

A Comparative Study of Sun Motifs in the Bouyei and Shui Cultures

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Abstract:

Objective: The sun pattern is one of the primitive totems worshipped by humans. As a highly symbolic cultural symbol, it is widely present in the cultures of multiple ethnic groups and showcases their unique aesthetic tastes and cultural connotations through comparison. **Method:** By using the comparative method, the sun patterns of the Buyi ethnic group and the Shui ethnic group were compared in terms of pattern form, color and cultural symbol. **Result:** Analysis reveals that the sun of the Buyi ethnic group is mostly designed in a circular shape, with simple and elegant colors, embodying the hope that the sun will nourish all things and bring about a bountiful harvest. The Shui sun pattern is designed with concentric circles, decorated with patterns filled inside. The colors are relatively bright, carrying the worship of ancestors and deities as well as the awe of natural forces. **Conclusion:** By comparing the two, it is helpful to deeply explore the unique cultural genes of these two ethnic groups, provide new perspectives and references for the study of ethnic cultures, and promote the inheritance and development of ethnic cultures.

Keywords:

Sun Motif, Bouyei Ethnic Group, Shui Ethnic Group, Pattern Comparison, Traditional Culture

1. Introduction

Patterns refer to designs or decorative elements with certain regularity and repetitiveness, often used for decoration, symbolization or the conveyance of specific cultural meanings. In the early 20th century, the term “pattern” emerged in the Chinese language and was defined as “a design or drawing made for a certain purpose”, encompassing two-dimensional decorative patterns, three-dimensional decorations, and three-dimensional creations. With the refinement of pattern studies, the scope of patterns gradually narrowed down to “decorative motifs or graphics”, which is the narrow definition of patterns. The term “pattern” as we use it today refers to this narrow definition. [1] The sun pattern, as an ancient pattern, frequently appears in various ethnic groups and holds significant importance. For instance, Zhou Man’s “Symbolic Representation: The Sun Pattern in Ethnic Integration” discusses the sun pattern as a shared cultural symbol among multiple ethnic groups, reflecting cultural

identity and value integration in ethnic integration, and playing a crucial role in connecting the past and the present and enhancing ethnic identity. [2]

2. Overview of Sun Wrinkles

The introduction in “The Illustrated Guide to Classic Chinese Patterns” is: “The sun pattern depicts the image of the sun.” The significance of the sun pattern to life is self-evident. As one of the primitive totems of human worship, it is endowed with profound thoughts about life. [3]

In the early Neolithic period, sun patterns had already appeared in the rock paintings of General's Cliff. A large number of pottery and shards engraved with sun patterns were also unearthed from the Gaomiao Culture and Yangshao Culture. By the Shang Dynasty, on the gold foil unearthed from the Jinsha Site, four winged birds were soaring around the sun, showcasing the unique artistic expression of the sun pattern. After the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties, the use of the sun pattern gradually decreased in the Han areas of the Central Plains. However, in many ethnic minority areas, it remains a frequently used pattern. [4] On traditional items of the Buyi and Shui ethnic groups, the sun pattern is still used as an important decorative element, continuing its profound cultural significance.

2.1. Overview of the Sun Pattern of the Buyi Ethnic Group

The Buyi people have a deep sense of awe and worship for the sun pattern, which is a manifestation of their understanding of nature, religious beliefs and aesthetic needs. Among the Buyi people, there is a legend about the twelve SUNS: When the world was first created, the twelve SUNS hung high in the sky. The intense heat caused crops to catch fire and rivers to dry up. The people hid in caves and struggled to survive. A brother and sister of the Buyi ethnic group, who were skilled in archery, could not bear to see their fellow villagers suffer. After discussing with others, they asked everyone to make a “sun” gilded with gold and silver powder from white cloth and place it on the mountain top. The true SUNS were drawn and dived down. The brother and sister took the opportunity to shoot arrows and shot down ten of them. One sun hid in the clouds, and the other fell into the Milky Way and became the moon. After that, the world returned to normal, and the story of the brother and sister became a legend passed down from generation to generation. [5] It reflects the special understanding and totem worship of the Buyi people towards the sun. In the Buyi people's concept, the sun possesses mysterious power and is closely related to the growth of all things and human life. This reverence and worship of the sun have led to the emergence of the sun pattern. In the traditional sacrificial activities of the Buyi ethnic group, the sun is regarded as an important sacrificial object, and sun patterns often appear on sacrificial items and the decoration of ritual sites.

