

# Dragons are Auspicious: Interpretation and Application of Miao Dragon Pattern Samples in Southeast Guizhou

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**Abstract:** *The reason why the clothing modeling in Southeast Guizhou is more abundant and colorful than other ethnic groups is because of the extensive use of pattern patterns. Now, the dragon pattern in Miao costumes is taken as the representative object. The dragon pattern is of great significance in Miao decoration. It directly points to the two roots of totem worship and ancestor worship. This paper will study the totem worship of dragon pattern and the ideology represented by dragon pattern from the perspective of semiotics and design, excavate the aesthetic value contained in dragon pattern in Miao costumes, explore the innovative application of dragon pattern in costumes, show the beauty of the combination of science and technology and art, and reflect the harmonious relationship between man and nature. Make the new design mentality for the dissemination Qiandongnan Miao nationality characteristic culture.*

**Keywords:** *Miao dragon pattern; design methodology; totem worship; innovative applications*

The Miao nationality is a nation with a long history and strong vitality. In the long historical process, although there are ancient songs handed down orally, they are rarely formed in paper. However, it is precisely because of the lack of words that the graphics of the Miao nationality are extremely rich and diverse, from word of mouth to ceremony, from central singing and dancing to shaping clothing. These channels not only provide the Miao people with carriers and scenes that can be created and perceived, but also give the Miao culture the guidance and development of moral spirit. This unique understanding of human survival on the natural environment has become a new content for people to interpret the meaning of life, making the Miao costume patterns beyond the general meaning and have profound historical and cultural meanings. There are many kinds of Miao pattern patterns, such as dragon pattern, horn pattern, plant pattern, animal pattern, geometric pattern and so on. This paper attempts to select the dragon pattern in Miao pattern through literature research method and analysis comparison method, feel the significance of dragon pattern in Miao pattern, and try to explore the innovative application of dragon pattern in clothing.

As far as the significance of dragon pattern is concerned, it not only reflects the spiritual connotation of the miao people, which is an important reason for the transmission of the miao spirit from generation to generation, but also reflects the communication relationship between the miao individuals and the natural environment in their living environment. From the perspective of social ecology, the dragon pattern of miao nationality refers to the two psychological roots of totem worship and ancestor worship, and these psychological activities are derived from the artistic and cultural activities and daily life creation of Miao people. The function of Miao pattern in recording national cultural facts is far more than aesthetic significance, and dragon pattern can best represent the spiritual connotation and development process of Miao pattern.

## 1. Miao dragon image analysis

The dragon does not exist in real life, is created by the folk people daydream of auspicious things, later dragon image was requisitioned by the royal aristocracy, become a symbol of royal power, and gradually become a symbol of the Chinese nation. The dragon also has a supreme position in the Hmong culture, in order to commemorate the slaughter dragon hero, pray for good weather, Qiandongnan Hmong also dictated 'Dragon Boat Festival legend'. As a totem of the Chinese nation, the dragon is a process of image experience from simple to complex. From the jade dragon in the Hongshan culture to the majestic dragon image in the Tang Dynasty, to the dragon pattern image on the blue and white porcelain in the

Yuan Dynasty, which is 'small head, slender body, a few claws', strong and flexible, full of vitality, and finally to the Qing Dynasty, the dragon's appearance began to become peaceful and more secular. The change of dragon pattern image reflects the collision and integration in the formation of Chinese civilization. The dragon pattern image of the Miao nationality is very different from the traditional dragon pattern image. The dragon pattern image of the Miao nationality is not limited to the traditional dragon pattern image, but is more bold and exaggerated. The Miao nationality has a reverence for dragons. Their reverence for dragons is actually a reverence for nature. The dragon pattern image is more varied in the Miao culture because of the long-term close relationship with nature, which leads to the Miao people's worship of nature and the belief that all things are spiritual. For the natural phenomena encountered, they all express their inner fear of nature in the form of worship, and for the unexplained natural phenomena, they even create images 'out of thin air'. In the Hmong religious concept, everything in the world can become a dragon, and then according to the Hmong people's understanding of all things in nature, the image of the dragon is more idealized. The traditional dragon pattern image is basically fixed in the fixed mode of 'the antler, rabbit eye, cow head, snake body, eagle claw, tiger paw, horse tail'. Since the dragon of the Miao nationality has no written records and is passed down from mouth to mouth, the dragon pattern image of the Miao nationality has a natural and profound ancient atmosphere. This chapter will analyze the image characteristics of the Miao dragon from four aspects: 'dragon head, dragon body, dragon horn and dragon tail'.

