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# Analysis on the Shape and Pattern Art of the Baby Bibs in the Republic of China Period (1912-1949)

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**Abstract**
Baby bib is a popular clothing accessory during the Republic of China period. This article takes baby bibs in this period as a case to analyze their style and pattern characteristics. Results showed that the baby bib shapes can be classified into three types, including geometric shape, plant shape and animal or children shape. Geometric shaped bibs account for the largest proportion due to their relatively simple craftsmanship. The embroidery patterns of the bibs include plants, animals and human related items, with peony and butterfly being the mostly used patterns. Among the bibs, 48% bibs have peony embroidery and 30% bibs have butterfly embroidery. Tiger patterns are also greatly used because of the implied meaning of tiger being able to drive away evils and protect the children. The study provides a reference for elucidating the artistic and cultural connotations of this folk clothing during the Republic of China.

**Keywords**
baby bib, folk art, shape characteristic, pattern Characteristics.

## 1. Introduction

Bib, a clothing accessory exclusive to babies and young children, is wrapped around the baby's neck to prevent saliva from making clothes wet and food from making clothes dirty. From ancient China to the present, bibs have been an indispensable clothing accessory for Chinese babies and young children during their growth process. Not only in China, but also in western countries, baby bibs are extensively used today, and the materials for bibs are more extensive, including not only textiles, but as well as plastics [1].

Baby bibs in China can be traced back to the Han Dynasty. Xiong Yang in the Western Han Dynasty mentioned the word "Yige" in his book named "Dialect Verification Note". Pu Guo in the Jin Dynasty marked it as "children's clothing used for preventing saliva" [2]. The "Rites and Customs" section of the "Laiyang County Annals" published in the Republic of China records: "The baby bib is called 'Weizui', and also called as 'Zhejin' [3]." Therefore, baby bib is also known as "Weizui and Zhejin". Bib is a clothing accessory developed from the adult's garment piece wrapped around the neck and draped over the shoulders. In the field of Chinese clothing culture research, scholars categorized baby bibs as "small cloud shoulders (also known as Yunjian)" due to the similarities in shape, decorative patterns to female cloud shoulders [4]. Therefore, the origin of baby bibs is often associated with the female cloud shoulders.

Baby bibs were popular during the late Qing Dynasty and reached its peak during the Republic of China period (from 1912 to 1949) [5]. The popularity of baby bibs in the Republic of China period can be reflected from many old photos, for instance, a baby wearing bib in an advertisement of Yingrui milk powder was published on page 22 in issue 58 of Liangyou Pictorial which was a famous magazine during the Republic of China [6]. In the meanwhile, the economy of the Republic of China declined due to the impact of war and turmoil, and women were forced to work for a living, taking on dual roles of family and profession. However, handicrafts such as spinning, weaving, and embroidery were still the daily lives of common people of women during the Republic of China [7]. Mothers made bibs by hands for their children as daily clothes and devoted their love and blessings to children through bibs. Baby bibs in the Republic of China period vividly displayed the folk art of that time.

This article studied the shape and pattern art of the baby bibs in the Republic of China period collected from different museums. The shape and pattern characteristics of these bibs were analyzed and compared to give an understanding of the folk art in the Republic of China period. From this article, we can pry into the wisdom, innermost being and aesthetic taste of the females in that period.

## 2. Materials and methods

Exhibits of baby bibs from different museums (shown in Table 1) were collected. These museums are located in Shanghai, Jiangsu Province and Zhejiang Province, which are the Yangtze River Delta regions. The Yangtze River Delta regions were the most prosperous region in Chinese history for a long time of period, and even today in modern China it is the most prosperous region with Shanghai as the economic center of it. The textile industry, especially the silks, of the Yangtze River Delta regions is also very prosperous. Therefore, exhibits from museums of this area were chosen and studied. The museums included China National Silk Museum, Folk Art Museum of China Academy of Art, Hangzhou Museum of Arts and Crafts, Silk Museum of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, Shanghai Textile and Apparel Museum and Suzhou Silk Museum. After careful classification and inspection, 33



