

## **Aesthetic Characteristics and Cultural Genes of Youyang Tujia Yang Drama Mask in Chongqing**

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**Abstract:** Yang drama, also known as "Lianke drama", is distributed in Xiaohe town, Youyang county, Chongqing city, China, and che ba village, Tonggu township, etc. it originated in the Yin and Shang dynasties. Whenever people get married, they invite theatrical troupes to perform Yang drama at home. Yang drama is widely praised by the world for its sound and props. Take the mask as an example, according to the different characters, there are great differences in modeling, expression and color. It can be said that it is the soul of Yang drama and has far-reaching historical significance for the inheritance and innovation of mask culture in our country. Based on the review of Youyang Tujia and Yang drama mask past lives, this paper makes an in-depth analysis of it from the perspective of aesthetic characteristics such as shape and color, as well as cultural genes such as original culture and cultural integration, and further examines its collision with modern design, aiming at promoting more scholars inside and outside the industry to understand the connotation of youyang Tujia and Yang drama culture and its mask culture.

### **1. Introduction**

Since the development of Tujia Yang Opera in Youyang, Chongqing, known as the "living fossil of drama", a variety of cultural elements have been precipitated, including the Central Plains culture, Chu culture, Ba culture and Tujia culture. At the same time, it integrates Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and folk beliefs. It also has the trajectory and influence of religions such as Maitreya, Wuwei religion and Manichaeism. Under the background of cultural integration, Youyang Tujia Mask Yang Opera itself has also been inherited and developed. In-depth study on the mask culture of Yang opera has played a role in the survival and development of Chinese traditional culture to a certain extent. Nowadays, the times have been deduced as "material supremacy", and traditional culture faces the predicament of survival. With the awakening of traditional cultural awareness, more and more people are gradually turning their eyes from modern art to traditional art. The Youyang Tujia mask Yang opera has also gained new development vitality.

### **2. The Past and Present Life of Youyang Tujia Yang Opera**

Youyang Opera, also known as "Mask Yang Opera", is also known as "Yiyu Opera" by local people, and is a kind of Nuo opera. Yang Opera can be traced back to the Yin and Shang Dynasties. Theoretically speaking, it has a history of more than 3000 years. It originated from the Nuo sacrifice of the primitive society totem worship of Tujia ancestors in the primitive society. This phenomenon of "totem worship" is extremely common in our primitive society, and the predecessors of the opera are derived from this.

It is rumored that the ancestors of the Tujia nationality expelled ghosts and evil spirits, dispelled the plague, and then held a ritual activity. Using peach wood or other wood as raw materials to carve masks, according to the different roles, carve out masks with different shapes and exaggerated shapes, including not only gods and ghosts, cowheads and horses, but also prime ministers and other roles. The characters wear these wooden masks and sing and dance as ghosts and gods.

With the development of the times, people's ideas about ghosts and gods are constantly changing. In this process, Yang Opera has been endowed with new cultural connotations, from the initial

sacrificial function to the present entertainment function, enriching the spiritual life of Tujia people. In 2007, when the “National Intangible Cultural Heritage Masterpiece Application Project” was launched, Chongqing Youyang Tujiayang Opera successfully applied for the official residence, which officially became an important part of Chinese folk drama culture and art [1].

### 3. Aesthetic Characteristics of Tujiayang Opera Masks in Youyang

#### 3.1 Imaginating Style Interest

In the Rhesus Monkey, the Yuan Dynasty imperial crown said: "The genus Rhesus Monkey is a beast... The monkeys, originally wild animals, can perform "Guolang" to passers-by by wearing masks to get pears and jujubes. Although it is a description of macaques, it also reflects the aesthetic interest of mask modeling. The attention of the ancients to the mask is often placed in the relationship between the user and the user. For example, in the Zen Master of Zan Mi'an of Shi Daosheng in the Song Dynasty, it was made to "the wolf venom, the cast iron mask"; Shi ShaoTan's One Hundred and Four Hymns "Live, cast iron. Spit out the heart of the heart, hang the iron mask"; Shi Zuqin's "Zhitang Xitang Please" "iron mask, not close to human feelings" and so on. Through the mask "material", modeling, etc., give people unlimited imagination [2].