### ***1.1. The change of Miaolong's leading image***

In the hands of the Miao people in southeastern Guizhou, the dragon image is varied, and the names of dragons are numerous. The types of dragon head changes are also diverse, such as double-headed dragons, centipede dragons, chicken head dragons, phoenix head dragons, and human head dragons.

Double-headed dragon is one of the patterns of Miao dragon. Silver bracelets made of the double-headed dragon are popular in Shidong generation of Taijiang in southeast Guizhou. Legend has it that the people in the Hmong region have a strange disease, with numerous drugs also not see its good, the protector of the gods double-headed dragon cannot bear to see the people suffering, pray to the gods to sacrifice themselves to save the people, after getting the gods' promise to jump into the 'European boring well', at night to dream to let people go to the well to bathe can be cured, people do so after all have recovered their health, so people in order to commemorate the double-headed dragon, the image of the double-headed dragon carved on the silver ornaments worn. Double-headed dragon is mainly manifested as a snake body, two taps, two taps to a snake body connected, no dragon tail, snake body covered with scales, feet like chicken feet, usually with flowers around the pattern.

Centipede dragon, the shape of the dragon head is the centipede head, the body of the dragon is slender and slender, and the overgrown fins on the whole body represent the foot of the dragon. The shape of the centipede dragon is sometimes double-headed centipede dragon, or the image of the centipede head dragon with the fish body, which is the classic meaning of praying for more children.

Chicken head dragon, the shape of the head is the chicken head, chicken head erect, dragon snake body, coiled winding reflects the dragon slender body, chicken head dragon in the Hmong culture has the meaning of good weather, is a beautiful, auspicious national pattern.

Crested dragon, 'its head is like a phoenix or a chicken, but its body is slender like a snake, with serrated fins from head to tail, no feet and whisker fins.'<sup>[1]</sup> Crested dragon flexible but not serious, its abstract shape, free release, ever-changing.

Human head dragon is a pattern combining human shape and dragon shape. It generally adopts human head dragon body and has no feet. Sometimes visible human head fish, like a mermaid. In the Miao pattern, people and dragons generally appear in the picture at the same time. There are often horns and crowns on people's heads. The form of combination of people and dragons is generally a scene where people ride dragons or tame dragons and play dragons. It shows the intimacy between the Miao people and dragons, and dragons are gods that can be tamed.

In addition, in the Miao dragon pattern, the change of the shape of the dragon head is that the Miao people's willingness to pray for a better life is different. The shape of the Miao dragon head is similar to that of the traditional Chinese dragon head. Sometimes there are only some subtle changes, such as some dragon heads without dragon whiskers and dragon horns.

### ***1.2. The dragon image change of Miao dragon***

For the dragon body shape of the Miao dragon pattern, it has richness and diversity. It basically breaks away from the traditional dragon body with snake body as the main body. <sup>[2]</sup> The rich imagination of the Miao people makes the Miao dragon unable to be attributed to a certain animal. The representatives of dragon body diversity in Miao dragon are:

Buffalo dragon, also known as 'cattle dragon'. The Hmong people think that there is a connection between dragons and cattle, and that dragons become stronger, more powerful and more powerful when they become cattle. In combat, the Buffalo Dragon can be called mounts, so that brave warriors even fight to win/invincible in the world. <sup>[2]</sup> It can be seen that in the change of the dragon body, the Hmong people have given symbolic significance.

Silkworm body, also known as 'silkworm dragon'. In the Hmong culture, the silkworm is the hope of adequate food and clothing. Since ancient times, the Hmong people have raised silkworms to meet the needs of silk and embroidered silk thread. The combination of the silkworm and dragon is the miao people in labor practice wish god bless people grain abundance, good weather. This is the rich connotation of silkworm dragon.

Fish body, also known as 'fish dragon'. The dragon and the fish also live in the water, the Hmong people hope that their fish can be as big as the dragon, the vitality of the fish is strong, the reproductive capacity is strong, the fish production means that the population reproduction and prosperity, while the dragon has the divinity of the son, <sup>[2]</sup> the dragon and the fish together, the Hmong people have the hint of the son.

