

Value and Direction: Starting from the Sichuan Opera "The Legend of the White Snake"

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Abstract: The value and direction of Sichuan Opera lie in its own aesthetic and spiritual values. It is full of vitality and keeps pace with the Times. It not only integrates the popular entertainment forms among the masses but also achieves the dissemination and inheritance of Sichuan Opera while adhering to the essence and innovating. Looking upstream, history cannot hide the repeated cries of new life of Sichuan Opera in the long river of time, and in this way, it continues the indomitable spirit of Sichuan Opera. the unique regional environment is the fertile ground for the birth of Sichuan Opera, spreading the culture of Ba and Shu throughout the nine provinces. Art is appreciated by both the refined and the popular, and its forms are diverse. It is commendable and worthy of praise to integrate Sichuan Opera into the current popular media for dissemination and promotion. Through the Sichuan Opera "The Legend of the White Snake", we can appreciate the beauty of its form and meaning, and tell the value of contemporary Sichuan Opera.

Keywords: Sichuan Opera; the Legend of the White Snake; Value and Direction; Inheritance and Dissemination

1. Introduction

Sichuan Opera embodies the wisdom of the historical events, dialects, social and political life of the people in Bashu. It has a long history and is of great artistic value. From a macro perspective, history, linguistics, anthropology, sociology and political science are not very clear fields. These humanities have not been given established responsibilities by society, but they play a crucial role in the continuation of culture and even civilization. the historical significance, linguistic charm, human wisdom, social background and political ideology contained in Sichuan Opera, which is part of the

Ba-Shu culture, all demonstrate the authenticity of its status as an intangible cultural heritage. the artistic life course of Sichuan Opera has highlighted the humanistic strength of the people of Bashu in social practice, presenting a rich and diverse range of artistic expressions and containing unique values. At present, in the face of the predicament of how to integrate the innovation of the Times in the creation of Sichuan Opera plays, the limited dissemination of the Sichuan Opera's conventional patterns and the five Skills and four methods, and the low attention paid to the stage performances of Sichuan Opera, we should start from the "new", strive to integrate the public's aesthetic standards in the dissemination of Sichuan Opera, and take the initiative to explore, in order to redefine the relationship between intangible cultural heritage represented by Sichuan Opera and society in the future, and explore the direction of practice.

2. Value: the Spirit and Aesthetic Orientation of Sichuan Opera

The unique natural environment has given birth to the spirit of Bashu - the thrilling and diverse techniques of Sichuan Opera and its stimulating and cheerful aesthetic expression. Looking upstream, history cannot hide the repeated cries of new life of Sichuan Opera in the long river of time, and in this way, it continues the spirit of Sichuan Opera. the regional environment is the fertile ground for the birth of Sichuan Opera. the spirit and aesthetic orientation of Sichuan Opera have evolved in the context of different eras, and its value has been increasing day by day.

(1) the spiritual value of Sichuan Opera

Professor Dirk Bude mentioned in "The Main Ideas That Constitute Chinese Culture": "The Chinese do not consider religious thoughts and religious activities to be an important part of life. " the spiritual foundation of Chinese culture is not religion but ethics. [1] the ethics of an important part of life have condensed into

relatively unified spiritual symbols in the process of the transformation of Chinese social forms: namely, the "rites" represented by Confucian ethics as the center, the "Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues", and the "heaven, earth, sovereign, parent and teacher".

Under the reinterpretation of the stories of past dynasties, the spiritual foundation of "The Legend of the White Snake" is no longer merely a myth or a magnificent legend, but rather an expression of the life ethics of the people of Bashu and a representation of spiritual symbols. As one of the four major folk love legends in China, "The Legend of the White Snake" originated from the incident of the giant snake in Luoyang during the Tang Dynasty, was initially formed in Feng Menglong's "Cautionary Sayings" in the Ming Dynasty, and became mature and popular in the Qing Dynasty. It is a model of collective creation among the Chinese folk. the "White Snake", which originated from the legends of immortals, demons and monsters with religious connotations, swears to support her husband and educate her children, and abide by human ethics. Xu Xian follows the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, saying, "A graceful and virtuous lady is the ideal match for a gentleman. " the Green Snake and the White Snake are not actual sisters. After the White Snake cultivated for a thousand years and the Green Snake for five hundred years, they transformed into humans. Calling each other sisters is in line with the ethical and moral principles of kinship in Confucianism. "Xiaoqing" follows the white snake, listening and accompanying it, symbolizing the absolute obedience of "the ruler and the subject".

