

2025 International Conference on Art and Design, Education, Media and Social Sciences (DEMSS 2025)

Article

Study on the Inheritance Status of Miao Embroidery in Youth Clothing

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Abstract: As an essential part of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, Miao embroidery boasts a long history and exquisite craftsmanship, carrying profound cultural connotations and spiritual meanings. This study aims to explore the understanding and awareness of Miao embroidery among contemporary youth, as well as the current status of its inheritance and development paths. Through surveys and literature analysis, the study finds that contemporary youth have some understanding of Miao embroidery, but few have in-depth knowledge, and the market for it is somewhat limited. The main inheritors of Miao embroidery include officials, schools, inheritors, and designers, who have played an important role in promoting the inheritance and innovation of Miao embroidery culture. At the same time, the application of Miao embroidery in youth clothing design demonstrates new development directions, incorporating modern elements to present a unique Oriental aesthetic charm. This study provides valuable references for the protection, inheritance, and modernization of Miao embroidery.

Keywords: Miao embroidery; youth clothing; inheritance status; youth identity

1. Introduction

Miao Xiu, or Miao embroidery, constitutes a vital component of the rich and diverse cultural tapestry of the Chinese nation. Boasting an extensive historical trajectory, this art form traces its origins back to the period when the ancestors of the Miao ethnic group inhabited the Yellow River Basin, evolving through millennia into a sophisticated visual language. As a profound manifestation of collective wisdom, traditional Miao Xiu is distinguished by its intricate textile techniques, vivid aesthetic compositions, and motifs imbued with deep spiritual and cosmological significance. These elements have solidified its status as a premier example of China's intangible cultural heritage, preserved through generations as a living record of ethnic history and identity.

The institutional recognition of this craft has reached significant milestones in the 21st century. In 2006, the central government included Miao Xiu in the inaugural batch of the national intangible cultural heritage list, a designation that underscored its unparalleled artistic and historical value. This recognition was further bolstered in 2021 when it was added to the National Intangible Cultural Heritage Representative List [1]. To date, the systematic documentation of this heritage has expanded, with seven distinct projects related to Miao Xiu now recognized within the national intangible cultural heritage framework [2].

Academic discourse concerning Miao Xiu has progressively deepened, focusing on the triadic relationship between historical evolution, artistic characteristics, and the mechanisms of inheritance. Scientific investigations have concentrated on the technical

Received: 12 December 2025

Revised: 20 January 2026

Accepted: 03 February 2026

Published: 08 February 2026



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specificities of various embroidery styles-such as flat embroidery, braid embroidery, and tin embroidery-while exploring how these manual skills intersect with the broader constructs of traditional culture [3-4]. Furthermore, significant attention has been directed toward the challenges of cultural preservation in an era of rapid modernization. Scholarly works emphasize the necessity of integrating protection with innovation, suggesting that ethnic crafts must undergo a process of creative transformation to remain relevant in contemporary society. Such research advocates for the promotion of traditional crafts within a modern cultural and industrial framework, ensuring that the essence of ethnic artistry is not lost amidst globalization [5].

Despite these efforts, researchers have identified several obstacles hindered by the pace of contemporary social development. The transition from a traditional agrarian society to an industrialized market economy has impacted the natural transmission of these skills. Issues such as the lack of design innovation and the shrinking of traditional market spaces have created difficulties in expanding the regions where these techniques are practiced. Comparative studies have noted that without a sustainable connection to modern consumption patterns, traditional embroidery faces the risk of becoming a static museum artifact rather than a vibrant daily practice [3, 6-9].

In the context of modern inheritance, clothing serves as the primary medium for the expression of Miao Xiu, offering a rich and vivid canvas for traditional cultural symbols. Within this domain, youth clothing culture represents a particularly dynamic sector. Characterized by its pioneering nature, diverse aesthetic preferences, and leadership in fashion trends, youth culture provides a critical platform for the revitalization of traditional motifs. As young people increasingly seek out "Guo Chao"-a trend emphasizing domestic styles and cultural pride-clothing becomes an essential carrier for passing down the legacy of Miao Xiu to the next generation.