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| Source | China National Silk Museum | Folk Art Museum of China Academy of Art | Hangzhou Museum of Arts and Crafts | Silk Museum of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University | Shanghai Textile and Apparel Museum | Suzhou Silk Museum | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quantity | 13 | 15 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 33 |

*Table 1. The baby bibs from different museums*

items which were made in the Republic of China period were selected and analyzed (Table 1). Empirical, theoretical, and graphical methods were used for the investigation according to the research method of Kumpikaite et al. [8]. The detailed pattern characteristics of the bibs were depicted by Adobe Illustrator and were analyzed.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. The shape art of the bibs in the Republic of China

There are many shape types of baby bibs in the Republic of China, including animal shapes, plant shapes and shapes in daily life objects. These bibs are cut and sewn in one piece or multiple pieces which are spliced and sewn together by strips. Overall, they can be divided into three categories: geometric shapes, plant shapes, and animal or baby shapes, with geometric shapes accounting for the majority. These shapes are mostly in the form of axial symmetry or central symmetry. In order to conform to the human neck circumference, the shape of the inner ring is usually circular, and the opening at the center of the back neck is designed, which is fixed by Chinese knot buttons, buckles, straps, etc. [9].

#### *3.1.1. Geometric bibs*

The bibs in geometric shape are simple in shape design, with common shapes of square, circular, and semi-circular, which conforms to the aesthetic characteristics of traditional Chinese philosophy of "round sky and square earth" [9]. Bibs in square and circle shapes are usually radially centered or have a rotating skeleton. The square shape is mainly composed of four "Ruyi" shapes, as shown in no. 1-4 bibs in Table 2. The no. 5 bib is a four pieced with each piece in a pomegranate shape. The overall shape of no.5 bib is similar to the no. 1-4 bibs, thus it is classified into the "Ruyi" shape. These five bibs emphasize the symmetry of the structure and the layering of colors. Four pieces are even numbered, which is consistent with the Chinese people's love for even numbers. The no. 6 bib is a five pieced "Ruyi" shape, with adjacent "Ruyi" pieces connected by curly cloud patterns, emphasizing the beauty of continuity and balance between faces. Five pieces also refer to five blessings to children, which are "five blessings descending upon the house, five cereals with good harvest, five sons ascending the imperial examination, and five generations having prosperity". The "Ruyi" shaped bibs expresses the beautiful meaning of everything is satisfactory and good luck in everything, showing the expectations of happiness of people in the Republic of China period.

Bibs of no. 7-14 in Table 2 are circular bibs. The no. 7 bib is a four-piece style and the no.8 bib is a six pieced style. Four and six pieces are even numbered pieces and are considered lucky numbers in Chinese culture. Six in Chinese is pronounced "Liu". "Liu" is homophonic with "Lu", which means "everything goes smoothly". The no.9 bib is a one piece cut, but the overall shape is four semicircular pieces, which is very similar to the no.7 bib in terms of shape. The no.10-13 bibs are multi-pieced bibs and are in the form of axial symmetry or central symmetry. The no. 10 bib consists of fingered citron shaped pieces. The no.11 bib is made of five satin pieces and is a circular shape from the overall look. The no. 12 bib is in a form of the Eight Diagrams. These four bibs are in a circular shape, with a symmetrical and balanced structure. The no.14 bib is semicircular but closer to circular, thus it is classified as circular shape.

No.15-18 bibs in Table 2 are heart-shaped bibs and all have a one-piece structure and are tied to the baby's neck with a rope strap. These four bibs also resembled peach shapes. Peach tree is the essence of five trees which can be found in the book named "Beginner's Record" of Xujian in the Tang Dynasty. It can suppress evil spirits and ghosts. People make peach talismans and stick them on the door to suppress evil. Peach tree is immortal tree [10]. In mythology and legend, the Queen Mother celebrates her birthday by setting up peaches to entertain the immortals. Folk people imitate this and use flour to make peaches to celebrate the family members' birthdays. Therefore, the peach has an auspicious meaning of prolonging life, warding off evils and avoiding evils in traditional Chinese culture. Mothers in the Republic of China period made this shape of bibs to bless good health to their babies.

