



# Application of Chinese Miao Tribe Typical Embroidery and Beadings in Women's Ready-to-Wear Clothing

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**Abstract.** In modern times, more and more women's roles and emancipation have emerged in almost all fields. The role of these women is even seen in several cultures and beliefs in the world, one of which is the Miao New Year Festival in China. The participation of Miao tribal women in the annual festival became a source of inspiration for designing a ready-to-wear collection entitled MINZU. The MINZU collection packs a symbol of Miao belief in a modern form so that it can be accepted and used by urban residents in big cities. The MINZU collection features a jacket silhouette typical of China combined with traditional Miao clothing to display the overall impression of ethnicity. The modern impression is obtained by applying several material manipulations, namely embroidery and beads. The objectives of this design are to: 1) Create a ready-to-wear women's clothing collection with the inspiration of the Miao New Year festival, 2) Apply material manipulation techniques in the form of embroidery and beads typical of the Miao tribe to the urban women's clothing collection. The method used is the PBL (Project Based Learning) method, which is the learning method that uses real projects through information search and data synthesis, material exploration, feasibility assessment, and design interpretation to produce final results.

Keywords: Beadings, embroidery, ethnic, Miao tribe, modest wear.

## INTRODUCTION






The Miao people are a minority tribe that lives in the mountains of Gui Zhou, South China. The Chinese government officially recognized them in 1949 (Davis, 2005). Even though they are a minority tribe in China, women from the Miao tribe are very creative and independent. The Miao tribe is often considered a tribe that resembles fairy creatures in mythology because they are considered to have their beauty and grace (Tapp, 2023). The women of the Miao tribe are very well-known as independent women, have high mobility and social freedom, are strong-willed, and can think politically. Miao tribe women have an essential role in the tourism sector in their village, namely being tour guides, selling handicrafts, holding workshops on making typical Miao tribe crafts, and renting out typical Miao tribe costumes (Bender, 2006).

The dominance of Miao tribal women is demonstrated in festivals or folk parties held every year. The festival held between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> months, with changing dates every year, is called the Miao New Year Festival, symbolizing the beginning of something new and fruitful (harvest). In this festival, the women of the Miao Tribe are divided into four large sub-tribes who gather, sing, and dance together (Bender, 2006) (Tapp, 2023). At the Miao New Year

Festival, the women of the Miao Tribe wear clothes that they have specially made to highlight the unique colors of their respective regions of origin but still have one common thread as the Miao Tribe. The red thread is shown in the silhouette of the clothing worn in the form of a typical Chinese jacket combined with a pleated skirt or wide trousers that resemble a skirt (Pang, 2022).






Miao women make the clothes worn at the festival by combining their handicraft skills with embroidery. The Miao Tribe's unique embroidery skills are very famous and much sought after by people outside the Miao Tribe (Wang, 2017). The embroidery motifs usually come from their daily lives in the form of elements of the natural environment in Miao villages, such as flowers, mountains, butterflies, and stripes. The floral motif, which has a special meaning in the life of the Miao tribe, comes from the pomegranate flower, meaning the development of the descendants of the Miao tribe itself. The mountain motif symbolizes the residence of the Miao tribe, namely at the foot of the Gui Zhou mountains. The butterfly motif is often used because it is considered the ancestor of the Miao tribe. The line motif symbolizes the river that the Miao tribe passed through during the migration period since the time of their ancestors. The Miao tribe's typical embroidery with typical motifs is then applied to their traditional clothes (Torimaru, 2020) (Xuan & Jianmin, 2020). The traditional clothing of the Miao tribe is usually worn at weddings and New Year's, as a way to represent their tribe, and at ceremonies honoring ancestors. The Miao tribe respects their ancestors or forefathers, so during the Miao New Year Festival, a ceremony to honor the ancestors is also held (Xin & Liyun, 2020).

