

Research on Patchwork's Origin and Development

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Abstract

Patchwork is a handicraft to put some certain shapes of small cloths together. Historical records of patchwork was discovered in Ancient Egypt as far back as BC 1000. Patchwork has been popular in the England and in around 13-14th century, European spliced little pieces of cloths for cold necessities, which made the handle of patchwork techniques gradually tend to decorative other than utility. Patchwork designs and techniques were taken across the Atlantic to North America with the early settlers in the mid-eighteenth century. In the early years of 20th century, owing to the continuous technological advances, woman got more job opportunities that made patchwork technologies withered. Patchwork art continually evolved on the basis of historical and cultural factors to new styles, the famous Hawaiian, Stained Glass, Mola, Celtic, Victoria, Seminole and many other patchwork styles like that perfect embodied different art and cultures of different nations in different times.

Key words : patchwork, quilt, mola, seminole.

I. Introduction

Patchwork, known as Piecing, or Quilting, is a handicraft to put some certain shapes of small cloths together. Nowadays patchwork is becoming popular internationally, but people still hold different arguments on its origin and development. Research on its history helps to the patchwork with brighter future and better cultural heritage.

II. Patchwork's Origin and Development in Foreign Countries

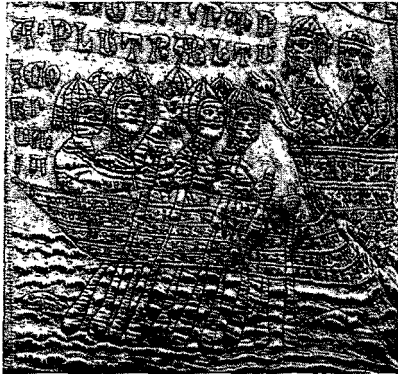
According to historical records and illustrations, patchwork was known in Ancient Egypt as far back as BC 1000; contemporarily, Tricivara called

as well as "Bai Xiu Yi", which originated in Indian Buddhism also belongs to the forms of ancient patchwork. The earliest surviving examples are fragments of pieced silks and damasks found in India which date from the sixth and ninth centuries AD.¹⁾

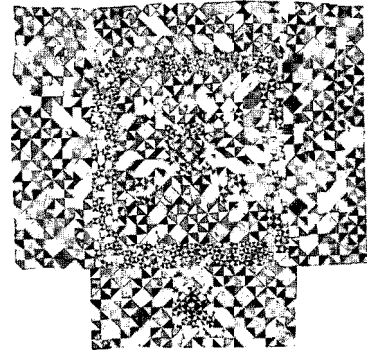
Patchwork has been popular in the England. At about 13-14th century, being attacked by cold snap, European spliced little pieces of cloths for cold necessities, which made the handle of patchwork techniques gradually tend to decorative other than utility, and that was most popular in U.K. Up to now, the earliest surviving examples of British patchwork was the set of bed furnishings at Levents Hall in Kendal, Cumbria, made there in 1708. While the earliest preservation of patchwork quilting was Sisilian in Italy. <Fig. 1> shows

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1) Dorothy Osler, *Machine Patchwork: Technique and Design* (London: B.T.Batsford, 1987), p.89.



〈Fig. 1〉 Linen Patchwork Quilting in 1400.



〈Fig. 2〉 Patchwork Production during 1788-1790.

a Sicily Linen Patchwork quilting worked in 1400, which is now preserved in the museum of Victoria and Albert in London.²⁾

Patchwork designs and techniques were taken across the Atlantic to North America with the early settlers from both Britain and the Low Countries of Europe. It was followed with widely popular and was given a new design style, which developed into a unique American patchwork design style later. The hundred years or so between the mid-eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century were generally accepted as the hey-day of both American and British patchwork.³⁾ But it was also generally accepted that the patchwork quilts produced in America at that time achieved much greater heights of creativity and originality than their British counterparts, and showed a very high standard of workmanship. During this process, it was brought about a wide range of patchwork patterns, thus appeared one-shape patchwork, block patchwork, crazy patchwork, and so on. With the arrival of the first industrial revolution in 1860s, when Mechanized production gradually replaced the hand-crafted, machine sewing patchwork, this greatly improved the patchwork technologies. In early 1960s, patchwork still survived among some small number of enthusiasts,

then faded-out, 〈Fig. 2〉 shows a silk patchwork production during 1788 to 1790.⁴⁾