This paper focuses on the intersection of youth clothing culture and ethnic craftsmanship. Utilizing comprehensive surveys, literature analysis, and field research, the study aims to assess the awareness and attitudes of contemporary youth regarding the inheritance of Miao Xiu. By clarifying the historical trajectory and current status of these embroidery techniques within the sphere of youth fashion, the research explores strategic methods to empower the younger generation as active participants in cultural preservation. This inquiry seeks to provide theoretical and practical insights into how Miao Xiu can be effectively integrated into modern life, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of China's excellent traditional culture in the present day.

2. Research Design

As an important bearer of the excellent traditional culture of China, the youth group plays an active role in the inheritance and acceptance of Miao embroidery. However, there are differences in the recognition and understanding of Miao embroidery among young people, and their acceptance of the craftsmanship and awareness of inheritance vary. To explore this phenomenon in depth, this study uses a survey method to analyze multiple dimensions, including contemporary youth's understanding of Miao embroidery, their acceptance of the craftsmanship, and their awareness of its inheritance.

A total of 1006 valid questionnaires were collected for this study, with Miao participants accounting for 81.21% and non-Miao participants accounting for 18.79%. In terms of gender distribution, males accounted for 50.99% and females accounted for 49.01%. The participants had diverse age groups, with high school students under 18 years old accounting for 52.29%, undergraduates accounting for 18.59%, working individuals accounting for 23.06%, and graduate students accounting for 6.06%. Through surveying different background groups, this research systematically reveals the current state of youth awareness regarding the inheritance of Miao embroidery and their acceptance of the craftsmanship, thus providing empirical evidence for the protection and inheritance of Miao embroidery culture.

3. Analysis of the Current Status of Miao Embroidery Inheritance and Development

3.1. Understanding and Awareness of Miao Embroidery Among Contemporary Youth

The understanding of Miao embroidery culture among contemporary youth varies. According to the survey results, about 20.08% of participants have no understanding of Miao embroidery, 6.16% have a very good understanding, while the majority (73.76%) have a basic or general understanding of Miao embroidery. This indicates that, although most young people are aware of Miao embroidery, there are few who have a deep understanding and affection for this culture. Non-Miao groups have less knowledge of Miao embroidery, which suggests that cultural awareness of Miao embroidery is primarily concentrated in Miao and surrounding areas.

Regarding the learning of Miao embroidery techniques, the survey data shows that 55.47% of participants have attended related learning activities. This percentage is lower than the 79.92% who claim to have heard of Miao embroidery, indicating that although most people have some knowledge, relatively few have actively participated in learning the craft. Contemporary youth have various channels for learning about Miao embroidery. According to the survey results, 93.3% of participants received information about Miao embroidery through advertisements, 96.72% learned about it through school education, about 60% gained relevant knowledge through books and materials or from family and friends, and 44.43% obtained information via news or short video platforms. These data reflect the wide dissemination channels for Miao embroidery, especially in Miao-populated areas, where school education plays an important role in promoting knowledge of Miao embroidery.

3.2. The Views of Contemporary Youth on Miao Embroidery Products

The purchasing behavior of contemporary youth regarding Miao embroidery products shows certain limitations. According to the survey, 22.3% of respondents frequently purchase Miao embroidery products, while 46.2% rarely or never purchase them. This data suggests that the market for Miao embroidery products is limited, possibly due to the products themselves or insufficient promotion, resulting in a narrower market.

In terms of interest in purchasing Miao embroidery products, 36.28% of participants are interested in ethnic-style Miao embroidery, 29.72% prefer classical styles, and 34% are drawn to modern styles. This indicates that, with the passage of time, the aesthetic demands of contemporary youth for traditional Miao embroidery have shifted, making innovative designs that align with youth preferences necessary.

Regarding the budget for purchasing Miao embroidery products, the survey shows that 12.62% of respondents are willing to spend under 100 yuan, 29.82% are willing to pay between 100 and 500 yuan, 13.92% are willing to spend between 501 and 1000 yuan, 26.54% are budgeting between 1001 and 2000 yuan, and 17.1% are willing to spend over 2000 yuan. Overall, the youth group tends to have a lower price point for Miao embroidery products.

As for the willingness to purchase Miao embroidery products, the survey results indicate that 41% of respondents are "very willing," 39.86% are "somewhat willing," 27.04% are "acceptable," and only 1.69% are "unwilling." This suggests that the majority of youth have a positive attitude toward Miao embroidery and show high acceptance.