Twin dragon, refers to a dragon with two snakes. The double dragon often takes the center of the paper as the symmetry point in the pattern. The two bodies of the dragon are symmetrical to each other, and sometimes it is human.

The change of the dragon body of the Miao nationality is the ecological relationship that reflects the mutual recognition, mutual support and emotional sustenance between man and the natural environment. At this time, people determine themselves in a complex natural relationship. <sup>[3]</sup> For the change of decoration, the significance of recording people's emotional concepts far exceeds its aesthetic significance. The combination of dragons and symbolic things in life is that the Miao people consciously regard dragons as a mysterious and vital object rather than an authority over specific life.

### ***1.3. The change of dragon horn image of Miao dragon***

The most prominent point of the dragon of the Miao nationality is that there is a pair of majestic horns. The reason is that in the consciousness of the Miao people, the cattle and the dragon are interlinked, and the horns represent the vigorous male reproductive ability. The Miao people think that people can be made into dragons and hope that their ancestors are the incarnations of dragons. Therefore, transforming the horns into horns is also a good desire to pray for more children and more blessings and to reproduce the offspring.

### ***1.4. The change of dragon tail image of Miao dragon***

Most of the dragon tails in the Miao nationality are goldfish tails, which are almost the same as the traditional Chinese dragon tail shape. In the Hmong paper-cut culture, a small part of the arched paper-cut is a pony tail shape, there is a small part of the feather tail and bald tail. Most of the miao dragon will use goldfish tail. The first reason is that goldfish tail has elegant shape, smooth lines and more beautiful appearance. The second is mentioned above, in the Hmong fish symbol of many children, this is a symbol of reproductive worship. Generally speaking, compared with the ever-changing shape of the dragon head and the dragon body, the change of the dragon tail of the Miao nationality is not very complicated.

## **2. Totem worship in Miao dragon costumes**

The Miao nationality is a collection of a variety of worship in a nation, and the Miao totem culture is the expression of 'life consciousness' and 'witch god culture'. In the ancient times when the medical conditions were not developed, whether the population was prosperous and whether the nation was revitalized. The two are closely related. The ancient Miao people created various image symbols, such as different dragon heads representing different auspicious meanings, as a symbol to distinguish the clan.

Taigong area of the Lantern Festival will 'play dragon lantern', Taijiang area also has 'dragon' customs, are full of worship and yearning for dragon totem.

In the process of migration of the Miao nationality for thousands of years, in addition to the culture of the same origin, the culture of other nationalities has been continuously integrated and absorbed during the period. Therefore, the totem of the Miao nationality is multi-source. Miao Shanglong, in the red temple in the southeast of Guizhou, takes the dragon as its clan symbol. Clothing, bedsheets, quilts, curtains and other daily necessities will be made into embroidery patterns with the dragon as the main body. The worship of the dragon in Miao nationality is very common, and the deeper meaning is to regard the dragon as the symbol of the nation.

### ***2.1. Magnificent-the sacred meaning of dragon pattern***

The transformation of dragon pattern on Miao costumes is closely related to its national mentality, national implication and national customs, focusing on expressing an aesthetic cultural thought. In the history of the development of the Miao nationality for thousands of years, farming culture is the origin of the Miao culture. Its geographical environment and climatic factors determine the objective factors of the Miao's farming life. Farming rice is inseparable from cattle, water and the sun. Therefore, the most representative of the Miao's dragon pattern is the combination with cattle. The combination of the cattle in the cultivated field and the dragon of the rain is also widely used.

In addition to the great influence of agricultural civilization on the Hmong people, there is the Hmong people's emphasis on reproduction. The whole mankind regards the reproduction of life as a major event in the continuation of civilization. Production itself is the reproduction of race. Therefore, in addition to cattle, fish is also an important cultural symbol of the Miao nationality. Fish production is regarded as a symbol of vigorous reproduction by the Miao people. Therefore, the combination of fish and dragon has become a compound fish and dragon pattern, which is widely used in the embroidery of the Miao nationality to praise the reproduction of life.

Miao as a minority, its religious aesthetic culture is also an important factor of the nation, the Miao people through the dragon symbol to express their religious beliefs, in order to obtain the blessing of the gods, is the Miao people for a better life of faith comfort, they will dragon as the ancestor and protector of the Miao nationality, is the Miao nationality emblem and logo.

