms, laws of beauty and aesthetic features.

Keywords: Rongjiang; batik; fish pattern analysis; composition analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The fish pattern is a very common pattern in Rongjiang Miao batik. As a representative pattern of the Miao people, the fish pattern symbolizes the spirit of the national culture, and also implies the good wishes of the Miao people for life, and is an important part of the research on the philosophical and aesthetic values of the Miao patterns (He Tong, 2022; Pan Min, 2022).

Fish has an important position in the history of the Miao people, and it is an indispensable dish for major festivals such as the "Year of the Miao" or for entertaining honored guests. It is similar to the metaphor of "fish" in ancient China. Fish is a metaphor for women, which means "reproduction", "sex" and "propagation", and later symbolizes wealth and good fortune. The fish is a metaphor for women, symbolizing "reproduction", "sex", and "reproduction", and later symbolizing wealth and good fortune, as well as a good fortune for every year. In addition, it is recorded in the Hmong poems that the fish fed the ancestors of the Hmong, including the butterfly mother. "Fish farming in rice paddies has become a traditional habit of the Miao people, who use fish to weed the crops and provide manure for the growth of crops. During the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China, the Miao people who moved to Rongjiang from Jianhe and Taijiang used fishing as their business. Since the "Ga et Ha" branch of Rongjiang lived in the mountains or mountain beams, depending on the mountains and the water, they often used triangular patterns as fish scales in the batik patterns, and used awn patterns to express the fins of the fish and the posture of the fish when swimming, and linear stripes such as the curly grass pattern appeared as the fish's whiskers, which had a strong narrative character. The combination of fish and bird motifs in the Yungjiang Birds of Prey Clothes, the meaning of "fish and bird presenting auspiciousness", "bird holding a fish" records the peaceful picture of the sea and land, and

the combination of fish motifs and sun motifs in the two-square continuous motifs expresses the meaning of "symbiosis between the sea and the sky". The combination of fish pattern and sun pattern in two consecutive patterns expresses the meaning of "symbiosis between sea and sky". Fish motifs are often combined with bird motifs and butterflies. The typical fish and bird composite pattern represents fertility worship and is a pattern that glorifies vitality (Yuan Dan, 2015), and also links it to human gender, implying conjugal love and beauty (Hu Xiaobing, 2015).

1.2 Research Questions

1. How to analyze the styling characteristics of Rongjiang Miao batik?
2. How to analyze the fish pattern characteristics of Rongjiang batik?

1.3 Research Objectives







1. To analyze the modeling characteristics of Rongjiang Miao batiks.
2. To analyzing the Fish Pattern Characteristics of Rongjiang Batik.

2. DATA ANALYSIS

2.1 Styling Analysis

As can be seen from Rongjiang Miao batik works, its modeling characteristics are more flexible and changeable, and the basic composition can be divided into two kinds, one is to use dots, lines, and surfaces to form geometric patterns, forming a pattern more regular, abstract expression of the overall shape of the fish, and the other is a more realistic expression of the fish's scales, fins, whiskers, and so on. The fish pattern with abstracted modeling features mainly omits the relatively complex forms and retains its main implication features. The body of the fish is represented by two crossed arcs, omitting the fins, tail, eyes and other parts of the fish. The Miao people generalize the fish according to their knowledge and observation of the fish in their lives, deform and simplify the fish form, and express it in the form of dots, lines, and surfaces in an abstract and refined way (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Realistic and Abstract Stylized Fish Patterns

Realistic modeling			
Abstract Modeling			

Source: Author's own photograph

The fish shaped by the ancestors of the Miao people are round and fat, and usually appear alone or in combination with other animal and plant motifs. The form can be divided into single fish pattern and composite fish pattern, often expressed by realistic, abstract and surreal techniques, with diverse shapes and rich meanings (Table 1.2).

The fish pattern with composite features is mostly composed of a combination of many kinds of plants and animals, and this pattern structure is more widely used among the Danzhai Miao. Since ancient times, the Miao have made a living by fishing and hunting, and people have created new patterns by integrating the worship of sacred animals and creatures with the scenes in their lives, and re-created many fish motifs in line with their own aesthetic sense. Therefore, the fish motifs with composite modeling features are more vivid and interesting, rich in pictures and stories, and diverse in style.

