



Analysis of Artistic Characteristics and Cultural Emotions of Costume Design in Peking Opera "Mu Guiying Hanging the General"

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Abstract. This thesis focuses on three key plots in the Peking Opera "Mu Guiying Takes Command" : "The Yang Family's Deliberation", "Holding the Seal to Take Command", and "All Set and Ready to Go - Setting Out for Battle", and conducts an in-depth analysis of Mu Guiying's costume design in different scenarios. From the perspective of design psychology, this paper explores how the colors, patterns, materials and styles of clothing convey the emotions and psychological changes of characters, and at the same time uncovers the cultural meanings and traditional aesthetic concepts behind them. Through research, the artistic characteristics of Peking Opera costume design are revealed, and its significant value in the fields of cultural inheritance and modern design is clarified, providing a theoretical reference for the innovative development of traditional opera costume culture.

Keywords: Peking Opera; Mu Guiying Takes Command; Costume Design; Color Psychology; Emotional Metaphor; Cultural Meaning; Traditional aesthetic concept

1 Introduction

This paper focuses on the costume design of characters in "Mu Guiying Takes Command", and its significance and value lie in: from the artistic perspective, it reveals that the costumes of Peking Opera achieve the aesthetic pursuit of "conveying the spirit through form" through the freehand expression of color, style and patterns; from the cultural perspective, it explores the values such as loyalty, filial piety, chastity and righteousness, as well as gender breakthroughs contained in the costumes; from the practical perspective, it provides a model for the innovative application of traditional elements in modern design, promoting the inheritance and revitalization of the culture of opera costumes in contemporary times, and achieving a dual value resonance of artistic features and cultural emotions.

2 Artistic Features and Emotional Connotations of the Costume Design for the "Yang Mansion Deliberation" Scene

2.1 Summary of the Story

In the chapter "The Yang Family's Deliberation" of the Peking Opera "Mu Guiying Takes Command", Mu Guiying retired to the Yang family for twenty years. At this time, the Western Xia invaded. Lady She Taijun, with an imperial edict, strongly urged Mu Guiying to take command and go to war. Although Mu Guiying had a grudge against the Yang family because the imperial court had once neglected them, she was finally inspired by Lady She Taijun's persuasion of the greater good of the country and the children's voluntary willingness to fight. She finally regained her ambition and decided to go to war again.

2.2 Emotional Transmission of Clothing Color Elements

In "The Yang Family's Deliberation", Mu Guiying's first appearance in a costume is mainly in a light and elegant bluish-gray color with white accents, interpreting the character's state of mind through color and shape. The bluish-gray color is calm and reserved. In traditional opera costumes, it is a "neutral color", which not only fits the identity of a "retired general", suggesting the tranquility after twenty years of retirement, but also echoes the role of a brain strategist during deliberations with a calm visual psychology, symbolizing motherhood and wisdom^[3]. The white collar and the lace on the cuffs add softness and elegance, highlighting the feminine grace. During the performance of the drama, this costume combination was deeply integrated with the environment, brewing a dual attribute of "serenity" and "melancholy", alluding to the inner conflict and struggle of Mu Guiying during the deliberation, concealing her concern for the safety of the Song Dynasty and her hesitation about setting out for another campaign(see Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Mu Guiying Taking Command - "Yang's Residence Council" Scene Costume (Source: zhuan.ti.cnjiwang.com)

2.3 Clothing Styles and Pattern Designs

The costume of the "Yang Mansion Council" is deeply imbued with traditional ethics and female virtues. The loose female wedding dress in bluish-gray with knee-wide sleeves, paired with the drape of silk, exudes a serene and gentle charm. The standing

collar is elegant and dignified, fully demonstrating the demeanor of a master. The patterns mainly feature cloud patterns and plum, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum. The cloud patterns fit the serene scene, while the floral patterns symbolize purity and tenacity. They not only enhance the inner qualities of the characters but also reflect the pursuit of fine virtues.