Sichuan Opera, one of the oldest local drama genres in China, has its spiritual values rooted in the survival sentiments of the people in Bashu. There is no completely isolated form of artistic expression. Only by identifying the development process of Sichuan Opera can its form be explained. It emerged in the middle of the 18th century, during the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty. This period was the enlightenment stage for the people to appreciate Sichuan Opera and absorb the essence of the four major vocal styles of classical opera, namely Kunqu, Yiyang, Bangzi and Pihuang, as well as the folk lantern opera of the Ba-Shu region. Tracing back to the origin of Sichuan

Opera's mature perception as an artistic form - Sichuan Opera originated in its native land, was nurtured in the Han, Tang, Song and Yuan Dynasties, sprouted in the early Ming Dynasty, and spread throughout Sichuan Province as well as some areas of Yunnan and Guizhou. In Sichuan, as early as the Han Dynasty, a variety of folk operas such as singing, dancing and acrobatics had already formed. By the Tang Dynasty, music, dance and drama in Sichuan had flourished, and it was known as "the best Sichuan opera in the world". With the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties, "Sichuan Zaju" further developed. During the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, the successive establishment of local guild halls and the continuous inflow of various vocal styles and opera genres from both the north and the south integrated with Sichuan Opera. Based on the above-mentioned time span and regional characteristics, Sichuan Opera, which combines the dialect features, folk customs, folk song and dance music, and storytelling and folk art of Sichuan, has evolved into a vocal art with local Sichuan characteristics.

The richness of the stage plays, the uniqueness of the special effects and the ingenuity of the techniques of Sichuan Opera have constructed the spiritual value of freehand brushwork. the stage plays of Sichuan Opera are extremely rich and diverse, and it is known as "three thousand Tang, eight Hundred Song, and an endless array of three states". There are approximately 1, 700 preserved plays with original text in the collection of the Sichuan Opera Research Institute of Sichuan Province, and about 1, 000 recorded scripts. Between 1955 and 1957, a total of 400 traditional plays were collected, sorted and performed in Chengdu and Chongqing. Among these plays, those belonging to the high-pitched opera system include "Five Robes", "Four Pillars", "Eighteen Scripts of Jianghu", and the "Four Major Scripts" recognized by the Sichuan Opera circle. With the support of the Four skills - singing, acting, reciting and martial arts, and the five methods - hands, eyes, body, techniques and steps, from witty and witty expressions to the accompaniment of instrumental music, and the special effects of "face-changing", "fire-breathing" and "water sleeves", along with the freehand and stylized movements, a star-studded monument of Sichuan Opera has been formed. From the construction of singing style,

semantics to form, repertoire and techniques, including the diverse expression of characters, the unique spiritual value of Sichuan Opera has been built up.

Understanding Sichuan Opera is like understanding things. Through scientific analytical methods, we can deduce the form and development laws of Sichuan Opera, acquire the ability to draw inferences by analogy from epistemology, and explain the spiritual value of Sichuan Opera in its course and behavior. the performance of Sichuan Opera, as a form of entertainment for the people of Bashu, has gradually flourished and developed into a unique artistic technique, transcending objective existence and condensing into an aesthetic image with national characteristics. By taking advantage of the unique environmental space of the Ba Mountains and Chu rivers, a national value that stems from the spirit of the soul can be created.

(2) Viewing the Aesthetic Orientation of Sichuan Opera from the Perspective of Regions Sichuan Opera has always presented an open and unique aesthetic orientation. the isolation of the basin civilization has made it less vulnerable to the harm of moral consciousness and the suppression of ethical systems, thus preserving its foolishness, backwardness and primitive brute force and wildness. Sichuan is the birthplace of Taoism. Compared with the refined and scholarly nature of Confucianism, Taoism's belief in the freedom of nature and life has nourished the spirit of transcending boundaries and not being confined to a single pattern in the culture of Ba and Shu. the creation of the green snake precisely reflects the contempt of the Ba-Shu civilization for hierarchical authority and the origin of gender hierarchy. [2] the novel "The Legend of the White Snake" is titled "White Snake", but in fact, "Green Snake" encompasses a large part of the aesthetic orientation of Ba-Shu culture.