Plekhanov once said: 'The art of any nation is determined by its heart.'<sup>[4]</sup> The Miao people worship the dragon as a totem, and the sacred implication of the dragon pattern is the reaction of the Miao people's psychological activities. Combining the sacred meaning of the dragon pattern with modern clothing, it can show a creative form of 'Yida'. Whether it is a concrete shape or a Yida shape, the decoration is based on the Miao's blessing for a better life, always protecting people and meeting people's psychological needs.

### ***2.2. The combination of ancient and elegant dragon pattern form***

Ancestor worship, totem worship, and animism are indispensable elements in the history of most ethnic cultures, and the worship consciousness of the Miao nationality has continued from ancient times to the present. In the eyes of the miao people, the dragon is the embodiment of all creatures, so the dragon pattern in the miao culture has intangible characteristics, reflected in the clothing patterns such as the previously mentioned buffalo dragon, silkworm dragon, double body dragon, etc. The Miao dragon pattern shows the unique national aesthetic tendency in the Miao culture with its clumsy shape and artistic technique. The simple and elegant dragon pattern is the Miao people's ideological fluctuation and emotional catharsis of all things in the world.

The dragon pattern in the miao culture has internal relations or certain rules. Through the method of imagination, the elements in the environment, such as animals and plants, are combined with the dragon pattern image with integrated artistic treatment techniques, and this technique is used in the miao dragon pattern. Examples abound, such as flower dragon, horn dragon, tiger dragon, etc., which combine the image of the dragon with other forms through series and coincidence to produce a new artistic form. In addition to the integration of the creation of the shape, the Miao people also use the sensory organs to perform the spiritual performance of the observed objects in the aspect of the dragon pattern. Its eclectic attitude trend truly expresses the Miao people's inner desire for freedom and romanticism.

On the basis of all things in the world, combined with the dragon pattern style, the creator transforms his inner feelings and inner images into realistic elements. What is displayed on the dragon tattoo of the

Miao nationality are the superb modeling ability and the beautiful desire to pursue oneself. The dragon pattern of the Miao nationality is the emotional catharsis of the Miao culture with its simple, elegant and varied image.

**2.3. Ecological enlightenment-social consciousness of dragon pattern**

Among the many traditional dragon patterns, the dragon patterns from the Shang and Zhou Dynasties to the Qing Dynasty are the representative images of the highest rulers. From the emperor's clothing patterns, it can be seen that the traditional dragon is gradually linked to the social hierarchy from the original natural divinity. It is the new divinity of the symbol of social power, so the dragon in the traditional sense is always teeth and claws, and the face is ferocious. The dragon pattern of the Miao nationality belongs to the civilian population. If the traditional dragon is the conscious reaction of the feudal society, the dragon of the Miao nationality is the embodiment of the obvious farming culture consciousness. In the social life of the Miao nationality, all things related to people's production and life can be transformed into dragons, so the dragon pattern in the Miao culture belongs to the civilian population.

**3. The application of dragon pattern in miao costumes**

**3.1. Innovative applications of dragon pattern in clothing**

Using the principle of semiotics, how to update the design and inheritance of the Miao dragon pattern is of great social significance to the development of the Miao dragon pattern. In the process of creation, grasping the characteristics of the Miao dragon pattern is a factor that cannot be ignored. Its variability and invisibility are important features that distinguish it from other single forms of national patterns or geometric patterns. Because of this, variability and invisibility make the Miao dragon is systematic, relying on myths, beliefs, legends, Miao history, flowers and trees and other carriers to generate different images, due to different forms and self-contained. Therefore, it is necessary to systematically analyze its common characteristics and personality to summarize and refine it into a symbol system, so as to facilitate the design and application.