3 The Artistic Features and Emotional Connotations of the Costume Design for the "Holding the Seal and Taking Command" Scene

3.1 Summary of the Story

In the chapter "The Yang Mansion's Deliberation" of the Peking Opera "Mu Guiying Takes Command", Mu Guiying retired to the Yang Mansion for twenty years. At this time, the Western Xia invaded. Empress Dowager She, with an imperial edict, strongly urged Mu Guiying to take command and go to war. Eventually, she regained her ambition and decided to return to battle.

3.2 Emotional Transmission of Color Elements in Clothing

In terms of style design, apart from the changes in patterns and colors, it is consistent with the attire of the first chapter "The Yang Family's Deliberation". Mu Guiying's wide robe and large sleeves follow the "freehand" aesthetic, weakening the constraints of reality. With a dignified and dignified demeanor, it fits the identity transformation of holding the general's seal. The wide robe symbolizes having a broad mind for the world, and the water sleeves are designed to facilitate the expression of emotions through stylized actions such as lifting and swaying. It is the embodiment of the aesthetic of "conveying the spirit through form" in Peking Opera^[2]. The patterns mainly feature round flowers and entwined branches. Round flowers symbolize the peace of the family and the country, while entwined branches represent vitality and the spirit of inheritance. This echoes the continuation of the Yang family's loyalty and bravery, as well as their dedication to protecting the country, and conveys their commitment to the family and the country(see Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Mu Guiying Taking Command - "Holding the Imperial Seal and Taking Command" Scene Costume (Source: nichangyayun.com)

3.3 Clothing Styles and Pattern Designs

In terms of style, Mu Guiying's wide-sleeved robe continues the "freehand" aesthetic, weakening the constraints of reality and matching her commanding identity with a dignified and dignified demeanor. The wide body of the robe symbolizes a broad vision for the world. The water sleeves are designed to facilitate lifting and swaying to convey emotions in a stereotypical way, embodying the aesthetic of "conveying the spirit through form" in Peking Opera. The patterns mainly feature round flowers and entwined branches. Round flowers symbolize the peace of the family and the country, while entwined branches represent vitality and the spirit of inheritance. This echoes the continuation of the Yang family's loyalty and bravery, as well as their dedication to protecting the country, and conveys their commitment to the family and the country^[7].

4 The Artistic Features and Emotional Connotations of the Costume Design for the "Ready to Go · Dispatch Troops to Battle" Scene

4.1 Summary of the Story

In the chapter "Ready to Go and March Forward" of the Peking Opera "Mu Guiying Takes Command", after Mu Guiying decided to take command, she quickly threw herself into battle. Mu Guiying beat the war drums, and amid the passionate beats of the drums, the morale of the army soared. The Yang army marched out of the city gates in a mighty force and charged forward bravely towards the war-torn border, vowing to repel the invading enemies of the Western Xia and safeguard the peace of the country and the family.

4.2 Emotional Transmission of Clothing Color Elements



Fig. 3. Mu Guiying Taking Command - "Holding the Imperial Seal and Taking Command" Scene Costume (Source: nichangyayun.com)

In the scene of "All Set and Ready to Go: Setting Out for Battle", Mu Guiying's costume has undergone a third makeover, from bluish-gray to carmine and then to bright red. This transition interprets the transformation of the character's identity and the changes in her inner world. The costumes in this chapter are mainly in bright red and sky blue,

creating a sharp contrast and constructing a color philosophy of "the combination of hardness and softness, and the interweaving of cold and heat". Zhenghong is the primary color in the color system of traditional Chinese opera, symbolizing "loyalty, bravery and sacrifice", and inheriting the red lineage of the Yang family. The sky blue, as an auxiliary color, contrasts with the bright red in terms of "heat and cold" and "movement and stillness", balancing the burning sensation of red and conveying the dual psychology of "passionate march" and "calm command of the army", thus forming a color narrative of "wisdom and courage".(see Fig. 3).