It is undeniable that the shape of the Tujia Youyang mask in Chongqing is very imaginative and interesting to read. Related researchers have found that the materials used in the initial stage of the Yang opera mask are usually willow, poplar and the like. After that, the cloth is gradually added to the crepe or paper, and the layers are stacked to make the material feel volumey and concave and convex. Finally, the material with the contour of the face is embossed, and the overall shape is more three-dimensional and fine. The masks of Yangxi Opera are one of the main artistic forms of Tujiayang Opera in Youyang, Chongqing. The masks used in Yangxi Opera are usually related to the roles and purposes of the users (Figure 1 and Figure 2). They are not only heroic figures but also ugly and funny gods, including Haotian Supreme King Jade Emperor, the Holy Emperor of Voldemort Guan of Gutian Buddha, and others such as Mrs. Pang, Nurse. Fa Bodhisattva, even Qin Shubao, Lieutenant Chi Gong and so on. Through different mask shapes, the viewer can understand the identity of the actor and the actual psychology of the character behind the mask[3].



Fig.1. Yang Drama mask



Fig.2. Yang Drama mask

In Figure 2, the first mask is a judge, as a god, it also maintains a fierce and dignified image. Everyone has never seen a judge, but by watching Tujiayang Opera in Youyang, we can get an intuitive experience from its mask shape, and understand the historical image and real character of the role in depth. The red face mask in the middle is a typical image of Guan Yunchang, with long eyebrows, Phoenix eyes and powerful masculinity. Guan Gong has already surpassed the existence of God in Tujia group consciousness, and has become a symbolic symbol of exorcising evil and avoiding evil, and has been worshipped by Tujia people all the year round. The third mask is the image of the official, the five senses are correct, giving people a first impression of integrity; the mask is exquisitely crafted, the expression is exaggerated, the god is upright and kind, the other masks are mighty, fierce, weird, or the eyeballs are prominent, or the teeth are grinning, or The eyebrows rise, making people feel a mysterious power and rough and unrestrained beauty.

Therefore, it can be said that the mask design of Youyang Tujiayang Opera is simple and heavy, rough and concise, and can exaggerate and vividly express the character of the drama character. It has strong folk characteristics and local flavor, and is one of the models of the original ecological mask design.

### **3.2 The indispensable rhyme of color**

On the basis of exaggerated modelling, another indispensable element of Youyang Tujiayang Opera Mask is color. Face masks are often used in the quintessential Peking Opera of our country. Each face can be divided into roles by color. For example, the color of righteous face spectrum is mostly red, and the color of treacherous face spectrum is mostly white. On one point, the masks of Yang Opera coincide with the color use of face mask in Peking Opera. Most of the Yang opera masks are mainly warm colors such as red and orange. They are not as delicate as the Peking Opera masks. They are slightly embellished with black, full of green or gray, which constitutes the overall color matching of the mask. And often use other bright colors, strong solid color pigments, embellish the details of the mask, so that the whole mask is more sacred, eye-catching aesthetic charm, full of rich local customs.

### **3.3 From Instantaneous to Eternal Space Tension**

Mask is a typical artistic figurative prop. In Youyang Tujiayang Opera, performers use masks to fully display their personal charm and give viewers further imagination space. Of course, there are many situations in Youyang Tujiayang Opera where the same role has multiple performance masks. Actors will also choose the correct mask based on their different environments, different mental states, and the different perspectives they play in the narrative. On the stage, the Yang Opera mask realized the eternal influence from the character's performance moment to the role of the role to the viewer and even the entire Tuyang Tujiayang opera culture. The powerful space tension of the mask also provided a comparison for the Tujia Youyang yang opera. Large expansion space [4].