2.2. Overview of the Aquarium Sun Pattern

Aquarians mainly live in the southern regions. The natural environment makes the sun have a huge impact on their production and life. The rising and setting of the sun in the east and the changing of the four seasons are closely related to the agricultural production, fishing and hunting activities of the Shui people. In the long-term production and life, the ancestors of the Shui people gradually developed a dependence and reverence for the sun, and then integrated the image of the sun into their own cultural and artistic creations, forming the sun pattern.

The “water book”, an important cultural component of the Shui people, is an ancient script and cultural classic of the Shui people, containing rich religious beliefs and philosophical thoughts. In the records of the Water Book and the religious rituals of the aquatic people, the sun was endowed with an important position and was regarded as a deity or a symbol of deities. This kind of religious belief level cognition has led to the frequent appearance of the sun pattern in the culture and art of the aquarium people. For instance, in the architectural decoration, clothing patterns, and daily utensils of the aquarium people, the sun pattern is used to express reverence for deities and prayers for a better life.

3. Comparison of Sun Patterns between the Buyi and Shui Ethnic Groups

Although the sun patterns of the “Buyi ethnic group” and the “Shui Ethnic Group” both represent the worship of the sun, they differ in form, color and cultural symbolism: their basic constituent elements are the same, but there are differences in the form of the elements. Different environmental beliefs lead to different color usage. The religious significance, social concepts and aesthetic concepts of each ethnic group are also different.

3.1. Comparison of the Morphological Characteristics of Patterns

3.1.1. The sun pattern of the Buyi ethnic group

The expression of the sun pattern of the Buyi ethnic group is rich and diverse. It often takes a circle as the core, symbolizing the completeness and fullness of the sun. The circle forms the basic framework of the sun. Around the circle, there are radiating lines, which can be in the form of straight lines, curves or wavy lines. These lines showcase the sun’s radiant light, and the diverse expression techniques also reflect the sun’s life and power. In the sun pattern, geometric patterns such as triangles, squares, and rhombuses are often added as decorations. These patterns are arranged and combined in a symmetrical or surrounding manner to enrich the visual expression. Not only that, the sun pattern is often combined with other natural elements and cultural symbols, such as cloud patterns, water patterns, and bird patterns, to form corresponding patterns, further deepening the cultural connotation and expressing respect for nature and reverence for life.

Among the Buyi people, the main forms of sun patterns are the sun patterns on copper drums and the sun patterns in maple dye and batik:

(1) The sun patterns on the bronze drum: As shown in Figure 1, they are radiating awning patterns, mostly 12 sharp-angled awning patterns, radiating outwards from the center of the drum surface. The lines are strong and powerful, symbolizing the radiant light of the sun. Sometimes, feather eye patterns are also decorated between these awning patterns, adding complexity and mystery to the decoration.



Figure 1. Bronze drum of the Buyi ethnic Group.

(2) Sun patterns in maple leaf dyeing and batik: As shown in Figure 2, the shape is simple and clear. It adopts the technique of abstract deformation, discarding the complex elements such as the flag pattern, comb pattern, and milk ding pattern in the copper drum pattern. Only the core part of the sun pattern is retained. The sun is represented by simple geometric shapes, such as using circles or nearly circles to represent the outline of the sun, and using straight lines or curves to represent the light, which has an ancient and mysterious beauty.



Figure 2. The batik sun pattern of the Buyi ethnic group.

3.1.2. Aquatic sun Pattern Morphology

The ancient ancestors integrated and formalized all kinds of things they longed to record into the traditional national culture passed down through The Times using symbolic language. The sun pattern is a carrier that embodies the worship of the primitive ancestors and is also an important source of inspiration for the decorative patterns of ethnic minority items. They believe that decorating items with sun patterns can establish communication with deities and receive protection.