4.3 Clothing Styles and Pattern Designs

In terms of style design, militarized improvements were made on the basis of the general's uniform, such as adding shoulder guards, wrist guards, leg guards and other armor components to meet the needs of going to war. The four phoenix-patterned banners on the back are fan-shaped and flutter with movements, simulating a "grand army approaching the battlefield", completing the functional transformation from "ritualized" to "practical combat", fully demonstrating the heroic posture of the military generals. In terms of pattern design, the dragon and phoenix patterns interweave with the flame and weapon patterns^[5]. The flame pattern symbolizes the intensity of war and the high morale, suggesting that she will break through the battlefield with overwhelming force^[1]. The weapon pattern highlights the theme of battle, enriches the visual layers, and strengthens the image of going to war.

5 The Reflection of Traditional Aesthetic Concepts

5.1 The Embodiment of Traditional Aesthetic Concepts in Clothing Design

The costume design of the Peking Opera "Mu Guiying Takes Command" deeply integrates traditional aesthetics and cultural values, using colors, styles and patterns to create an artistic expression that combines vision and spirit. Firstly, the spirit is depicted through form. For instance, the blue and gray female wedding dress and the red battle robe symbolize the tranquility of seclusion and the heroic spirit of the battlefield through the imagery of color. Secondly, adhering to the beauty of moderation, the patterns of the python robe are symmetrically distributed along the central axis, and the decoration of the helmet is clearly layered, reflecting symmetry and order. Thirdly, the blank Spaces and decorations in the robes reflect the interplay between the real and the illusory, which is in line with the Taoist philosophy of "the interdependence of being and non-being", and showcases the rhythm of the scene's movements.

5.2 The Deep Reflection of Cultural Values in Clothing

The costumes in the Peking Opera "Mu Guiying Takes Command" often have concrete representations of loyalty and implicit expressions of filial piety and righteousness. The

dragon-patterned python robe concretizes "loyalty to the monarch and service to the country", reinforcing Confucian ethics. The colors and patterns strictly adhere to the ritual system, highlighting the hierarchical order. The breakthrough lies in the reconstruction of women's values - traditional women often wear "pei" and "skirt and jacket" to appear gentle and graceful, while Mu Guiying's armor and handsome helmet break the gender boundaries with tight clothing and rigid flags^[6]. This not only demonstrates the heroism of "women are no less capable than men", but also aligns with the value breakthrough of "women taking responsibility for the country".

5.3 The Integration of Aesthetics and Culture

The costume design of the Peking Opera "Mu Guiying Takes Command" is not an isolated decorative art, but an integration of "form", "meaning" and "spirit". It builds an aesthetic framework with freehand colors and symmetrical composition, and carries Confucian ethics with symbols such as dragon and phoenix patterns. Ultimately, through the transformation of Mu Guiying's costumes, it achieves a thematic elevation from "personal destiny" to "the great righteousness of the country and the family"^[4]. This design logic profoundly embodies the pursuit of "the unity of beauty and goodness" in traditional Chinese aesthetics. The beauty of clothing lies not only in its visual form but also in the transmission of eternal cultural values through artistic symbols, making the stage image a concrete embodiment of the national spirit.

6 Conclusions

This thesis conducts an in-depth analysis of the character costume designs in the three plots of "The Yang Family's Deliberation", "Holding the Seal to Take Command", and "Ready to Go and Dispatch Troops" in "Mu Guiying Takes Command". From the perspective of design psychology, it reveals the connection between costumes and the emotional and psychological changes of characters, explores their traditional aesthetic concepts and cultural connotations, and reflects traditional Chinese aesthetics, values, and philosophical thoughts. Studying the essence of Peking Opera costume design and its application value in modern design has enlightening and reference significance for modern design. It is conducive to promoting the inheritance and innovation of traditional opera costume culture, combining traditional elements with modern design concepts, and creating works with both cultural connotations and artistic values.

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