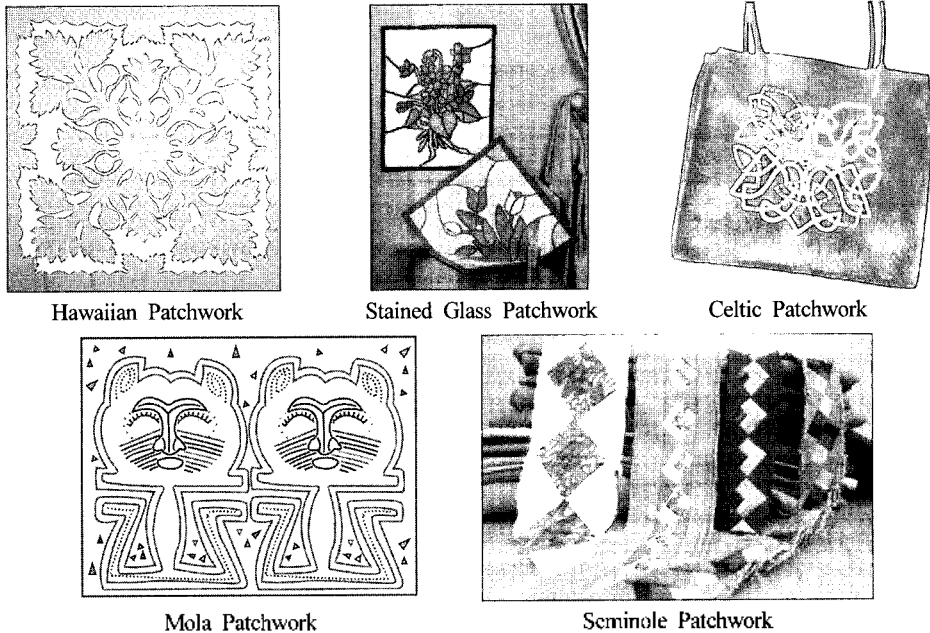
In the early years of 20th century, owing to the continuous technological advances, woman got more job opportunities that made patchwork technologies withered. However, since the global economic panic happened in October 1929, a lot of used cloths get reused; moreover, comities sponsored matches on quilting and evolved in kinds of patchwork competitions, patchwork got in once again. After World War II, people could hardly remember patchwork's existence before 1970 when it re-attracted social attention during the women's liberation movement in the United States. Then Patchwork Quilt Association and Organizations which held kinds of exhibitions as well as competitions were set up. Annual Quilting Show Award hold by the USA Patchwork Association has been running for nearly 40 sessions, with its scale expanding from only 7 people at the first place to 200 branches in 33 states and total number of 5,500 members. It is so evident that patchwork is badly popular all over the world.

With spreading wider and developing better, patchwork art continually evolved on the basis of historical and cultural factors to new styles,

2) Donna Kooler, *Encyclopedia of Quilting* (A Leisure Arts Publication, 2005), p.76.

3) Dorothy Osler, *op. cit.*, p.33.

4) Donna Kooler, *op. cit.*, p.75.



〈Fig. 3〉 Examples of Different Patchwork art Styles (Wang, 2009).

the famous Hawaiian, Stained Glass, Mola, Celtic, Victoria, Seminole and many other patchwork styles like that perfect embodied different art and cultures of different nations in different times (Fig. 3).

By the end of 20th century, patchwork was welcomed in Japan, Korca, South Asia and China's Taiwan. In 1970, patchwork was introduced to Japan through the Exposition, and then Japanese institutionalized and systematized it into teaching curriculum and teachers' training means. Combined with marketing, a patchwork market which centered with housewives rose, leading the popularity of patchwork in Asia. After that, creative Patchwork DIY boomed, followed with corresponding materials market's expanding and exhibitions showed up throughout the world.