In terms of purchasing channels, online shopping accounts for 93.44%, dedicated markets for 97.81%, while 59.34% purchase from Miao-populated areas, 87.38% from shopping malls, and 66.7% from tourist attractions. These data indicate diverse purchasing channels, and youth do not have strict preferences for specific buying methods. However, the relatively lower willingness to purchase from Miao-populated areas reflects weaker local promotional efforts.

Regarding the types of Miao embroidery products preferred, jewelry ranks first with a satisfaction rate of 89.56%, followed by bags and shoes at 85.39% and 83.4%, respectively.

Clothing has a satisfaction rate of 77.44%, while furniture is relatively low at only 19.58%. This data shows that the youth group has a higher acceptance of Miao embroidery products, but the market demand for furniture items is comparatively low.

On the strengths of Miao embroidery products, the survey results show that quality is considered the most important factor (98.91%), followed by exquisite craftsmanship (94.43%) and strong design sense (93.14%). The satisfaction with unique patterns and cultural heritage is 76.54% and 78.93%, respectively, while the satisfaction with symbolic meanings is lower, at only 67.5%. This reflects that consumers highly value the quality of embroidery, and unique patterns and the transmission of ethnic culture are seen as advantages.

Regarding existing problems with Miao embroidery products, 41.75% and 42.54% of respondents indicated that the colors are too bright and the styles lack novelty. 44.33% and 44.53% cited that the products are too limited in variety and unsuitable for daily use, while the most significant issue is the difficulty in cleaning, mentioned by 67.5%. The problem of cheap workmanship was less frequently raised, at only 20.48%. These issues suggest that the youth group has high expectations for Miao embroidery products, particularly in terms of design and practicality.

3.3. Current Status of the Main Inheritors of Miao Embroidery

Miao embroidery, known for its unique patterns, exquisite craftsmanship, and rich cultural connotations, enjoys a high reputation both domestically and internationally. However, with the advancement of modernization, the inheritance and development of Miao embroidery face numerous challenges. To protect and pass on this culture, multiple inheritors have played an active role, including government institutions, schools, inheritors, and designers. These parties work together to provide support for the continued development of Miao embroidery.

First, the government plays a crucial role in the inheritance path of Miao embroidery. To date, seven Miao embroidery-related projects have been listed as national intangible cultural heritage representative projects, marking the country's high regard for the inheritance of Miao embroidery [10]. With the introduction of policies for the protection of traditional culture and intangible cultural heritage, many Miao-populated areas and local cultural and tourism departments have actively organized cultural events such as Miao culture festivals and folk festivals. For example, in Fenghuang County, Hunan Province, the "June 6th" Miao Culture Festival allows local residents and tourists to participate in ethnic dances, martial arts performances, and ethnic songs, showcasing the unique charm of Miao culture.

Secondly, schools also play an important role in the inheritance of Miao embroidery. Particularly among young people, who are an important force in cultural inheritance, their understanding and transmission of Miao embroidery are crucial. Many schools, especially those in Miao-populated or Miao-culture-influenced areas, make full use of regional advantages to carry out a variety of Miao embroidery activities, deepening students' understanding of this traditional culture [11]. For example, Huanggu Primary School in Shibing County, Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, Guizhou Province, has integrated Miao embroidery and Miao tie-dyeing into extracurricular activities, allowing students to closely interact with and appreciate the charm of Miao embroidery. Additionally, schools in non-Miao areas have also conducted Miao embroidery experience and promotional activities, further promoting the spread of this culture.

Moreover, inheritors, as the main bearers of Miao embroidery techniques, play a core role. Inheritors of Miao embroidery combine traditional skills with modern culture, continuously innovating and advancing this culture [12]. For example, Wei Zuying, an inheritor of the intangible cultural heritage of traditional Miao embroidery, returned to her hometown to start a business in 2010. Through establishing a professional cooperative,

she promoted the development of the Miao embroidery industry, helping local villagers to escape poverty and increase their income. She not only organized women in the village to form a cooperative but also integrated modern elements into Miao embroidery. Furthermore, she established a poverty-relief workshop to provide employment opportunities for relocated residents and train key inheritors.