The patterns and styles of the aquarium sun pattern are generally divided into two types: the sun pattern on the back fan and the sun pattern on the copper drum [6]:

(1) The sun patterns on the back fan embroidered with horsehair are mostly combined with cloud patterns, lightning patterns, tree patterns, etc., and often appear at the center of the lower part of the back fan embroidered with horsehair. As shown in Figure 3, the main form is mainly concentric circles. The geometric patterns decorated inside spread out in all directions like the rays of the sun. The ribbon-like patterns around the sun represent thunder and lightning. It symbolizes the beautiful wish of the Shui women for their children to be protected, and also reflects the Shui people's worship of nature.



Figure 3. The sun pattern embroidered on the back fan with a ponytail.

(2) The sun pattern on the bronze drum is located in the middle of the drum and serves as the decorative core and focus of the entire drum. As shown in Figure 4, the shape of the sun pattern is circular. From the center, it radiates out a series of awning lines, which are evenly thick and powerful, and extend in all directions, demonstrating a sense of strength. The tail of the mango pattern has a slight twist and change, adding

a touch of soft charm to the hard lines. The number of miscanthus patterns is usually even, with common numbers being eight or twelve. They are neatly arranged, presenting a kind of orderly beauty. Inside the sun pattern, some delicate and fine patterns, such as the meander pattern and the cloud and thunder pattern, are often filled to add visual layers, endow it with profound cultural connotations, and carry unique spiritual beliefs and aesthetic concepts.



Figure 4. Aquarium Bronze Drum.

3.2. Color Comparison

3.2.1. Colors of the sun pattern of the Buyi ethnic group

The colors of the sun pattern of the Buyi ethnic group are deeply rooted in the historical culture and living environment of the ethnic group, mainly using blue and white. Blue, derived from the indigo dye, is generally a deep color with warm tones. It has a calm, stable, simple and elegant tone, which can relieve and calm the agitated mood. It is often used as the base color of the sunburn pattern to give people a sense of serenity and depth. [7] For instance, in the Buyi ethnic group's sweet gum dyeing, blue is often used as the background color to set off the sun pattern. White, during the dyeing process, due to the anti-dyeing technique, the undyed parts retain the cotton-white color, with high lightness and no colorless phase. It is used to represent the main body or the radiant part of the sun pattern, giving people a sense of brightness, simplicity, innocence, lightness, tranquility, neatness and elegance. Against the blue background, the white sun pattern stands out particularly. The combination of blue and white can create a refreshing and bright feeling. In addition, orange-red is also used to outline the contour of the sun pattern, etc. Orange-red is dazzling and warm, like the sun high in the sky, giving people light and hope. At the same time, it collides with blue and white, presenting a strong visual contrast, and achieving a harmonious and unified effect in the color conflict, adding a touch of vitality to the sun pattern.

Among the Buyi people, both men and women mainly use cool tones, believing that such colors are the most in line with the habits of their own ethnic group. In their eyes, these colors are the most beautiful. The aesthetic concepts and pursuits of each ethnic group are different. Some people prefer bright and vivid colors, while others enjoy strange and unique hues, which is influenced by their own living environment and cultural concepts.

3.2.2. Colors of the aquarium Sun pattern

In terms of color usage, the aquatic sun pattern has a unique charm, showcasing the aesthetic and cultural values of the aquatic people. The color tone of the Shui ethnic group's clothing is simple and elegant. The basic tones are usually pure colors such as blue, black and indigo, which subtly reflect the Shui people's humble, low-key and emotionally reserved way of dealing with the world [8]. Compared with the simple

and plain colors used in the costumes of the Shui ethnic group, the application of colors in the patterns of the Shui ethnic group's horsehair embroidery is bold and bright, with the main colors often being bright red or orange. In contrast to the elegant and monotonous colors of the costumes of the Shui ethnic group, the colors of horsehair embroidery present a completely different style, with bold and bright colors, and the main patterns usually take bright red or orange as the main colors. Therefore, it also reflects the enthusiasm and vitality of the sun.

Gold or yellow is often used in the part where the sun shines, using bright tones to represent the radiance of the sun. The edges of the golden-yellow lines are complemented by vermilion accents. The intense vermilion, like fire, echoes the golden yellow, creating a visual conflict and integration, adding a touch of solemnity. In the use of background colors, dark colors such as deep blue or black are often employed. Through color contrast, the distinctiveness and three-dimensionality of the sunray pattern are highlighted. The overall color is harmonious and unified, rich in layers, reflecting the aquatic people's acute sense and creativity towards natural beauty.