The character construction of the "Green Snake" in the classic Sichuan Opera "The Legend of the White Snake", which is different from the past, showcases the free and "wild growth" momentum of Sichuan Opera. In Sichuan Opera, the green snake in folk tales is depicted as entangled in Yin and Yang, with male and female forms alternating. the male green snake is passionate and resolute, deeply in love with the white snake, with a tragic touch. the female green snake is lively and cheerful,

with a comedic touch.

The rugged terrain features are the most direct perception of the landforms of Bashu by people, and the aesthetic tendencies thus formed inevitably blend with them. the aesthetic of freehand Chinese landscape painting has permeated the regional culture. Amidst the gentle and soft mountains and waters, there emerges the Suzhou Pingtan characterized by the soft and gentle Wu dialect. In the difficult Shu Road and the rugged terrain where a hundred steps and nine turns through the rocks, In the Ba-Shu region, there is a more "thrilling" and "dangerous" aesthetic tendency - from basic skills such as holding a hand, shuttlecock skills, waist and leg skills, fan skills, flying creases, and tossing brocade to special skills like spitting fire and concealing knives, water sleeve dancing, lighting candles, holding oil lamps, and kicking sharp eyes, the list goes on and on.

To truly clarify what kind of predicament Sichuan Opera has fallen into in its current development and where its way out lies, a referential approach to breaking the deadlock is to return to the soil in which Sichuan Opera survives and re-examine it from the perspective of the opera ecosystem. [3] the aesthetic tendencies formed by the special regions have provided inspiration for exploring the character characteristics of Sichuan Opera, and the formation and evolution of aesthetic tendencies have also given a direction for exploring the future era value of Sichuan Opera.

3. Direction: Keep Pace with the Times and be Innovative

In line with the laws of social development and the aesthetic standards of the general public in the context of the Times, we should expand the development direction of Sichuan Opera as an intangible cultural heritage and rejuvenate it. the period of keeping pace with the Times for Sichuan Opera begins with reconstructing its position in the public's cultural and entertainment life, followed by innovation to enable it to be recognized from a "new" perspective, and more importantly, to be examined from the "heart".

(1) Create plays that express mainstream values First of all, it is necessary to demythify Sichuan Opera from the mysterious color in the eyes of the current new generation, create plays that promote socialism and express mainstream values, and integrate them into the

entertainment life of the general public. the status of Sichuan Opera in the mass cultural and entertainment life needs to be connected through a top-down collaborative approach. From the policy support plan to the specific implementation, it requires the joint coordination of multiple parties such as the Sichuan Opera Art Research Institute and the Sichuan Opera Troupe, to match high-quality publicity strategies and excellent plays, and to produce with a model that conforms to the mainstream acceptance forms of the contemporary era.

Secondly, in the selection and refinement of Sichuan Opera itself, it is also necessary to increase the exposure rate of Sichuan Opera. Only by seeing beauty can one recognize it. the male green snake in "The Legend of the White Snake" is strong and resolute, while the female green snake is understanding and gentle, which conveys the concept of "self-cultivation" in China's fine traditional morality of "cultivating oneself, regulating the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to the world". the diversity and rich layers of the green snake character are perfectly presented, covering multiple qualities from China's fine traditional culture. In the play, integrate the context of new media and follow the path of hit plays to customize more eye-catching plays.

While being aware of the problems in the dissemination and development of Sichuan Opera, we should actively let people see its beauty - increasing the connection between Sichuan Opera and life. Integrate it into your daily life. Only by allowing the public to be exposed to it unconsciously can the beauty of Sichuan Opera be condensed into a "mother's flavor", interact with mainstream values, promote socialism and create Chinese characteristics.

