

### Visual Rhetoric Strategies of the Oroqen Ethnic Group's Traditional Patterns

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#### **Abstract**

The traditional patterns of the Orogen ethnic group are the embodiment of the Orogen ethnic group's culture and history. The patterns carry meanings and reflect the dynamic development of the Orogen ethnic group. In order to elucidate the traditional patterns of the Orgoen ethnic group, combined with the interviews, content analysis, document analysis, and grounded theory, the research focuses on the rhetoric strategies of the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns. The article aimed to study (1)How is the spacial rhetoric embodied in the Orogen ethnic group's patterns?(2)How is the emotional rhetoric showed in the Orogen ethnic group's patterns? (3) How is the identity rhetoric represented in the Orogen ethnic group's patterns? Guided by the research questions, the findings are as follows: 1. The spacial rhetoric is embodied in the natural scenery elements, which are reflected in the Orogen ethnic patterns including floral patterns, cloudy patterns, mountain patterns and so on. 2. The emotional rhetoric of the Orogen ethnic group mainly reflects in the images. The production of cultural image in the discourse expression system of visual rhetoric is the core strategy of visual discourse construction. 3. The identity rhetoric is mainly embodied in the national identity and the recognition of the Orogen ethnic group. The study offers a new perspective of the Orogen ethnic group's traditional patterns and ethnosemotics and extends the research scope of the Orogen ethnic group.

**Keywords:** the Orogen ethnic group; traditional patterns; visual rhetoric strategies

#### Introduction

Ethnic issue is a hot issue, the solution to which will influence the development of a nation, especially for China, for there are 56 ethnic groups in total. The study of the ethnic group has been the focus of many fields, such as sociology, ethnics, humanities and so forth. As one of the ethnic group in China, the Oroqen ethnic group has also been studied from many perspectives by scholars. However, the early studies normally adopt the perspective of ethnography, paying attention to the history and documents. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Peirce's (1935) semiotics provided a new perspective for people to view the world; therefore, from the perspective of semiotics, as an ethic group, the Oroqen ethnic group is a single semiosphere, in which there are quite a number of things worth studying. Relatively speaking, the study on the Oroqen ethnic group, especially in the perspective of semiotics, is still in an early stage in China.

The Oroqen ethnic group is not only one of China's ethnic groups but also one of ethnic groups with the smallest population. According to the data in 2021, the total number of the population is only 9168. To some degree, this ethnic group needs paying much attention to, for it is an endangered ethnic group. Therefore, it is urgent and necessary to do the research on the Oroqen ethnic group so that more and more people can know about the Oroqen ethnic group and its culture. Historically, the Oroqen ethnic group used to live by hunting and dwell in the mountains which were located in the Greater and Lesser Xinggan Mountains. The people of the Oroqen ethnic group were nomads, whose lifestyles have formed exclusive culture of the Oroqen ethnic group. However, this ethnic group only has an oral language without a written one, which is one of the main reasons that the Oroqen ethnic group is endangered. Fortunately, the Oroqen ethnic group has rich patterns which are a convenient and vital way to record and pass on culture. That is to say, the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns are the embodiment of the spirits, living conditions, rosy forecast, customs and so forth.

Therefore, the study mainly adopts the grounded theory, interviews, document analysis, and content analysis to explore the visual rhetoric strategies of the Oroqen ethnic group's traditional patterns, which will offer a reference to the study of ethnography in China and further broaden the application of semiotics.

### Research objectives

The research objectives of this article focus on the following: How is the spacial rhetoric embodied in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns? How is the emotional rhetoric showed in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns? How is the identity rhetoric represented in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns?