#### *3.1.2. Plant-shaped bibs*

Table 3 shows the plant shaped bibs, with the first and second ones in petal shape, and the third and fourth ones in a tree leaf shape. The first one is a five petal shaped bib, symbolizing the five blessings of longevity, wealth, health, good morals, and a good ending. The no.2 bib is a peony shaped bib, consisting of five petals, with a symmetrical structure and pattern color. Peony is the "King of Flowers", symbolizing "wealth and auspiciousness". The no.3 bib is a multi-pieced bib, consisting of twelve willow leaves surrounding the collar, each of which has the same size and shape. Twelve is a lucky number, which has the meaning of twelve zodiac signs, twelve hours and twelve years forming a cycle in traditional Chinese culture. The no.4 bib is a double-layer, multi-pieced willow leaf shaped bib, consisting of sixteen willow leaves in the upper and lower layers. The bib is symmetrical in structure and pattern color. It is made with intricate and exquisite craftsmanship. Sixteen is

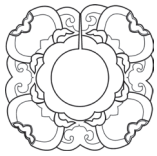
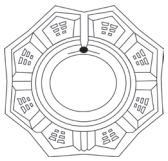
| No. | Style | Name and source | Picture | Illustration | Details |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | "Ruyi" shape | Satin bib with embroidered flowers and butterflies (from China National Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib had four pieces and each piece was in a "Ruyi" shape. The two pink pieces were embroidered with magpie and plum blossom. The two green pieces were embroidered with butterflies and flowers. |
| 2 | | Red and green Satin embroidered bib (from China National Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib had four pieces and each piece was in a "Ruyi" shape. Each piece consisted of a big peach shape and two small round shapes. The big peach shapes were embroidered with Peony flower. |
| 3 | | Embroidered flower bib (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy of Art) |  |  | The bib had four pieces. Each piece was patch embroidered with flower pattern. The diagonal pieces were the same in color. |
| 4 | | Red satin embroidered bib (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy of Art) |  |  | The bib had four pieces in Ruyi shape. Each Ruyi was consisted of a big persimmon shape and two curled cloud patterns. The big persimmon shape was embroidered with flower and bird. |
| 5 | | Embroidered bib with pomegranate shape (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy of Art) |  |  | The bib was a four pieced structure. Each piece was a pomegranate shape. Flower, fish, butterfly, phoenix and children were embroidered. |
| 6 | | White satin embroidered bib (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy of Art) |  |  | The bib had five pieces in Ruyi shape. The adjacent pieces were connected by curled cloud patterns. Each piece was embroidered with butterfly and flower. |
| 7 | Circular shape | Lock embroidery Flower bib (from China National Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib had four pieces and the four pieces were connected by a strip to form a round shape. The color and the pattern of the diagonal pieces was the same. |
| 8 | | Colored satin embroidered bib (from China National Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib had six pieces and the six pieces were connected by a strip to form a round shape. The six piece had different colors. |
| 9 | | Colored satin embroidered bib (from China National Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib was cut in one piece with four semicircles. The four semicircles were embroidered with plum blossom, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum. |
| 10 | | Bib with fingered citron shape (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy) |  |  | The bib was a multi-pieced structure. Six fingered citron shaped pieces were connected by six leaf shaped pieces. Each fingered citron and each leaf had different color. |