**TABLE 1.** Motifs and meanings of Miao tribe embroidery.

| No | Motifs (Symbol)   | Meaning  |
|----|---|--|
| 1  |   | Butterflies:<br>The Miao people believe that they originate from butterfly eggs. Therefore, butterflies are considered the ancestors of the Miao Tribe |
| 2  |  | Pomegranate Flower:<br>symbol of the development of the descendants of the Miao Tribe  |
| 3  |  | Stripes:<br>symbolize the migration period of the Miao tribe during the time of their ancestors  |
| 4  |  | Mountains:<br>symbolizes the Miao Tribe settlements in mountainous areas   |
| 5  |  | House:<br>symbolizes the residence and place of celebration of the Miao New Year Festival  |

(Source: Han & Cong, 2021)

**TABLE 2.** Comparison of the meaning of colors in Chinese and Miao culture.

| No | Color   | Chinese   | Miao                             |
|----|---|---|----------------------------------|
| 1  |    | Red<br>represents fire<br>meaning: good luck                              |                                  |
| 2  |    | Yellow<br>represents the earth<br>meaning: loyalty, sincerity, and purity |                                  |
| 3  |    | Green<br>represents nature<br>meaning: health, luck, and harmony          | symbolizes maturity and elegance |
| 4  |    | Blue<br>represents wood<br>meaning: strength                              |                                  |
| 5  |  | White<br>represents metal<br>meaning: brightness and purity               |                                  |

Based on the historical background and traditions of the Miao tribe above, it was taken as inspiration to design a modest wear collection entitled MINZU, which displays feminine, colorful characters and gives an ethnic impression. The fabric material used in the clothing is taffeta, which represents the typical clothing of the Miao tribe, which uses shiny materials. The fabric manipulation used is embroidery to create typical Miao motifs, pleats to symbolize Miao women's love of wearing pleated skirts, and beadings to enhance the aesthetics of the clothing displayed in MINZU's modest wear collection.

## METHOD

The method used in this design is Project Based Learning (PBL), namely a learning model that involves a project in the learning process (Al-Tabany, 2014) (Daryanto, 2013). The Project Based Learning (PBL) method generally has three stages, namely planning, implementation (creating), and processing (Rezeki et al., 2015). The PBL method applied in making the MINZU modest wear collection is in line with research conducted by previous researchers (Ayda & Astuti, 2020) divided into several stages as follows:

- 1) Literature study is the stage of looking for sources of information related to the theme raised, namely about the Miao Tribe and the New Year Festival from scientific journal articles, internet articles, and other information media.
- 2) *Moodboard* is the stage for determining goals, direction, and combinations in designing clothing so that the creative process is clearer and more focused.

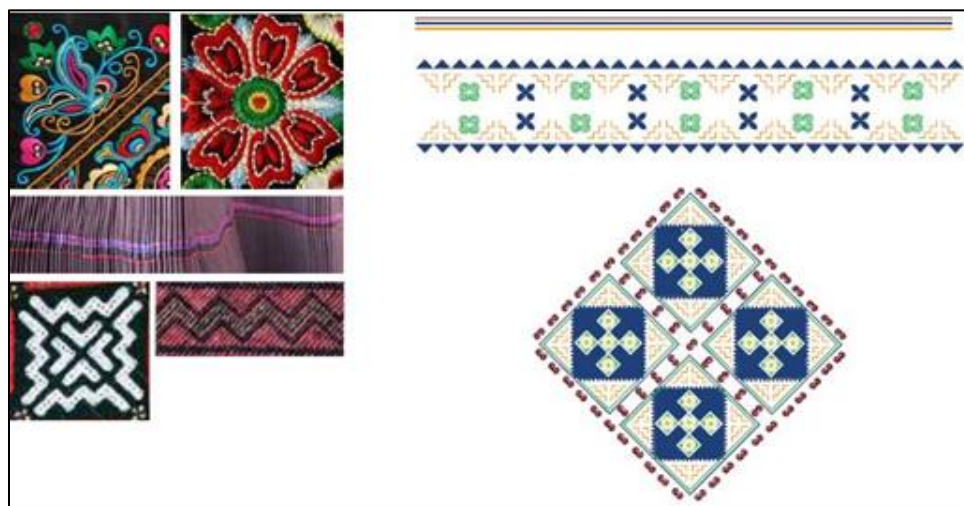
- 3) Planning or design is the stage for realizing the source of ideas from the mood board and turning them into a design with characteristics according to the theme raised by applying embroidery techniques, pleats, and beadings in the MINZU collection.
- 4) Product realization, the MINZU fashion collection work stage, which includes making fashion patterns, cutting fabric, sewing fabric into clothing, applying fabric manipulation (embroidery, pleats, and beadings), and finishing or perfecting the fashion collection by adding product accessories.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