#### **Literature Review**

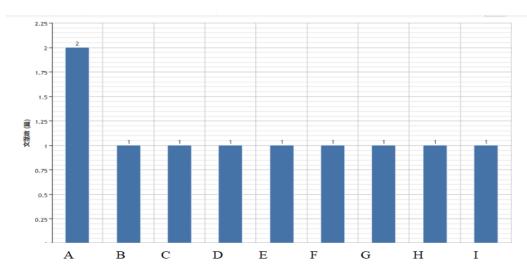
The research mainly takes China National Knowledge Infrastructure (hereinafter referred to as CNKI) as the main data resource, which is the most frequently used platform to obtain research materials. The research samples were retrieved on September 7, 2022 and the research topic is "the Oroqen ethnic group". The findings show that the research on the Oroqen ethnic group is more and more year by year.



Fig.1 The Yearly Research on the Orogen ethic group

The former research on the Orogen ethnic group mainly focuses on the culture, tourism, music, dance, religion and so on. Du (2021) summarizes that at present, there are many comprehensive works on the Orogen people, including history, culture, society and other aspects, and a lot of studies on the intangible cultural heritage of the Orogen people. In terms of thematic research, including different types of intangible cultural heritage research, comparative research, survey reports, inheritance and promotion research, etc. In terms of theoretical research, the main research to protect, inheritance and carry forward the excellent intangible cultural heritage, the national intangible heritage protection, inheritance is conducive to the identity of Chinese culture, attaches great importance to the protection of regional intangible cultural heritage, inheritance, the Orogen ethnic group's intangible cultural heritage protection, inheritance creative transformation and innovative development, etc. Huang (2021) points out that based on the rich characteristic traditional culture of the Orogen ethnic group, the development countermeasures of the Orogen cultural tourism project integrating the national spirit and cultural characteristics is studied, which try to endow the traditional culture of Orogen with the characteristics of the times, and further expand the cultural tourism market of China, and create a unique brand of Orogen cultural tourism brand.

Inputted the keyword "the patterns of the Oroqen ethnic group", only ten articles were retrieved.



A:The Orogen ethnic group

B:visual design

C:traditional patterns

D:the Orogen history

E:signs

F:signs and design

G:video

H:ethnics

I:visual signs

Fig2. The related research topic of the Orogen ethnic group

Among these ten articles, Zhang (2011), Wang (2010), Zhou (2020), Li (2021), Yan (2021) and other scholars respectively explored the patterns of the Oroqen ethnic group, some of which were attached to the connotations of the patterns, some of which focused on the

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applications of the patterns. However, most of the research stays the level of the introduction of patterns and does not explore the theoretical level. Only four of them are related to semiotics. Most of them show that the title is related to signs, but the content has little to do with it.

The Orogen ethnic group has closely relationship with rhetoric. The traditional rhetoric places an importance on the meanings. As a matter of fact, the meanings occur in the specific communication structure and practice situation, so it mainly focuses on the rules, use and effects of significance. Semiotics aims to explore a reference relationship and meaning structure leading to the semiosis representation from the form and structure level of the object. Any semiotic system has a dimension of rhetoric, and visual images can also be studied in the sense of rhetoric (Fross, 1986). visual rhetoric is an emerging research field, emphasizing the visual medium text, spatial text, event text as the main rhetorical object, through the strategic use of visual text, and the strategic construction and production of visual discourse, achieve persuasion, dialogue and communication function of a practice and method of (Liu, 2017, p.101). Visual rhetoric is not only an epistemology and methodology, but also a practical theory, thus providing a theoretical paradigm for conducting research on visual topics. Commonly, there are three basic types of the visual rhetoric according to the objects: the representation of visual objects, including films, drawings, advertisements, games, the experience of visual objects, such as parks, gardens, museums and the process of the visual objects, including rituals, image events and so on. The Orogen ethnic patterns belong to the first type, which is the presentation of objects.

Based on the above literature review, it can be founded that in recent years, the research of the Oroqen ethnic group has been paid more and more attention to and the research scope is extended larger and topic are much more than before; however, in the perspective of semiotics, the related study is comparative not much, which is worth scholars' focusing on.