*Table 2. Bibs in geometric shape*

| No. | Style | Name and source | Picture | Illustration | Details |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | Circular shape | Flower embroidered bib (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy) |  |  | The bib was a five pieced structure. Each piece was embroidered with flowers. Two pieces were pink and two pieces were green and one piece was light yellow. |
| 12 | | Bib with the Eight Diagrams (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy) |  |  | The bib was an eight pieced structure. The eight pieces formed the Eight Diagrams shape. The Eight Diagrams were embroidered on them. The diagonal pieces had the same color. |
| 13 | | Embroidered bib (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy) |  |  | The bib had six pieces and the six pieces were connected together by a strip to form a round shape. On the bib, flowers and "卐" were embroidered. |
| 14 | | Embroidered bib with "卐" character (from China National Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib was cut in one piece and was close to a semicircle shape. It was patched embroidered with "卐" character and bat pattern. |
| 15 | Heart shape | Pull and lock embroidered bib (from China National Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib was one piece with red and black color and formed a heart shape. It was embroidered with flower pattern. |
| 16 | | Pull and lock embroidery bib (from China National Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib was one piece with purple and black color and formed a heart shape. It was embroidered with flower pattern. |
| 17 | | Blue satin embroidery bib (from China National Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib was made with satins of black, red, yellow, pink and blue. It had a heart shape. It was embroidered with flower and butterfly pattern. |
| 18 | | Embroidery bib with butterfly pattern (from China National Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib was made with black and green fabric. It was a heart shape and was embroidered with butterfly pattern. |

Continued *Table 2. Bibs in geometric shape*

also a lucky number, which is double of the number eight. At the same time, the pronunciation of sixteen in Chinese is "Shiliu" which is homophonic with pomegranate (in Chinese also "Shiliu"). Pomegranate is a fruit with large numbers of seeds which means lots of children in Chinese culture.

### *3.1.3. Animal and child shaped bibs*

Table 4 shows animal shaped bibs with different animal elements, including tiger, dog, mouse, pig, and a child shaped bib. No. 1-5 bibs are tiger shaped bibs. When wearing the no. 1-4 bibs, the front limbs of the tiger are located in front of the baby's neck, while the two hind limbs and tail of the tiger are located behind the baby's neck. When wearing the no. 5 bib, the entire tiger shape is located at the front of the baby's neck. Although these five bibs are all tiger shaped, they are in different shapes, sizes, and expressions. The whiskers and claws of the tigers are beautifully crafted. The no.6-8 bibs are dog shaped bibs. When wearing the no. 6 bib, the dog's head and forelimbs are located in front of the baby's neck, while the hind limbs and tail are located behind the neck. The no.7 and no.8 bibs are one pieced circular bib embroidered with a double dog shaped pattern. During the Chinese agricultural period, the six animals, including pig, horse, cow, sheep, chicken, and dog, are referred to as the six livestock. Dogs are loyal pets to humans. In Chinese mythology and legend, Erlang God has a dog called roaring dog who accompanies him to subdue demons and catch monsters. Therefore, in folk art, dogs are also auspicious beasts that can drive away evils and suppress evils.

The no.9 bib is a mouse shaped bib, which forms the front part of the bib and

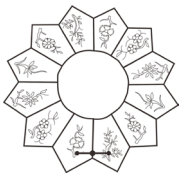
| No. | Style | Name and source | Picture | Illustration | Characteristic |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Petal shape | White silk embroidered flower bib (from China National Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib was five pieces of petal shape. Each petal was embroidered with flower and spider. |
| 2 | | Colorful satin embroidered with flower and crab (from China National Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib was in five petal shape. The color and the shape was bilateral symmetry. It was embroidered with flower and crab. |
| 3 | Leaf shape | Embroidered bib with leaf shape (from the silk museum of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University) |  |  | The bib consisted of twelve piece with leaf shape. Each leaf was a willow leaf. The diagonal pieces were the same color and pattern. |
| 4 | | Double layer willow shaped bib (from Suzhou Silk Museum) |  |  | The bib were two layers. Each layer was sixteen pieces of willow leaf. The diagonal pieces were the same color and pattern. |