In addition, designers play a unique role in the modernization of Miao embroidery inheritance. In order to better adapt Miao embroidery to the aesthetic needs of modern youth and expand its audience, Miao embroidery designers need to create fusion products that combine Miao embroidery with modern clothing styles in line with the tastes of young people [13]. For example, Miao designer Yang Chunlin, influenced by his family from a young age, developed a strong interest in Miao embroidery and began designing Miao cultural clothing in 2009. In 2013, he used his savings to open a clothing store named "Gu A Xin" after his Miao name in Xi'an, and later expanded the store to cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Chengdu. At its peak, he had 30 stores, successfully spreading Miao culture across the country [14]. Through the joint efforts of these various inheritors, Miao embroidery culture has continuously innovated and developed, gradually integrating into modern society's trends and ensuring its ongoing inheritance.

3.4. The Application of Miao Embroidery in Youth Fashion

Miao embroidery techniques are diverse, with common techniques including flat stitch, cross-stitch, and three-dimensional stitch. Flat stitch is the most basic technique in Miao embroidery, known for its straight lines and simple patterns. It is often used to stitch delicate, single-layer images of flowers, plants, animals, and people, showcasing the intricate and refined nature of Miao embroidery. Cross-stitch is a form of embroidery that uses intersecting stitches to form patterns. In Miao tradition, cross-stitch is commonly used in textiles, adding a unique charm to Miao clothing. Three-dimensional embroidery is a technique that uses raised and thickened stitches to create a visual three-dimensional effect. This technique brings embroidered works to life, making them more vivid and realistic, and it is considered one of the most distinctive features of Miao embroidery. In addition, Miao embroidery includes various other techniques such as rolling stitch, double-sided embroidery, bead embroidery, paper-cut embroidery, and patchwork embroidery. These techniques have been applied and developed differently in various regions and Miao subgroups, resulting in distinctive styles and patterns.

Miao embroidery is not only widely used in traditional clothing but has also gradually been incorporated into modern fashion design. For example, on September 24, 2024, the "China Miao · Art Exhibition" was held in Milan, Italy, co-hosted by the Chinese Consulate General in Milan and the Guizhou Provincial People's Government. During the 2024 Spring/Summer Milan Fashion Week, Chinese designer brand HUI presented a new collection, "Miao Imprint," which combined Miao embroidery with modern fashion, blending Eastern and Western elements to beautifully interpret unique Oriental aesthetics. The "ancient and modern" clothing worn by the models left the audience in awe, offering them a stunning experience of Miao culture. On September 26, 2021, Lawrence Xu and Poly China Silk Group co-hosted a fashion show at Wangfujing, "China's Commercial First Street," during Beijing Fashion Week. All the garments presented in this show were created using Miao embroidery techniques, with new and innovative patterns woven through Miao embroidery craftsmanship. These patterns combined Miao flowers, trees, animals, and beliefs with modern fashion styles, integrating ethnic cultural elements into contemporary aesthetics. This not only increased awareness of Miao embroidery but also broke the barrier that had confined this excellent culture to the mountains, bringing it to a broader audience.

4. Conclusion

In this study, we have systematically analyzed the current status of Miao embroidery inheritance in youth clothing culture, exploring Miao embroidery as an important part of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, its technical characteristics, and its inheritance path in the context of modernization. The research findings indicate that Miao embroidery enjoys a relatively high level of recognition and acceptance among the youth, but still faces challenges such as uneven inheritance awareness and market limitations. Through surveys and literature analysis, this paper clarifies the youth's understanding of Miao embroidery techniques, their level of acceptance, and their awareness of inheritance, while revealing the current application of Miao embroidery in youth clothing culture and market demand.

Moreover, this paper discusses the current status and development trends of Miao embroidery inheritance from four perspectives: official inheritance, school inheritance, inheritor inheritance, and designer inheritance. The research points out that the effective inheritance of Miao embroidery depends on the joint efforts of multiple parties, particularly in promoting and innovating designs within the youth group to better integrate into modern life and achieve the living inheritance of excellent traditional culture. In the future, efforts should be made to further strengthen the protection and research of Miao embroidery, promoting its wide application and innovative development in youth clothing culture, and ensuring the continued transmission and rejuvenation of this invaluable cultural heritage.

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