## Methodology

Combined with the interviews, content analysis, document analysis, and grounded theory, the research focuses on the rhetoric strategies of the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns. The research questions are the following: How is the spacial rhetoric embodied in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns? How is the emotional rhetoric showed in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns? How is the identity rhetoric represented in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns?

Quantitative and qualitative methods are employed in the study, including the grounded theory, interviews, document analysis and content analysis.

Grounded Theory is a method of qualitative research, mainly designed to build a theory based on empirical data. (Strauss, 1987, p.5) Researchers generally have no theoretical assumptions before the start of the research. They directly start from the actual observation, summarize the experience from the original data, and then rise to the systematic theory. In this research, the grounded theory is used to explore the elements of the spacial representation. With the help of the grounded theory, the elements are concluded in the following: natural views and customs. This is a reply to the first question "How is the spacial rhetoric embodied in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns?".

Interviews are one of methods to obtain the data that the study requires. Actually, in reply to the first research question, fifty interviewees are interviewed are employed to illustrate

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the meanings and connotations of the patterns.

Document analysis is mainly applied to the initial part the study, which is used to sort out the documents and get a general outline of the research state of the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns and visual rhetoric.

Content analysis is used to explore the rhetoric strategies, including the spacial rhetoric, emotional rhetoric, and identity rhetoric. All the content is analyzed in the following research objectives: How is the spacial rhetoric embodied in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns? How is the emotional rhetoric showed in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns? How is the identity rhetoric represented in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns?

### **Findings and Discussions**

The starting point of the study of visual rhetoric strategies is the semiotic analysis of visual images, and signs as a communication tool always associate with real-world matter to convey specific meaning. By studying the semiotic elements of the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns, the spacial representation view is constructed. Culture is the spiritual connotation of human production activities. The patterns of the Oroqen ethnic group is the embodiment of the Oroqen ethnic group, which depends on the visual cultural signs to express, thus making the patterns concrete and living. Based on the interviews and the grounded theory, the patterns of the Oroqen ethnic group is summed up the following elements to explore how the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns employ the visual signs to construct the spacial representation landscape.

### The findings and discussions in terms of the first objective

According to the first research question, "How is the spacial rhetoric embodied in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns?", the spacial rhetoric is embodied in the natural scenery elements.

The natural scenery elements are reflected in the Oroqen ethnic patterns including floral patterns, cloudy patterns, mountain patterns and so on. These elements are closely connected with the environment of the Oroqen ethnic group.

The Oroqen people mainly live in the mountain forest area of the Greater Hinggan Mountains, and the terrain is between 500 and 1500 meters above sea level, which is the alpine mountain area. The annual average temperature is about minus 20 degrees Celsius. The Hinggan Mountains habitat of deer, roe deer, tigers, leopards, wild boars, bears, foxes, and other wild animals, with crisscross rivers growing all kinds of fish. This superior natural environment of the best natural hunting ground, provide a rich source of food and clothing for the hunting Oroqen people.

Due to the living environment, the Oroqen people have lived in the mountains for a long time and have developed the deep love for natural scenery, so the design of decorative patterns reflects a beautiful natural image, fully highlighting the artistic characteristics of the harmonious coexistence between human beings and nature. The decorative pattern design with natural objects as the main theme is based on the prototype, and various forms of geometric figures and lines are used in the reproduction process.



Every one of the Oroqen ethnic group is the creator of the patterns, due to different people for the same object produce different aesthetic emotion, therefore, the pattern of the same thing also has a variety of forms of expression, for example, the butterfly and clouds modelling is not confined to a form, presented in the form of beauty. Most of the decorative patterns of the Oroqen people contain an auspicious meaning, such as forever, good luck, peace, festival, long life and other beautiful wishes. Through the structure and combination of figures, the Oroqen people create rich and widely used traditional patterns, which also reflect the Oroqen people's perfect and perfect aesthetic pursuit in the creation of artistic patterns. In addition, the Oroqen ethnic group lies in the process of the integration of other ethnic groups. The ethnic decorative patterns also draw lessons from the excellent pattern elements of the other ethnic groups, reflecting the aesthetic inclusiveness characteristics of the Oroqen ethnic group.