Table1.2 Composite fish pattern

Fish & Plant	Fish & Sun	Fish & Sickle,	Fish & Bird
			

Source: Author's own photograph

2.2 Characterization of fish patterns

① Fish eye features

Fish eyes in fish pattern modeling is often a point, two points, in some abstract modeling of fish patterns directly omit the fish eyes, only to retain the shape of the fish (Table 1.3). Fish patterns in which one dot is the eye are usually blue dots on a white background or white dots on a blue background. Two eyes stylized fish pattern, the eyes are simple dots or dots coat circle. According to the author's collection of pictures and data observation found that the fish patterns appear alone is often an eye shape, and the fish patterns appear in pairs are mostly two fish eyes.

Abstract point of feeling is relative, it is based on the size and location of the picture to decide, the fish eye in the whole pattern occupies the smallest area, naturally regard it as a point, it plays a role in positioning. The fish eye as a positioning point and then outline the outer outline of the fish, fish scales, fish tail and other patterns.

Table 1.3 Characteristics of fisheye

One eye	two eyes	no eyes
		

Source: Author's own photograph

② Characteristics of Fish Tail

According to the author's comparison of Rongjiang batik fishtail pictures, the fishtail patterns are divided into four categories. One is the scissor-like fishtail. (As shown in Table

4.5, it is shaped like scissors and gives the fishtail a flowing rhythm in the form of lines, which is simple and graphic. There is another kind of not only carved out the form of the fish tail, even the veins on the tail of the fish detailed with a short line carving, pay attention to the treatment of the fish pattern sparse and dense, the overall fish pattern lines carved smoothly, the fish tail looks more delicate and realistic. The second type is the fan-shaped fishtail, which is jagged in shape, and the inside of the fishtail is drawn with fine lines to follow the trend of the fishtail and the meridians, emphasizing the sense of fineness of the fishtail. The third category is a unique Miao fishtail depiction, the Miao people are good at discovering the beautiful things around them, and they are integrated into their own design patterns, plant patterns and fishtail pattern articulation, fully demonstrating the rich imagination of the Miao people, a or a tree root rattan and wood strips plus floral pattern to form a new fishtail modeling. The fourth type of fishtail is the contracted pointed fishtail, in which the body of the fish becomes thinner and thinner from the tail until it overlaps (Table 1.4).

Table1.4 Characteristics of fish tail

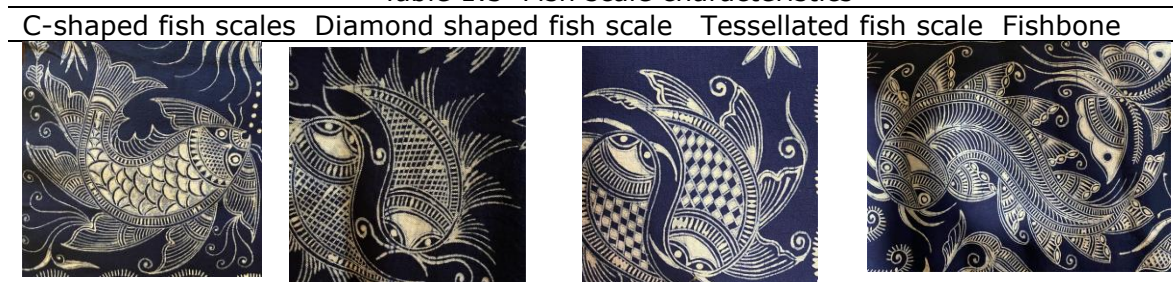


Source: Author's own photograph

③Features of fish scales

Among fish bodies are mostly depicted with a single line to show the outline of the shape, and the style of fish scales in the center can be roughly divided into four categories. The first category The fish scale is the simplest white treatment (Table 1.5), which only uses fine lines to depict the outer contour of the fish, and the overall feeling of the undecorated fish scale is more abstract, which focuses on the expression of the fish's shape. The second type of embroidery in the fish scales to the "C" shape sequential arrangement of the entire fish abdomen, the picture effect is neat and not rigid, giving people a feeling of fullness. The third type is the net-shaped fish scale style, which is the diamond pattern formed by the crossing of double lines. There is also a fish scale is based on the diamond-shaped fish scale to increase the contrast between light and dark, modeling is very similar to the checkerboard grid. The fourth type is to use fish bones instead of fish scales. This kind of fish bone appears in the form of symmetry, first split the fish into two halves by the central axis, and then decorate it with arcs, which have the same direction and interval.