## **4. Cultural Genes of Tujiayang Masks in Youyang**

### **4.1 Tujia Native Culture in Primitive Society**

The change of Tujia masks in Youyang is also the change of Tujia culture in Youyang. The cultural genes contained in the masks are very rich, which can be traced back to the original culture of Tujia in primitive society. Youyang is often called "barbarian land" in history. Because of its special geographical environment, although the environment is severe, Youyang has beautiful mountains and rivers, and rich products. In the General Records of Youyang Zhili Prefecture, Youyang has been described as "the two unitary mountains are beautiful and the two unitary waters are cool and upbeat". Ling Xiuyi gathers, the name cannot be poor"[5]. One side of the landscape raises one person, and this geographical feature has thus become the source of self-confidence and expressiveness of the Tujia people in the primitive society. At the same time, due to the worship of the totems and nature by the people of the native people, the appearance of the mythical characters such as Pangu and Fuxi in the mask of the Yang opera was promoted. The performers wear masks to make the secular characters and ghosts present at the same time, transcend the boundaries of physical time and space, and communicate with the spirits. The performers express their deep worship of the mysterious forces of nature through visualization and visualization, and express their unspeakable impulses and desires in order to seek comfort and improvement of their plight. This way of expression embodies the function of "entertaining gods" in the early stage of masks culture of Yangxi Opera, and is the precipitation of its original cultural gene.

### **4.2 Cultural Harmony Caused by Historical Migration**

Relevant scholars in Youyang Tujiayang Opera culture in Chongqing found that in the process of development, there is a phenomenon of multi-cultural integration, especially in the role change of masks of Yangxi Opera. From a historical point of view, Youyang is located in the Wuling Mountains, which is the junction of Chongqing, Hunan, Hubei and Guizhou, and is remote.

Therefore, the development of its original culture is facing a severe living situation. With the development of the times, large-scale cultural migration in history has a certain impact on its original culture. In the early stage, the mask of the Yang opera chose the evil spirits, the gods, etc. As the people gradually accepted the foreign culture, the development of centralized power promoted the unification of our culture. Therefore, the mask of the Tujiayang opera in Youyang also began to join new roles, such as the powers, Emperors, etc., and the development of this is inseparable from the influence of historical factors such as cultural harmony [6]. In his preface to *The Mask of China*, Mr. Gai Shanlin wrote: "Mask is the product of a society with underdeveloped science and low productivity... With the development and progress of society, people's perception ability and understanding level are improved. People no longer believe in the mysterious power hidden behind natural objects and social phenomena. Therefore, masks become tools for self-entertainment or works of art for pleasure from the tools of entertaining gods [7]. Cultural integration has brought about economic prosperity and rich knowledge. Mask culture no longer serves God at this time, but becomes a social activity and a unique way of life for Tujia people to express their emotions and enjoy life.

#### **4.3 From Totem Worship to Religious Belief**

It has been mentioned in this article that the mask culture of Tujiayang Opera in Youyang originated from the totem worship of Tujia nationality, and this worship phenomenon is also a tortuous response of human consciousness in history. Most of the people in primitive society believed in "all things are spiritual", and they had a blind fear or worship of natural forces beyond their control. From the initial prayer sacrifices, witchcraft, to the final figurative religious rituals, masks become the materialized carriers of the Tujia religious belief service and important props for ancient ritual activities. Through this ritual activity, people can temporarily eliminate people against ghosts and nature. The fear of the spirit, the realization of the self-life protection instinct and the release of pressure under the pressure of life, to obtain inner peace and security. Over time, sacrificial activities have become a local custom. Every important festival, the village has to hold Yangxi sacrificial activities. People make kowtows or return wishes to the divine figures in Yangxi. These images are gradually solidified as symbols of spiritual idols. Youyang Tujia Yangxi masks have also undergone changes from totem worship to religious beliefs. Promoted by the development of cultural diversity, the shape, color and even material of its mask have changed. For example, the ancients believed that peach wood could exorcise evil spirits and avoid evil spirits and turn evil spirits into good fortune, so there was a situation of peach wood making in the masks of the later phantom.

On the other hand, because the ancients did not form the ability and consciousness to analyze problems scientifically, the managers of most ethnic groups hoped to communicate with the gods by wearing the same mask as the gods. Therefore, it is not difficult to imagine that the masks of Yang Opera are becoming more and more symbolic and non-aesthetic. It has unique aesthetic taste and decorative style, and has become an important carrier of national aesthetics, folk art communication and drama culture. It embodies the cultural connotation of Tujia social structure, political concept, ideology, life concept and historical development. The embodiment of national cultural genes and cultural wisdom.