*Table 3. Bibs in plant shape*

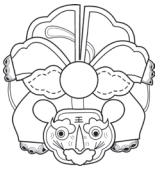
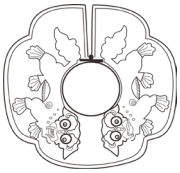
| No. | Style | Name and source | Picture | Illustration | Characteristics |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tiger shape | Green tiger shaped bib (from Shanghai Textile and Apparel Museum) |  |  | The tiger's ears stand upright above its head. The tail is located on the right leg. The same color was used for ears and mouth. |
| 2 | | Green tiger shaped bib (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy) |  |  | The tiger's head and body were cut separately. The body of a tiger is a circular shape. |
| 3 | | Orange tiger shaped bib (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy) |  |  | The tiger's head and limbs were cut separately. The tiger's ears stand upright. The body of the tiger is a circular shape. |
| 4 | | Yellow tiger shaped bib (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy) |  |  | The head, limbs, and buttocks of the tiger were cut separately. The tiger's ears were erect. It was very realistic in color and styling. |
| 5 | | Tiger shaped bib (from Hangzhou Museum of Arts and Crafts) |  |  | The head and limbs of the tiger formed the front part of the bib. The buttocks formed the posterior part of the bib. The buttocks and the claws were made with pink silk fabric. |

*Table 4. Animal and child shaped bibs*

| No. | Style | Name and source | Picture | Illustration | Characteristics |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | Dog shape | Green dog shaped bib (from Shanghai Textile and Apparel Museum) |  |  | The head, limbs, and body of the dog were cut separately and sewn together. The tail was located on the left leg. The same color were used for ears and mouth. |
| 7 | | Red bib with two embroidered dogs (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy) |  |  | The bib is a circular shape in one piece. Two dogs were embroidered in a bilateral symmetrical pattern. |
| 8 | | Embroidered dog bib (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy) |  |  | The bib was a round shape. Two dogs were embroidered in the center and small flower pattern were embroidered in the outer rings of the bib. |
| 9 | Mouse shape | Embroidered bib with mouse and lotus pattern (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy) |  |  | The bib was a combination of mouse and lotus flowers. The mouse was a one-piece cutting structure. The Lotus was symmetrical in shape and color. |
| 10 | Pig shape | Embroidered bib with pig shape (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy) |  |  | The head, body, and limbs of the pig were cut in one piece. It was a symmetric design in color and pattern scheme. |
| 11 | Child shape | Embroidered bib with child shape (from Folk Art Museum of China Academy) |  |  | The child was sitting cross legged. The head, arms, legs, and feet were cut separately. The overall structure was symmetrical in shape and color. Grape pattern was embroidered on the top clothes of the child. Plum blossom was embroidered on the pants of the child. The shoes were embroidered with bamboo and chrysanthemum pattern. |

*Continued* *Table 4. Animal and child shaped bibs*

is located in front of the baby's neck when worn. The other part of the bib is in the shape of a lotus flower, which is located at the back of the baby's neck when worn. The reproductive ability of mouse is very strong and mouse in Chinese culture has the symbolization of having many children. Lotus seeds are multi-seeded, which also means having many children. Therefore, this bib with the combination of the mouse and the lotus conveys the meaning of having multiple offspring.

The no.10 bib is a pig shaped bib with a circular body shape. The fat and round shape of a pig is a symbol of wealth, therefore, a pig is also a lucky beast. The word pig in Chinese is pronounced "Zhu", and it has the same pronunciation as the word "live" (also pronounced "Zhu") which implies that young children can smoothly overcome the obstacles of the hell and the world [11]. These six animal shaped bibs are symmetrical in shape, structure, and color scheme. The adorable and mischievous animal shaped bibs complement the childlike innocence of children. The no.11 bib is a child shaped bib with the child sitting cross legged and holding a collar in both hands, as if holding a ball. The child shaped bib is chubby and cute, with a lifelike appearance, expressing the wish of the mothers to pray for having children and mother's love to children.

From Table 4, it can be seen that the focus of animal shaped bibs is on the depiction of the head shape and the color patterns of the animal faces, which makes it very realistic compared to real animals. Animal shaped bibs are mostly tiger shaped. The Green Dragon, White Tiger, Vermilion Bird, and Xuanwu are the four gods in Chinese mythology. Tiger is also the king of all forest beasts. It is strong and powerful, with the reputation of driving away evil and suppressing

evil. It is an auspicious beast and is often praised with commendatory words, such as "strong and clever as tiger's head and brain, the dragon soars and the tiger leaps, and brimming with energy as a dragon and a tiger".