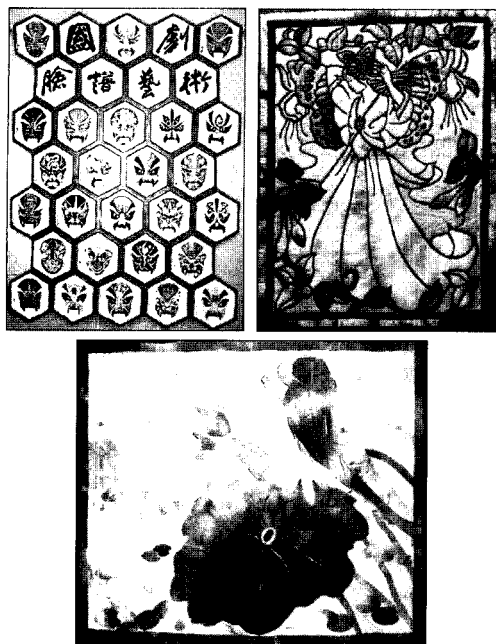
III. Patchwork's Origin and Development in China

Patchwork originally developed in Taiwan. In 1990, Guangqiao Company introduced systemically Japanese teaching system and relevant materials.

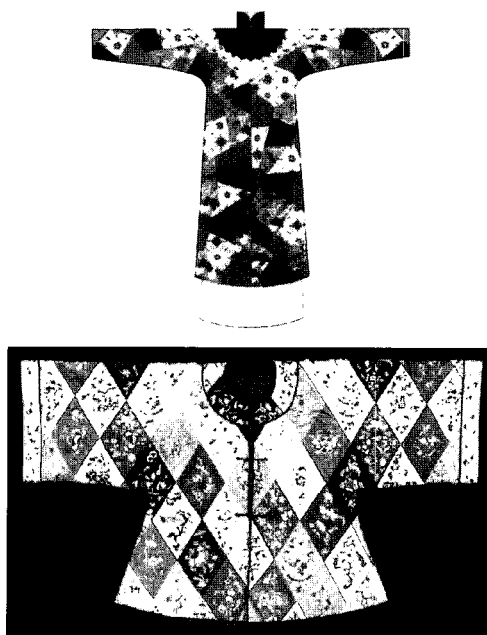
Until now patchwork has become a tide in Taiwan. Patchwork was known by people in mainland of China was in 2002 because of the first patchwork shop "Xileduo" in Hongqiao area. After that the patchwork art exhibitions are held every year. Training courses and all kinds of Patchwork works emerge in an endless stream. Patchwork work with Chinese elements has emerged gradually, such as the pattern of facial mask and Chinese folk characteristics. 〈Fig. 4〉 shows the works with Chinese character.

Although the word "patchwork" was just introduced to China, the concept of "patchwork" had already appeared in Chinese dynasties apparel, just not the same name.

It is recorded that since Buddhism was introduced into China in 1-2 century AD, "Bai Xiu Yi" has continued to evolve. "Bai Jia Yi" which has the meaning of "good wish" worn by children in the Tang Dynasty is also a prototype of patchwork. According to 〈Miscellanea of Fairy〉, "Bai Jia Yi" was called "sword coat" in ancient and "Bai Jia Yi" in the Tang Dynasty, From which we can see the patchwork has long been popular



〈Fig. 4〉 Chinese Character Patchworks (from Yimian and Asia Patchwork Festival 2009).



〈Fig. 5〉 Paddy Clothing in the Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty (www.zh5000.com).

in Chinese folk, especially in North China.

"The beggar's gown", also known as "poor clothing" in costumes is another combination of different cloths, drama actors who wear these clothes are indicated to be dignified before the play end; In Ming and Qing dynasties "paddy clothing" (Fig. 5) was pieced by colors of small brocade cloths on which colored fabrics interwove and looked like paddy fields, that's why "paddy clothing" was called. It was just like Wang Wei described in his poem that "learning paddy fields, tailoring pretty garments," (Xibao Zhou, 1984). Paddy clothing had being changed styles from symmetry to uneven splicing, lead to the diversity styles of patchwork developing.

It can be seen from our country's modern history that patchwork was not inherited in China, what is wide spreading here now was originated in western countries. However, people cannot deny that patchwork had been developed in China; it is an art of Chinese classical flavor which presented Chinese history and culture of ancient clothes.

IV. Conclusion

Patchwork has a long history throughout multiple stages; it is closely linked with our social and culture. Patchwork in the West, which is also the origin of nowadays' popularity all over the world was inherited well. Different styles reflect different nationalities of different periods. To explore the origin and development helps to apply cultural elements into the design of present products. This research will make great sense for the cultural heritage and further development of the patchwork.

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