The creation of patterns is derived from the nature, and the life of people. That is, nature and human life can not be separated and they are in a harmony state in the long run of development. In the creation of the Orogen ethnic group's patterns, the creation of the Orogen ethnic group's patterns is closely related to the nature. In the construction of the patterns, the representation of the natural scenery is the main visual signs that the makers of the pattern signs intend to express towards the natural scenery, which is of great significance to the representation of the Orogen ethnic group's patterns. The scenery shows the most realistic natural and ecological impressions towards the living conditions of the Orogen ethnic group. As landscape signs, they manifest the features of the Orogen ethnic group. Through the visual analysis of metonymy of the natural landscape signs and the paradigmatic of the visual signs of the natural scenery with local characteristics, the overall cognitive association mechanism of the viewer is activated, and the overall cognition of the audience on a style of a region is realized. Besides, from the perspective of visual metaphor, in the natural scenery built with natural signs, the appropriation of green mountains, green waters, ancient trees, pine, bamboo, cypress, lotus, chrysanthemum and other natural images reflects the harmony state of the Oroqen ethnic group with nature.

## The findings and discussions in terms of the second objective

According to the second research question, "How is the emotional rhetoric showed in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns", the emotional rhetoric of the Oroqen ethnic group mainly reflects in the images. "The reason why images quietly weave some kind of persuasion, and arouse the emotional resonance of the viewer is that the rhetorical strategy is the production of the established "rhetorical image". (Liu, 2018, p.1) The production of cultural image in the discourse expression system of visual rhetoric is the core strategy of visual discourse construction. Image is the unified relationship between rhetorical form and symbolic content: the representation of objects is the material carrier of visual rhetoric, that is, the symbolic form expression of visual objects, and meaning is rhetorical speech, which emphasizes the meaning behind the objects and the symbolic significance of visual objects. The production of cultural image in the discourse expression system of visual rhetoric is the core strategy of visual discourse construction.

The practice of image production is crucial for us to understand how it realizes the identity construction of rhetorical discourse. As a symbol form, its generation and development are shaped by subjective initiative, time fluidity and cultural evolution. The prototype image is *Res Militaris*, vol.12, n°2, Summer-Autumn 2022 8010



the most stable form in the image form, adhering to the collective unconscious identity. The visual rhetoric of the Oroqen ethnic group equals to a universally shared empirical cognitive framework. In the Oroqen ethnic group's culture, the reverence towards the nature is the cultural structure handed down through the baptism of time in the long history. It is a common mode of people's understanding of the emotion of nature. The image of reverence has formed the emotional identity of the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns, which is the prototype image of the visual rhetoric creation of patterns.

Visual metaphor and visual metonymy are two basic rhetorical means for image symbols to construct cultural images. In the practice of visual rhetoric of the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns, the construction of reverence image mainly appeals to the concept metonymy of image symbols.

The Oroqen people used to believe in shamanism and worship the many gods. "Animism, eternal soul" is the core of their shamanism, including nature worship, totem worship, ancestor worship and so on. Shamanism believed that mountains, trees, animals, rivers, rocks, etc., all have souls, and believed that these natural species have supernatural properties or worship them sacred. Because these are the dependent objects that human life and survival depends on. The Oroqen people worship all kinds of natural things, admire the ancient trees, tall stones and some strange shadows, and dare not offend them easily. The Oroqen people worship all kinds of natural things, admire the ancient trees, tall stones and some strange shadows, and dare not offend them easily. Therefore, the patterns of the sun, the moon and others are the embodiment of the whole and the part.