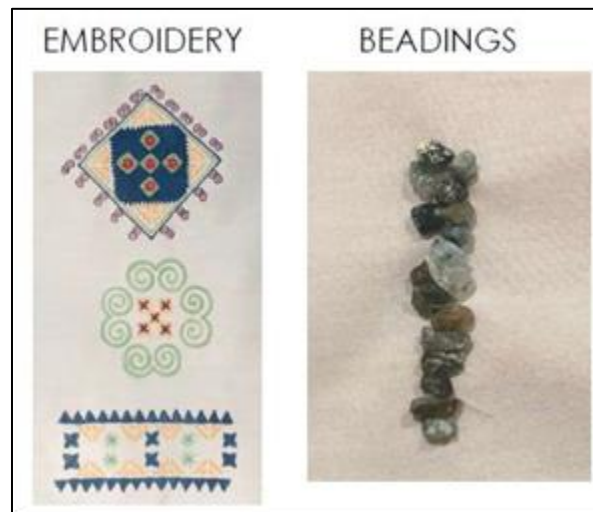
### Fashion Theory, Textile Material Design, and Color Psychology

The clothing theory used in this design is based on references from modest wear, namely clothing that covers more or does not emphasize the body's shape (Ahmad, 2016). Modest wear features simple cuts, usually worn because of religious or cultural background. Modest wear is also often used by most people worldwide for aesthetic reasons (Furseth, 2016). Modest wear aimed at designing the MINZU collection is clothing that can be worn for various formal events and has an elegant, simple, minimalist, or not excessive design.

Material design is a way to explore ideas in a material to provide detail or add value to an attractive product, material, or textile fabric to display a particular aesthetic (Aryani et al., 2020). Textile material designs include two types, namely raft designs and background designs. Raft design is a way of decorating fabric, such as adding color or motifs, which is done at the same time the fabric is made, for example, woven and plaited (Barnard, 2014). The background design adds aesthetic value by adding colors and motifs to the existing fabric, such as quilting, smock, patchwork, pleats, etc. The background designs in this MINZU fashion collection are beadings and embroidery. Beadings are a technique of completing or decorating clothing with beads. The beads used are stone-shaped beads with abstract shapes and patterns and have colors like natural stone. Beadings are intended to add aesthetics to clothing (Erliawati et al., 2018). Embroidery, commonly called embroidery, is the activity of embroidering thread on cloth or other materials to form designs with various motifs according to the maker's creativity, such as flowers, abstracts, animals, etc. (Erliawati et al., 2018). Making embroidery on fabric aims to create beauty in clothing to make it more attractive. Embroidery techniques can be done manually or digitally (using software applications via computer), with their uses and adapted to needs. The embroidery motifs used in the MINZU collection include floral, butterfly, mountain, stripes, and house motifs.



**FIGURE 1.** Miao Tribe embroidery reference (left) and embroidery design stylization (right).



**FIGURE 2.** Experiments on embroidery (left) and stone beads (right).

Colors have symbols and meanings in a particular society's culture (Daeli et al., 2019). Colors also have characters that give emotions to the user. In the MINZU collection, the colors chosen are red, yellow, green, blue, and white. These colors have psychological meanings: red symbolizes fire, which means good luck; yellow symbolizes earth, which means a prestigious color; green symbolizes nature, meaning health, luck, and harmony; blue represents wood, meaning strength; white symbolizes metal, meaning brightness and purity. The white color in the design gives a simple, strong, and minimalist impression. The colors used in designing the MINZU collection are derivatives of the colors in Table 2, adapted to modernity and the intended target market, namely women in urban society (Theodora & Aryani, 2022).

### Miao New Year Festival

The Miao New Year Festival has been taking place in Gui Zhou, China, for generations and is regularly held yearly. The Miao New Year festival is a traditional festival to celebrate and present the harvest to Miao ancestors, accompanied by horse racing and bullfighting events. The celebration takes place after the rice harvest in autumn, namely during September, October, or November in the Lunar Calendar. The Miao New Year Festival aims to gather all Miao people, especially Miao women who are married and live with their husbands. The Miao people gather and celebrate the festival, which lasts for three to five days, with all family members. At this festival, Miao women wear beautiful clothes with typical Miao embroidery (Long & Lee, 2021). Miao women perform elegant Reed-pipe dances accompanied by music played by youths and children (Bender, 2006; Tapp, 2023).