Table 1.5 Fish scale characteristics



Source: Author's own photograph

In Rongjiang Miao batik, many of the fish motifs will be densely decorated with dots inside

the body (Figure 1.1), which is also an abstract expression of the roe of the fish, implying that the fish has many children inside its belly, showing the Miao people's worship of the fish's exuberant reproductive ability, and conveying the meaning of transmitting the family's name to the next generation and the prosperity of the nation.



Figure 1.1 Fish pattern
 Source: Author's own photograph

④ Characteristics of fish fins

The fin is an indispensable part of the Hmong fish pattern. It is not only because it has the function of determining the direction and maintaining the balance. It is also the most distinctive mark that distinguishes it from the fish patterns of other ethnic groups. The expression of the fins in the Miao fish pattern is also rich and varied. The author classifies them into three categories (Table 1.6). One is the rough jagged fins, in terms of its connotation, this pattern is influenced by the concept of Miao witchcraft, and the Miao people decorate their favorite auspicious objects with a bit of fierce colors to satisfy their inner desire for evil spirits and disasters. The fins are divided into two directions: up and down. The upward-facing fins represent the fish moving forward in the water, while the downward-facing fins represent the fish stopping or braking in the water. The Miao people have skillfully expressed the function of the fins in embroidery images. There is another kind of fin pattern that turns this jagged shape into a rounded shape, similar to the water wave pattern, which is sketched along the back of the fish and is half-open, and this pattern is mostly found on children's bibs, so the image is lovely and vivid. There is also a simple triangular fin pattern that resembles a bird spreading its wings in an attempt to fly, and all of these fin shapes are symbiotic with natural organisms. The third type of fins is based on the second type of fins, with the addition of rattan and flower motifs, with the same symbolism as the addition of plant motifs at the tail of the fish.

Table 1.6 Characteristics of the fins

Serrated fins	Arcuate fins	Vegetative fins
		

Source: Author's own photograph

⑤ Characteristics of Fish Whiskers

Although there are various forms of fish whiskers in Rongjiang Miao fish motifs, their common point is that they all appear in the form of faces or change into different shapes in the form of thick lines, which exaggerate the image of fish whiskers in real life. According to the author's summary, it is divided into three categories. The first category is the simple fish whiskers in the shape of "eight", with simple and smooth thick lines that look particularly rough. The fish's whiskers start from the fish's head and spread outward, and

the direction of the whiskers is the same as the direction of the fish's swimming, as if it has a feeling of rushing out of the water. The second type is the abstracted curly grass type, similar to the butterfly's tentacles, which also extends outward from the fish's head, but the fish whiskers curl inward at the end, resembling curly grass, which makes the picture look richer. In the third category, the fish whiskers are replaced by the images of leaves and stamens of plants. These are highly decorative and emphasize the expression of meaning rather than the realism of form (Table 1.7).

Table 1.7 Characteristics of fish whiskers

"Eight" type fish whiskers	Curly grass type fish whiskers	Vegetable pattern whiskers
		

Source: Author's own photograph

2.3 Component characterization

Rongjiang fish pattern graphics have rich cultural connotations, forming the unique artistic style of the Miao people, we will find that these Miao fish pattern graphics are always reflected in the shadow of plane composition, based on traditional graphics, composition focuses on the study of pure form and pure modeling elements, and introduces a large number of logical concepts (Pang Lei, 2012). We can understand composition as the mathematics of art design, which focuses on the order (neat and orderly arrangement) and rhythm (repetition and change generated by the law) expressed by these abstract symbols and their simple geometric forms. The fish pattern graphics in the layout of the organization of the form is basically an even number of appearances, which is related to their reverence for the good intentions of pairs, they will be a complete fish graphics, the way to repeat the layout of the new composition of the form, there are symmetrical, reflective, contrasting type. There are symmetrical, reflective and contrasting patterns. Figures and figures have a good echo of each other, or happy, or look forward to, giving people a sense of intimacy and order. Repetition composition is the easiest form and method of composition in plane composition (Wang Wuxi, 2011), and this basic type of repetition creates a sense of harmony in the picture, and each kind of repetition is like a beat in a melody. Repetition is generally categorized into bone repetition and basic shape repetition, and in batik and paper-cutting, it appears as a basic shape repetition. In batik and paper-cutting, a basic shape is repeated. The effect of this repetition varies according to the size of the basic shape. In Fig. 1.2, several fish are connected at the head and tail, which gives a sense of movement of the fish swimming.