In the visual construction of the ecological image of the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns, the most commonly used rhetoric form is the visual metaphor. What is a visual metaphor? When we explain a concept of communication dilemma, and try to use another widely representative concept instead of the meaning, namely along the universal cognitive system to grasp the existing view, this is the metaphor, and the metaphor is visual requisition a visual symbol to express self cognitive view. It needs to be pointed out that both linguistic metaphor or visual metaphor in visual rhetoric, refers to the object is ontology and alternative object namely metaphor body in the symbolic sense has certain similarity, and must be corresponding to two different areas, in cognitive understanding namely image between multiple different symbol system.

Visual metaphor is not only a form of metaphor, but also a way of thinking to understand and perceive the world. At the same time, the application of metaphor also represents the generation of new ideas. The various decorative patterns created by Oroqen people have great artistic sense and aesthetic significance, although the original design is for practical purposes. Cloud and bird patterns are the earliest decorative patterns used by the Oroqen people, because the birds and clouds are closest to the gods they believe in, so they become a symbol of holiness and auspiciousness. The Oroqen people combine various points and lines to form a rhythmic pattern. The layout of these points and lines is very regular, and they deliberately maintain a symmetrical relationship in the simple and regular repetition, and embody the aesthetic motivation and aesthetic pursuit with Oroqen ethnic group's characteristics. The Oroqen people like to use decorative patterns with geometric patterns, and cleverly layout the decorative patterns in practice, simple but beautifully reuse some decorative patterns, making it natural with the material and state of the costumes and utensils. The Oroqen people strive to make different decorative patterns simple and simple, so that even those complex and changeable patterns still

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maintain a simple and simple style. This simple layout of the aesthetic consciousness reflects the orogen people in simple boring, day after day production practice of fishing and hunting and forest life, always maintain the love of nature, yearning for freedom and longing for the future, pattern design and application reflects the perfect combination of the Orogen people and nature.

Visual metaphor is not only a kind of rhetoric, but also a means of recognizing and perceiving the world. In the meanwhile, the application of visual metaphor represents that the patterns created by the Oroqen people are of great importance, although they designed them for the practical use at first.

Patterns of Clouds and birds are the earliest ones that the Oroqen people created. The reason is that they believe that clouds and birds are most close to the heaven and they are the symbols of good luck. The Oroqen people combine all kinds of points and lines together to form the patterns with rhythms. These patterns are arranged in a certain rule and in the simple law of repetition, the symmetry relationship is maintained, combined with the aesthetic motivation and aesthetic pursuit with Oroqen national characteristics. From these patterns, it could be inferred that the Oroqen people are fond of using decorative patterns with geometric patterns, and skillfully layou the decorative patterns in practice, simple but beautifully reuse some decorative patterns, making it natural with the material and state of the costumes and utensils. The Oroqen people strive to make different decorative patterns simple so that even those complex and changeable patterns still maintain a simple style. This simple layout of the aesthetic consciousness reflects the Oroqen people in simple boring, daily production practice of fishing and hunting and forest life, always maintain the love of nature, yearning for freedom and longing for the future, pattern design and application reflects the perfect combination of the Oroqen people and nature.

### The findings and discussions in terms of the third objective

In terms of the third research question, "How is the identity rhetoric represented in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns?" the Identity rhetoric is mainly embodied in the national identity and the recognition of the Oroqen ethnic group.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the communist party of China and the Chinese government firmly grasp the theme of common prosperity and development, adhere to their national conditions, sum up historical experience, draw lessons from other countries, create the correct path with Chinese characteristics to solve the national problem, establish and implement the national equality, national unity, regional national autonomy and common prosperity as the basic content of national policy, and form a relatively complete national policy system. The Oroqen ethnic group's patterns are important means to show China's national policies. The Oroqen handicraft-men are the main subjects to make the visual practice. These patterns in the visual rhetoric follow the needs of the times and policies and show the dominant role of China's discourse. National discourse, the representative of the mainstream ideology of the country and the will of the ruling party, is the means for the government to stably manage the country, so that the people of the whole country can have a common imagination of the country.