## 3.2. The pattern art of the bibs in the Republic of China

The patterns of the bibs mainly include flowers, birds, insects, fish, written symbols, and auspicious beasts. This is consistent with the patterns of the embroidery works in the Republic of China exhibited by the Tianshui Folk Museum [12]. The patterns follow the traditional folk spirit that patterns must be intentional and the meaning must be auspicious [13]. The patterns are combined symmetrically and continuously to create a visually balanced beauty. In terms of color, the five elements of black, red, blue, white, and yellow are the main colors, and the colors complement each other, with clear proportions, forming coordination and unity [14].

Table 5 shows the classification of pattern elements of the bibs. These pattern elements can be divided into three categories: plant, animal, and human related items. The plant elements used include peonies, lotus, plum blossoms, orchids, bamboo, chrysanthemums, and grapes. Among these bibs, 48% are embroidered with peony patterns, with peony patterns being the most frequently used. The use of plum blossom patterns is also quite common, accounting for 18%. The two flowers are often praised in traditional

| Style | Pattern | Illustration | Bib no. | Proportion (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plant element | Peony |  | 1-7#, 11#, 15-17#, 1*, 2*, 3*, 4* | 48 |
| | Plum blossom |  | 1#, 4#, 13#, 3*, 4*, $11^{+}$ | 18 |
| | Lotus |  | 6#, 8#, 2*, $9^{+}$ | 12 |
| | Bamboo |  | 9#, 3*, $11^{+}$ | 9 |
| | Orchid |  | 9#, 3* | 6 |
| | Chrysanthemum |  | 9#, 3* | 6 |
| | Grape |  | 4*, $11^{+}$ | 6 |
| Animal element | Butterfly |  | 1#, 2#, 5#, 6#, 8#, 15#, 17#, 18#, 1*, $9^{+}$ | 30 |
| | Tiger |  | $1^{+}$, $2^{+}$, $3^{+}$, $4^{+}$, $5^{+}$ | 15 |
| | Magpie |  | 1#, 4#, 8# | 9 |
| | Dog |  | $6^{+}$, $7^{+}$, $8^{+}$ | 9 |

*Table 5. The classification of the embroidered pattern of the bibs*

| Style | Pattern | Illustration | Bib no. | Proportion (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Animal element | Fish |  | 5#, 7# | 6 |
| | Phoenix |  | 4#, 5# | 6 |
| | Bat |  | 5#, 9# | 6 |
| | Dragonfly |  | 8# | 3 |
| | Spider |  | 1* | 3 |
| | Crab |  | 2* | 3 |
| | Mouse |  | 9+ | 3 |
| | Pig |  | 10+ | 3 |
| Human related element | Copper coin |  | 17#, 1+, 2+, 5+ | 12 |
| | 卐character |  | 13#, 14# | 6 |
| | Child |  | 11+ | 3 |

*Note: "#" means bibs in Table 2; "*" means bibs in Table3; "+" means bibs in Table 4.*

*Continued Table 5. The classification of the embroidered pattern of the bibs*

Chinese culture and are frequently used on baby's bibs.

Butterfly and tiger are the most commonly used animal elements, with 30% bibs embroidered with butterfly patterns and 15% bibs with tiger patterns. The combination of flowers and animals is mainly composed of peonies and butterflies, forming the pattern of "butterfly love flowers", as shown in the no.1, no.2, no.5, no.6, no.15 and no.17 bibs in Table 2 and the no.1 bib in Table 3. "Butterfly Loves Flower" was originally the song name of musical educational institution in Tang Dynasty. It was once called "Magpie Perches on a Branch", "Phoenix Rests on Parasol Tree", and "Fish and Water Have Joy Together". In the Song Dynasty, it was changed to "Butterfly Loves Flower". Due to its charming shape, it is a commonly used auspicious decorative theme [15]. The butterfly pattern is also presented separately, as shown in the no.18 bib in Table 2 and the no.9 bib in Table 4. Butterflies have been the object of chanting by literati since ancient times, as well as the beautiful patterns of embroidery needlework, which is Chinese people's pursuit of the ultimate beauty and aesthetic emotions [16, 17].