Another common type of repetition in the fish motifs of the Miao people of Qiandongnan is directional repetition. The basic shape of the fish is arranged repeatedly according to changes in direction. Figure 1.3 shows the fish repeated along a circle. Figure 1.4 also shows a fish that follows a circle. The picture is simple, but the fish in the picture give the impression that they are swimming in the water, showing the beauty of a lively and continuous order.

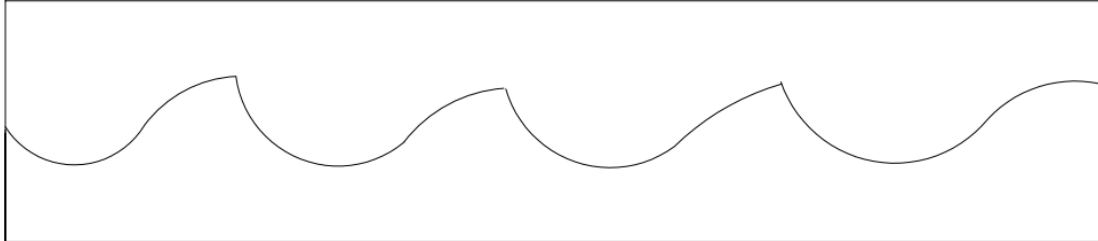


Fig.1.2 continuous composition
Source: Author's own photograph

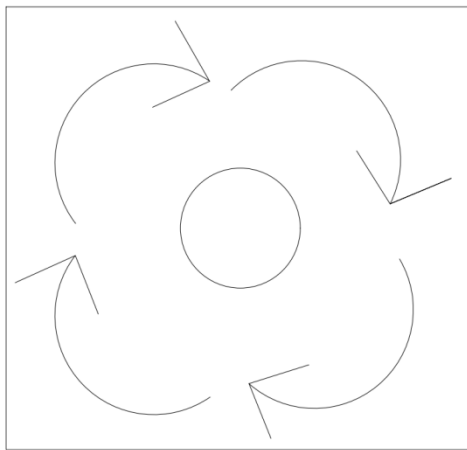


Fig.1.3 continuous composition
Source: Author's own photograph

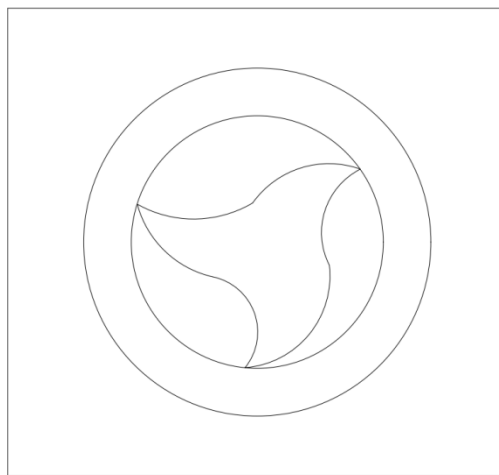


Fig1.4 continuous composition
Source: Author's own photograph

SUMMARY

In addition to the rich connotation of Rongjiang batik patterns, its artistic form is also worth



studying. This chapter provides an in-depth interpretation of Rongjiang batik fish patterns through the method of aesthetic analysis, interpreting the formal beauty of the patterns from the constituent elements of the patterns, the form of the patterns, and the law of beauty, respectively, and analyzing the beauty of the unique emotion and form of the Rongjiang batik fish patterns through the aesthetic characteristics. In order to reflect the aesthetic value of Zhai batik patterns and provide a theoretical basis for the application of patterns.

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