**FIGURE 3.** Miao New Year Festival atmosphere.

(Source: [http://www.china.org.cn/photos/2016-11/05/content\\_39643185.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/photos/2016-11/05/content_39643185.htm))

Miao women dress traditionally in specifically manufactured garments with a silhouette resembling a jacket or wrap shirt paired with a pleated skirt or extremely wide pants that mimic skirts to celebrate the Miao New Year Festival. Typically, the skirt is embellished with traditional Miao embroidery and tassels. According to research results (Xin & Liyun, 2020), The Miao New Year Festival aims to reunite the Miao tribe who live outside the Gui Zhou area. The Miao New Year Festival aims to promote brotherhood, respect ancestors through ceremonies, and engage in diverse cultural activities. This event is marked by beauty, joy, trust, and preservation of the Miao Tribe's traditions. The Miao tribe uses colors and symbols representing their ancestors' respect and having specific connotations in their beliefs (Xin & Liyun, 2020).

### **MINZU Modest Wear Collection**

The MINZU collection is intended for contemporary urban dwellers, with adult women who are gregarious, upbeat, and interested in ethnic things making up the target market. These MINZU collection's buzzwords are unique, colorful, and ethnic. Women's empowerment served as the trend reference for this fashion collection. Vibrant colors and bold designs aptly represent the Women's Empowerment subject, as these elements evoke a feminine essence and impart an elegant impression. Festive Fiesta, the sub-theme that reflects the trend, combines multicultural motifs with pattern-blocking components to create a modern bohemian look. Because the Festive Fiesta sub-theme features pattern blocking with ethnic motifs, it is, therefore, a trend reference consistent with the celebration of the unity of humanity. Four ready-to-wear ensembles from the MINZU collection result from studying many aspects of the modest wear trend, in addition to the theme and sub-theme approach. Every ensemble includes a motif derived from the traditional Miao tribe insignia, modernized to manipulate fabric through beading and embroidery. The MINZU fashion line includes wrap shirts or jacket-shaped blouses, bootcut pants, midi dresses, high-waisted wide-leg pants, and skirts with a midsection. Taffeta and solun, which are embroidered with designs and hues typical to the Miao tribe, are the materials utilized in the MINZU collection. Every piece of clothing uses fabric manipulation techniques, including beadings and embroidery.



**FIGURE 4.** MINZU collection design mood board.

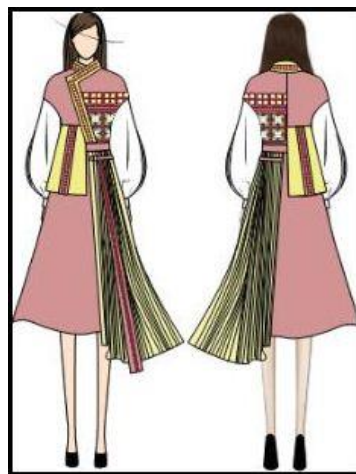


**FIGURE 5.** MINZU fashion collection front view.



**FIGURE 6.** MINZU fashion collection rear view.

A blouse with a jacket or wrap shirt silhouette paired with a midi skirt is the first look design from this collection. A characteristic Miao tribe motif is embroidered on the front of the blouse. On the midi skirt, however, are strap belts and pleats typical of Miao ethnic attire. A common Miao tribe motif is stitched on the strap. There are pleats on the midi skirt. A half-waist belt adorns the waist of this ensemble.



**FIGURE 7.** MINZU fashion collection's Look 1.



**FIGURE 8.** Actualization of the MINZU fashion collection's Look 1 photoshoot.

The Look 2 design comprises three pieces of apparel: culotte pants paired with an outer jacket/wrap shirt silhouette accentuated by a belt and an inside sleeveless shirt, as seen on the model. An embroidered piece is on one side of the pants, and a skirt-like fabric accent on the other. The blouse neck features pleats accentuating the belt, shaped like a dangling embroidered strap.