Plant patterns also appear separately, as shown in no.9 bib in Table 2. This bib is embroidered with the four plants of plum, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum. These four plants are regarded as the most noble plants by Chinese people and they are called "Four Gentlemen", symbolizing the pursuit of elegant life. Grapes and pomegranate have many seeds, symbolizing many children. Thus, the no.11 bib in Table 4 is embroidered grape patterns on the child's clothing, symbolizing many children and many blessings. The no. 5 bib in Table 2 consists of pomegranate shaped pieces and is embroidered with children pattern have the same symbolization.

The combination of magpies and plum blossoms forms the pattern of magpies perching on the plum, symbolizing happiness befalling, as shown in the no.1 bib and the no.4 bib in Table 2. The combination of lotus and carp, flower and dragonfly, and flower and bird makes the design theme of the bib full of interest and vitality, as shown in the no.8 bib in Table 2. The combination of peonies and phoenix is also reflected, as shown in the no.4 and no.5 bibs in Table 2, which

symbolizes auspiciousness, wealth, and nobility. Besides, the no.1 bib and no.2 bib in Table 3 are embroidered with patterns of spider and lotus, and crab and water plant, respectively, symbolizing a beautiful life of happiness descending from heaven and wealth coming from all directions.

Double coins and 卐character patterns are also used in the baby's bibs, such as embroidered double coin patterns in the no.17 bib in Table 2 and the no.1, no.2 and no.5 bibs in Table 4, and embroidered 卐character in the no.13 and no.14 bibs in Table 2. Double coins symbolizes great wealth. The 卐character is considered a symbol of the sun or fire, symbolizing auspiciousness, blessings, and longevity [18]. Therefore, the use of double coins and卐character patterns on bibs expresses the mother's expectations and blessings for their baby's auspicious and prosperous life.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. The function of protecting baby's skin

Children under the age of three often experience drooling. When a baby reaches four or five months old, the eruption of deciduous teeth stimulates the gums and causes increased saliva. Since young babies have shallow oral cavities, they cannot swallow excess saliva in a timely manner, and excessive saliva will flow out along the corners of the mouths. Traditional Chinese medicine refers to this phenomenon as "Zhiyi", commonly known as drooling [19]. Infants and young children's skin is very delicate, and their chin is close to the front clothes due to a short neck. Excessive saliva can moisten the front clothes and cause the skin of the chin red and rot. The scholar named Yixing Hao in Qing Dynasty mentioned in his book named "Zhengsu Wen" that bibs shaped like an embroidered collar are cut in six or seven silk pieces, and are sewn together, and applied to the neck (Figure 1). The end of the bib is decorated with buttons.

As shown in Figure 1, baby bibs can be used to prevent from salivate and



*Fig. 1. A baby wearing embroidery bib*

is changed to another when wetted by salivate [2]. Besides, when infants and young children eat, food can easily fall off onto the clothes. The use of bibs can effectively prevent saliva and food from getting wet and dirty the under clothing, protecting the skin of children's chin and neck.

### 4.2. The function of blessing good health and happiness

During the Republic of China period, there were continuous wars and social unrest, which made the medical condition at a low level, and the survival rate of infants and young children was relatively low. Tigers and dogs were often used as themes by mothers to sew clothes and clothing accessories for their children, with tiger being the most commonly used pattern. The word "tiger" is also commonly used in infant names, such as tiger baby (Huwa), tiger girl (Huniu) and tiger boy (Huzi), etc. The folk people believed that tigers are the king of all beasts, capable of defeating evils and devouring ghosts and devils. Children wearing tiger shaped bibs, hats, and shoes could ward off evil spirits, eliminate diseases and disasters, and grow healthy. Therefore, mothers used tiger shaped clothes or embroidered tiger patterns to pray for the healthy growth of their children.