### **5. The Collision between Mask Culture and Modern Design of Tujiayang Opera in Youyang**

#### **5.1 Decomposition, Collection and Reconstruction of Mask Culture**

In the modern designer troop, there are many inspirers through the study of the mask culture of Tujiayang Opera in Youyang. When Youyang Tujiayang opera mask culture collided with modern design, there were countless sparks. The inspiration behind the product design or the foundation was derived from the designer's decomposition, collection and reconstruction of Youyang Tujiayang opera mask culture [8].

To put it simply, Youyang Tujiayang opera mask culture includes detail elements such as totem

patterns, character modeling elements, color elements and spatial tension elements, which are mentioned above. However, how to combine this type of element with modern design involves the problem of reconstruction. A master of art and design once said: "Design is not only a culture, but also a materialized state. It must have a distinct national color. In shaping the cultural form, it should also break away the mystery, so that the design shoulders the sacred sense of culture and the sense of mission." Whether it is the design of the mask itself or the designers of other fields to integrate the mask culture elements into the design, the entire reconstruction process needs not only the designer's painstaking efforts, but also the deep heritage of the Yang opera mask culture. It is an inexhaustible and inexhaustible treasure trove of artistic inspiration.

## 5.2 Practical or decorative

Referring to the function of masks, especially those with exaggerated shapes and abrupt images, such as Youyang Tujia Yang Opera Masks, modern people often think of "decorative" first. In the process of studying mask culture, many scholars have found that many European and Asian residents like to put or hang masks with tribal totem elements in prominent places at home for decorative purposes. From this perspective, the decorative features of Youyang Tujia masks are more prominent. However, when it comes to the intersection of modern design, many designers break away from the existing mindset and combine it with "practical" design. For example, the mask is directly regarded as a popular culture, and the design of the handbag or the building is fully referenced to the mask shape. There are also many modern urban men and women who like to choose a mask with a strong traditional culture when they open a masquerade. To a certain extent, the practicality of the mask has been enhanced, and the culture has been able to survive in a "crowded" modern culture.

## 5.3 New Soul of Mask Culture in the Internet Age



Fig.3: Crystal Color Living Year: Design of Glass Painted Crafts of Yangxi Culture



Fig.4. Crystal Color Living Years: Design Logo of Glass Painted Crafts of Yangxi Culture

Under the impetus of network culture, mask culture has been further enriched. As shown in Fig. 3, the author encourages students to collect a large number of materials on the Internet when

instructing students to design masks for masks for masks, whether they are cultural materials for masks for masks in Yangxi Opera or other dramas. For example, the group of "Crystal Color Living Year" - Yangxi Culture Glass Painted Crafts Design, influenced by Western comic culture, students in the design process, with the animation characters as a reference, try to integrate "punk" and Gothic elements, in the face of the mask pattern deformation is exaggerated; Using a variety of geometric shapes, especially the details of the eye, using "smoky makeup", like a Gothic girl with heavy makeup; a heavy, sly feeling of sweeping the sun mask, giving a cute, cute fashion sense. With a fantasy and surrealism, in a sense, the mask can be regarded as the third face of human beings in real life. This surreal decorative design can create a relaxed and decompression environment. To satisfy people's curiosity and let people find the pleasure of natural relaxation in a fast-paced life.

## 6. Conclusions

In general, the Youyang Tujia opera mask in Chongqing is a figurative product of the collision of ancient and modern cultures. On one hand, the area of the primitive society has its original culture. On the other hand, with the changes of the times, under the influence of various factors, Chongqing The unique artistic charm of Youyang Tujia Opera has gradually become prominent, and its masks are impressive in terms of shape, color matching and spatial expression. When the Tujia opera mask is combined with modern design, it will spark more sparks. In the process of refining and integrating the related elements, designers also further promote the users of products and even the Chinese people to improve their own understanding of traditional culture. For the country, Chongqing Youyang Tujia masks and masks are precious intangible cultural wealth of our country. For designers, their masks inspire design inspiration to a certain extent and provide broader artistic design resources.

Mask culture is a cross-regional, cross-era culture, is the crystallization of human wisdom. The mask culture of Tujia foreign opera in Chongqing is also one of the indispensable precious embellishments of mask culture. It provides an important reference value for studying the folk culture, drama, history and religion of the Tujia people in Chongqing. It is the embodiment of the Tujia folk spirit and cultural genes. Therefore, it is worth further study by relevant scholars. Lead Tujia opera mask culture out of the country, for the world's people to recognize.

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