**FIGURE 9.** MINZU fashion collection's Look 2

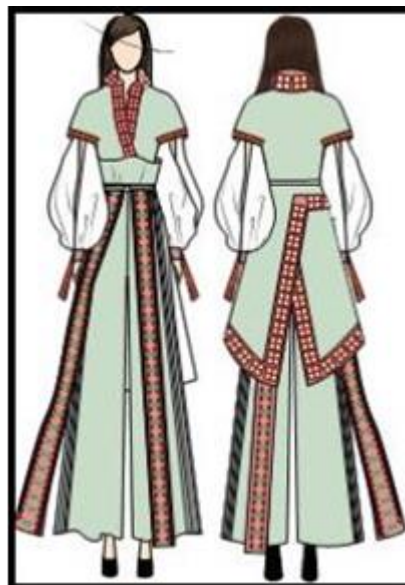
The design of Look 3 features a high Shanghai collar to draw attention to the outer, which is embellished with Miao embroidery. The outfit comprises a midi skirt with an unusual cut and an oversized shirt with wide sleeves inside. The pleats on the lower portion of the skirt add elegance to it (**FIGURE 10**).





**FIGURE 10.** MINZU fashion collection's Look 3.

The blouse in Look 4 is adorned with embroidery running the length of the collar and has a high collar. To create a modern image, the sleeves have wide, elongated slits. Together with broad, high-waisted pants, the blouse has a longer back. The positioning of pleats on the sides of the pants and the use of straps highlights the appearance of Look 4. Look 4 has an elegant and feminine feel thanks to the strap accent and the belt on the high-waist pants (**FIGURE 11**).

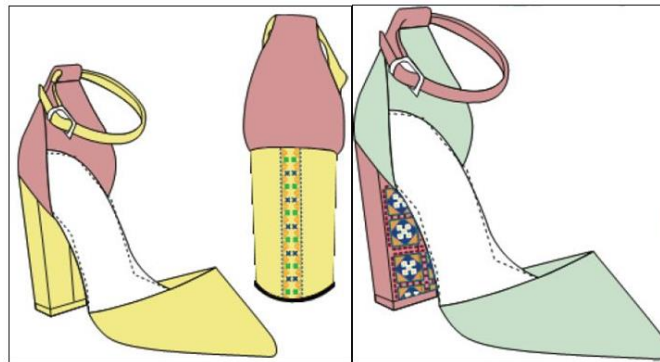


**FIGURE 11.** MINZU fashion collection's Look 4.



**FIGURE 12.** Actualization of the MINZU fashion collection's look four photoshoot.

Two shoe styles are available in this MINZU line. Embellished with motifs that complement the garment design, the ankle strap block heel shoe design has 10 cm high heels. Although they have different motif designs, both styles use the same shoe model. The synthetic leather material used in these two shoe designs, which match Looks 1 (FIGURE 8) and 4 (FIGURE 12), gives them a striking and feminine appeal.



**FIGURE 13.** In the MINZU fashion collection, shoes serve as accessories.

## CONCLUSION

MINZU drew inspiration for their collection of modest attire from the independence of the women of the Miao tribe, with nods to contemporary Indonesian fashion. Women Empowerment and Festive Fiesta are the sub-themes of Indonesian trend forecasting for 2020/2021. Several common emblems of the Miao tribe are applied through stylized needlework in the MINZU collection, which has been tailored to the target market and gives off a more contemporary appeal. Other material manipulations utilized in the MINZU collection include pleats, stone beadings, and embroidery. Because needlework manipulation accurately captures the traits and abilities of Miao tribe women, it is a preferred method of garment decoration. Using the themes and cultural outcomes of the Miao Tribe through the Miao New Year Festival, the complete MINZU collection's design seeks to produce modest apparel. The MINZU fashion collection is intended to create apparel for women that can convey an authoritative impression to the wearer, exhibiting an appearance that is in line with the modern urban woman's lifestyle of today—one that is more self-assured, active, creative, dynamic, and powerful. The MINZU collection aims to inspire people by showcasing elegant silhouettes, vibrant colors, and a multifunctional character that suits them for formal and informal occasions. This collection proves that modest wear designs do not have to look stiff and outdated. The MINZU line models modest wear styles that contemporary Indonesian women residing in urban regions can utilize, thanks to the skillful manipulation of fabric embroidery, beadings, and pleats.

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