Tiger pattern is also commonly used in children's hats and shoes, as shown in the Chinese Spring Festival pictures in Figure 2. The children in the pictures wear tiger shaped hats and shoes. In addition, the child in Figure 2(a) is wearing a circular Ruyi bib, while the children in Figure 2(b) are wearing a large bib with a dog pattern. From this, it can be concluded that the tiger, as a symbol of auspiciousness, is a commonly used theme in folk clothing accessories, and children's bibs are often paired with tiger hats and shoes.

### 4.3. Needlework culture

In the traditional agricultural society of China, the family life model is men farming and women weaving, with men managing external affairs and women managing internal affairs. This model has continued for thousands of years. Engaging in female labor activities such as weaving, sewing, and embroidery were the most important production activity for ordinary women in feudal society [20]. Spinned yarns, woven fabrics, and embroidered handicrafts were both commodities for a source of household income and as well as a source of clothing for family members. In the old era when the commodity economy was not yet developed enough, women usually had to sew all the clothes for their family members throughout the four seasons. In this family life model, the wise mother of Mencius (a great master of Confucianism in the Warring States Period of ancient China.) is achieved, whose family education story of breaking the loom when Mencius did not learn in




*Fig. 2. Spring Festival pictures. (a), a child celebrating the New Year; (b), two children celebrating the New Year*

his childhood is known by almost every Chinese people. Also in this family life model, the tragic love and marriage of the heroine, Lanzhi Liu, happened which was recorded in the Music Bureau Poem "Peacock Flies Southeast" in Han Dynasty.

During the Republic of China period, under the influence of the new trend of women's liberation and gender equality, a portion of urban professional women formed, but the society still demanded women's roles as traditional women. In rural areas, although also influenced by the modern enlightenment movement, the rural areas still retained and continued the traditional agricultural society and family moral way of life, and women still focused on supporting their husbands and children and family affairs were their main life affairs [21]. The government of the Republic of China in Nanjing has repeatedly emphasized that the goal of women's education was to cultivate virtuous wives and mothers. In November 1931, the Fourth National Congress of the Kuomintang reiterated that men and women should have equal educational opportunities, and women's education must cultivate sound moral character maintaining maternal characteristics, and build a good family and social life [22]. Women's education focused more on family matters, with the curriculum mainly focusing on gardening and sewing, etc.

During the Republic of China, the famous journal "Women's Magazine" also created a column named "Superficial Knowledge and Shallow Skills", advocating for women to transition from old-fashioned women to modern women through the cultivation [23]. The shallow skills here mainly referred to traditional handicraft techniques, including weaving and sewing. Women's Magazine also published technical knowledge such as "Women's Clothing Tailoring Skill" in volume 1, no.7 and "Embroidery" in volume 1, no.9 [24]. It can be found that the requirements of the government and society of the Republic of China for women's roles, as well as the promotion of handicraft skills, have greatly promoted the development of the needlework in the Republic of China. Therefore, women play an important role in family life by using looms, needles, and thread, and have nurtured this needlework culture into a rich and colorful art of weaving and embroidery. These embroidery arts still exude charming charm in modern times, allowing future generations to read, explore, and inherit.

## 5. Conclusions

Baby bib is a commonly used clothing accessory during the Republic of China period. It can effectively prevent saliva and food from getting clothes wet and dirty. It has strong decorative art and folk cultural connotations in terms of style and pattern design. Geometric shaped bibs are the most commonly used bibs due to their relatively simple structure and production. Tiger shaped bib is also commonly used in infant and young children's clothes due to the meaning of driving away evil and suppressing evil. Peony and butterfly are frequently used patterns due to their symbolism of beautiful love and nice life. Children's bibs reflect the intelligence, diligence, and unique aesthetic taste of women during the Republic of China period. Interpreting its aesthetic art and cultural connotations can bring inspiration to modern clothing design.

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