Besides, China put forward the concept of "targeted poverty alleviation", which means everyone in China should has the right to live a rich and happy life. Just as what Xin

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jinping, China's president said, General Secretary Xi Jinping has said, in the process of completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, no ethnic group should be left behind. It is based on the belief that the 56 ethnic groups have a linked destiny and share weal and woe that General Secretary Xi Jinping's important discourse on targeted poverty alleviation in ethnic minority areas has gradually taken shape. In 2013, General Secretary Xi Jinping first put forward the concept of "targeted poverty alleviation" during his visit to Shadong Village, Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Hunan Province. In 2015, he further put forward the "six precise" views during his investigation to Guizhou, China. These important statements provide solid theoretical guidance for poverty alleviation in ethnic minority areas.

All these measures and policies contribute to the identity rhetoric represented in the Oroqen ethnic group. Just because of these policies, the people of the Oroqen ethnic group have enough confidence to construct their lives and put efforts to the economy development, and the making of traditional patterns is one of them.

What's more, the identity recognition of the Oroqen ethnic group itself is also of great importance. The identity recognition means individuals regard themselves as the psychological cognition of a certain group in the emotion and value sense. Through the visual rhetoric practice, the stories, memories, history and others of the Oroqen ethnic group have been immersed in the Oroqen ethnic group's traditional patterns, making the patterns filled with new meanings. In terms of the visitors, the experiences towards the traditional patterns of the Oroqen ethnic group trigger the visitors to have the feelings of the Oroqen people. At the moment, she or he got the cognition and established the identity of the Oroqen ethnic group.

In the process of China's fast development, there has been a long time that the ethnic group is in an undeveloped state. When it comes to the Oroqen ethnic group, people always associate it with poverty. However, as the implement of rural revitalization, the values of the Oroqen ethnic group have been noticed by the society and the traditional patterns are considered as a media to introduce the Oroqen ethnic group. Through these patterns, the Oroqen people established the identity recognition.

#### **Conclusion**

Rhetoric strategies are ontological questions of the visual rhetoric paradigm designed to respond to the rhetorical effects of visual research. Since the "linguistic turn" in the 1960s, "speech act" has become a very important rhetorical issue, while the study of the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns is beyond the traditional language study. The new rhetoric expands the rhetorical object from language to all non-verbal symbols including visual signs, and then examines the problem of rhetoric in the symbolic practice of the symbol itself. Visual rhetoric not only stresses the functions but also the mechanisms and the effects of rhetoric. Thus, the study combines semiotics with rhetoric to apply in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns. The purpose is not only attached to the meanings of the patterns but also the effects of the patterns. That is to say, the identity is paid attention to. The study focuses on three questions: How is the spacial rhetoric embodied in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns? How is the emotional rhetoric showed in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns? How is the identity rhetoric represented in the Oroqen ethnic group's patterns?

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Guided by the research objectives and based on interviews, content analysis, grounded theory and other methods, the findings are the following: the spacial rhetoric is embodied in the natural scenery elements, which are reflected in the Oroqen ethnic patterns including floral patterns, cloudy patterns, mountain patterns and so on. The emotional rhetoric of the Oroqen ethnic group mainly reflects in the images. The production of cultural image in the discourse expression system of visual rhetoric is the core strategy of visual discourse construction. The Identity rhetoric is mainly embodied in the national identity and the recognition of the Oroqen ethnic group. The study of visual rhetoric strategies of the Oroqen Ethnic Group's traditional patterns offers a new perspective of the Oroqen ethnic group's traditional patterns and ethnosemotics and extends the research scope of the Oroqen ethnic group.

#### **Suggestions**

The study on visual rhetoric strategies of the Oroqen Ethnic Group's traditional patterns has extended the scope of traditional patterns of the Oroqen ethnic group and has enriched the traditional semiotics and rhetoric; however, the visual rhetoric strategies are not limited in spacial, emotional and identity. In the future, the research should be explored further.

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