Figure 1: Dragon Pattern in Miao Traditional Costumes

As shown in Figure 1, eight groups of dragon patterns extracted from Miao traditional costumes have different shapes, which can be named according to their external shapes and bionic meanings. According to the eight groups of dragon patterns in Fig. 1, the commonness of Miao dragon pattern elements is summarized, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Common elements of Miao dragon symbol

| Tap                                 | Dragon body   | Dragon tail   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------|
| Overhead: Hair wrapped, horned      | Body shape: curly   | Goldfish tail |
| Face: side opening tongue, tendrils | Body: Full of scales, streamlined without edges and corners |               |
|                                     | Back: Hair wrap   |               |

It can be seen from the above table that the visual dominant elements in the Miao dragon pattern are the elements that are emphatically extracted during creation. These common elements enable the creators to protect the traditional culture of the Miao nationality while updating the creation, and retain the essence of the Miao culture in the creative gene. The common connection between the signifier in the Miao culture and the signified expressed in specific things is an important factor in the process of creators' creation. The Miao people believe that the dragon pattern has its own natural spiritual power, which reflects the Miao people's love and worship of life. These signifier factors are displayed in clothing, and also show the Miao women's own aesthetic response. [5]

Table 2: Baby (0-3 years old) dragon pattern induction pattern clothing

| Class    | Pattern design  | Pattern Application Sample (Male / Female)  |   | Applied colour  |
|----------|---|---|---|---|
| Hats     |  |    |    | Male: blue tone, supplemented by other<br>Female: red tone, supplemented by other |
| Coat     |   |    |     |   |
| Pant     |   |    |     |   |
| Pinafore |   |  |  |   |

According to the common factors and expression of the Miao dragon pattern, the diversity theme of the Miao dragon pattern is associated, and the ' infant (0-3 years old) dragon pattern induction pattern clothing ' is designed, as shown in Table 2. The dragon pattern is applied to the functional clothing of the infant's physical condition change. The pattern design of the dragon pattern is based on the common elements of the Miao dragon pattern. The dragon angle is upright and there is a god, and the side opening of the dragon head has a tendril. The dragon body is winding and circling without edges and corners. The dragon tail is combined with the Miao butterfly flower deformation on the basis of the gold fish tail, and finally the pattern is formed. The product can change the color of the pattern according to the temperature and humidity of the infant's body. For example, the pattern is drawn on the back of the jacket to detect sweating. When the humidity of the subject changes, the pattern on the clothing will be more lively and bright. The pattern on the hat is used to detect the temperature change of the subject. The color change on the dress enhances parents' ability to perceive changes in infants and young children, and is intended to increase the demand response of infants in their infancy.

### 3.2. The value of dragon pattern in clothing design

The compensation for the real life and the unremitting pursuit of the ideal life are often reflected in the national aesthetics. Under the high-handed policy and harsh living conditions, the Hmong people have developed a sense of self-identity, a sense of resistance, a desire for a better life and a romantic artistic style. At the same time, it has also created a unique aesthetic of the Hmong people. In the ' infant (0-3 years old) dragon pattern induction pattern clothing ', the cheerful and warm colors preferred by the Miao people were selected, and bright and cheerful colors such as red, orange and peach red were used in a large area, and the contrast colors were decorated with green and blue to form a strong contrast effect. In addition to highlighting the decorative effect, it also gives people a warm, joyful and festive feeling. The warm and festive colors reflect the Miao people's good wishes for the pursuit of life. The design of ' infant (0-3 years old) dragon pattern induction pattern costume ' is to seek inspiration from the Miao culture with monotonous life and simple color. It is not only the correct inheritance of traditional culture, but also the blessing of the future generations in the dragon pattern like the Miao people.

The Miao people will be endowed with inner feelings and psychological images when creating dragon patterns. This is a kind of non-figurative natural object but a real reaction of the subjective psychology of the craftsmen. The pattern elements, modeling design and composition ratio of the patterns reflect the creator's free artistic realm of free will and eclecticism. The dragon pattern modeling, which is not limited by the inherent color of the object image, is the embodiment of the color view that ignores the color restriction that the civilians cannot use stipulated by the ruling class. It is a kind of romantic artistic taste.

#### 4. Conclusion

Therefore, from the sample interpretation of the dragon pattern, we can see that the essence of the Miao people's totem worship and belief in the animism of all things is closely related to the life and production of the civilian population. The ideology of the Miao dragon pattern is actually that the Miao people give the natural divinity of the dragon pattern to benefit the people and protect the people. The diversified and intangible dragon pattern is the Miao people's serious pursuit of ideal life and serious thinking of real life. Therefore, the creation of costume patterns based on the Miao dragon pattern is finally used in real life. It is based on the needs of modern cultural aesthetics, and contributes to the innovation and development of the cultural costume industry, the promotion of rural cultural construction and economic development, and the creation of national cultural brands, so as to better promote the inheritance and development of the Miao costume culture in Southeast Guizhou.

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