3.3. Comparison of Cultural Symbols

Patterns, as the core cultural symbols of a nation, are the profound accumulation of nature worship and cultural symbolism. It is not only a carrier of artistic expression, but also embodies the history, beliefs and values of the nation. Throughout the long course of history, people have transformed the myriad elements of nature, such as the sun, the moon, mountains, rivers, flowers, grass and trees, into symbolic patterns and symbols. Each pattern carries sacred and beautiful implications, witnessing the inheritance and continuation of the national culture.

3.3.1. Symbolic Meaning of the sun pattern of the Buyi ethnic Group

In the belief system of the Buyi ethnic group, the sun is regarded as the supreme deity, symbolizing light, hope and vitality. As a concrete manifestation of this belief, the sun pattern is widely seen in the traditional art forms of the Buyi ethnic group, such as traditional clothing, embroidery and batik. The Buyi people are an ethnic group mainly engaged in agriculture. The rising and setting of the sun determine the alternation of day and night as well as the cycle of the four seasons, which is related to the growth and harvest of crops and affects the daily life of the Buyi people. Therefore, the Buyi people express their longing for a bountiful harvest, as well as their reverence and gratitude for vitality and reproduction through the sun pattern. The warmth of the sun nourishes the vast earth, making the mountains and rivers lush and the people and livestock thriving. They infuse their gratitude for life into the sun patterns, embodying the beautiful vision of continuous vitality and prosperity. In addition, the sun pattern symbolizes unity and cohesion. When the sun shines brightly and all things are equal, it represents the equality and unity of the ethnic group. In the face of natural disasters and foreign invasions, the Buyi people are as closely connected as the sun, united as one, and jointly resist difficulties, maintaining strong vitality and cohesion.

The sun pattern, as the core cultural symbol of the Buyi ethnic group, embodies the reverence for nature, the love for life and the anticipation for the future, and carries forward the cultural spirit of the nation.

3.3.2. Symbolic Meaning of the Aquarium Sun Pattern

In the culture of the Shui ethnic group, the sun pattern holds a significant position and carries profound symbolic meanings. The aquatic people live by water, and water and sunlight are indispensable elements in their lives. The sun pattern symbolizes the nourishment of life. Sunlight not only brings warmth to the world but also promotes the growth and reproduction of aquatic creatures, providing food sources for aquatic people and ensuring the continuation of generations. The sun pattern symbolizes light and hope. The aquatic people have endured countless hardships, whether it be natural disasters, foreign invasions or difficult living conditions. They always believe that the sun will dispel darkness and bring light. The sun pattern embodies the aquarium people's profound understanding of time and the cycle of life. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west, and its periodic changes are like the passage of time, symbolizing the endless flow of time and the eternity of life. This perception guides the aquarium people to Revere nature and cherish life.

The sun pattern, as a unique mark of aquarium culture, carries the respect for life, the yearning for light and the wish for reproduction, and passes on the cultural roots of the nation.

4. Conclusions

The sun patterns of all ethnic groups originated from the worship of the sun by their primitive ancestors. Different cultural backgrounds and historical developments have led to differences in the shapes and connotations of the sun patterns of various ethnic groups. In terms of form, the Buyi ethnic group takes a circle as the core, surrounded by radiating lines, symbolizing the radiant light of the sun. The main image of the aquarium is centered around concentric circles, and the geometric decorative patterns inside gradually spread out in all directions like the rays of the sun. In terms of color, the Buyi ethnic group mainly uses blue and white, and employs bright colors such as orange-red for visual contrast. The aquarium mainly uses red, orange and golden yellow, with deep colors such as dark blue and black for visual contrast. From a symbolic perspective, the Buyi people mainly lead an agricultural life, and their worship of the sun pattern is mostly an expression of their hope for a bountiful harvest. The aquatic people tend to combine the sun pattern with the tree of life more often, hoping that their children will grow up healthy.

No matter how the expression of the sun pattern changes, it always embodies the profound mark of sun worship and conveys people's beautiful yearning for light, hope, warmth and vitality. The sun pattern, while being decorative and symbolic, also embodies a romantic sentiment that transcends reality. This pattern is not only a witness to ethnic diversity but also a manifestation of cultural integration.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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