(2) Plays that satisfy the preferences of young people

Plays that follow the trend and satisfy the preferences of young people are another effective way to lead Sichuan Opera forward. As Mr. Liang Qichao once said, "The responsibility of today does not lie with others, but entirely with me, the young man. " Therefore, the future direction of Sichuan Opera requires the enthusiastic participation of young people even more. A play that caters to the preferences of young people is a prerequisite for them to get involved in the trend. Following the

repeated success of the two large-scale modern Sichuan operas, "Singing the Phoenix" and "White Dew Turns to Frost", the latest installment of the "Women of the Republic of China Trilogy" by the Chongqing Three Gorges Sichuan Opera Troupe, "Moon over the Xiangjiang River", was successfully staged in Wanzhou from November 30th to December 2nd, 2021. [4] In the development of modern Sichuan Opera, feasible paths for creating plays that satisfy the preferences of young people are constantly being explored. the performance of "Moon over the Xiangjiang River" undoubtedly inspired the creation of plays. the perception and understanding of the "newness" of modern Sichuan Opera lay a realistic foundation for examining it from the "heart".

(3) Transforming Old Plays into new Ones - Keeping Pace with the Times

The National Theatre of China premiered in 2013 The story of the Green and White Snakes, adapted from Li Bihua's novel of the same name, who, after five hundred years of cultivation, wandered through the world and were bewitched by love. the play "The Green Snake" produced by him has once again gained popularity on new media platforms. the most notable "novelty" lies in the design of the dialogue, which incorporates modern language, ancient vernacular, colloquial expressions and Internet slang to convey emotions and ideas. Not only does it break through the established image, but it also incorporates elements of the new era, reflecting the changes of the Times and the evolution of values.

In the redefinition of Sichuan Opera, apart from promoting and disseminating it through new media platforms, it is also necessary to incorporate elements of the new era, take the essence and discard the dross, appropriately use "jokes", and moderately improve the original form to enable the public to have a "new" understanding. Sichuan Opera, as an intangible cultural heritage, is a play presented on the stage after the theater's meticulous refinement of the scene, the play and the actors. It is not only the condensation of individual but also collective wisdom. Based on the recognition of Sichuan Opera, the appreciation of its beauty, and even cultural confidence and pride, it has redefined Sichuan Opera, allowing it to move forward in the direction of keeping pace with the Times.

4. Integration and Upholding Tradition while Innovating

The integration and innovation of Sichuan Opera while adhering to its essence require the combination of communication methods and mainstream values to achieve the transmission of values and the establishment of directions. the pain point in the dissemination of Sichuan Opera lies in the spread of information - information is the prerequisite for forming cognition and the first step in understanding. Only when people obtain more "information" about Sichuan Opera can more possibilities be brought to its dissemination. McLuhan, the father of communication studies, believed that "the medium is the message. " From this, it can be seen that the instrumental value of media and the subtle influence it exerts on people after receiving information are of great significance.

(1) Integration: the communication means of new media convergence

From the primitive tribes' expression of thoughts and expressions through sound to the development of singing and singing into modern civilization, the process of introducing Sichuan Opera reveals that certain parts of human nature have been presented by Sichuan Opera in an artistic way. This characteristic vocal art of Sichuan has continued human civilization. On February 19, 2016, the General Office of the People's Government of Sichuan Province issued the "Opinions on Supporting the Inheritance and Development of Traditional Chinese Opera" under the document number of Sichuan Office Document No. 12 [2016]. This "Opinion" is divided into 10 parts and 27 articles, including general requirements, strengthening the protection and inheritance of traditional Chinese opera, supporting the creation of traditional Chinese opera scripts, supporting the development of traditional Chinese opera performance groups, supporting traditional Chinese opera performances, improving the production conditions of traditional Chinese opera, establishing an evaluation system for traditional Chinese opera art, improving the training and guarantee mechanism for traditional Chinese opera talents, increasing the popularization and inheritance of traditional Chinese opera, and strengthening organizational leadership, which have pointed out the direction for the survival of Sichuan Opera.

In terms of the dissemination of Sichuan Opera,

efforts should be made to adopt integrated media communication methods, and information should be disseminated through micro-videos, short videos, official accounts, etc. Due to the limitations of the performance scenes, performance groups and production conditions of traditional Sichuan Opera, they have been shelved by the public. As cultural inheritors, we are isolated from them and excluded from the information reception media. How Sichuan Opera can be integrated during its dissemination and what it can be integrated with have become the key points to focus on. First of all, only by seeing beauty can one recognize it. Making Sichuan Opera visible to the public and having its information understood and even comprehending by the public is the first step. Secondly, breaking down the information of Sichuan Opera into symbols and engraving them in public perception can serve as a new approach. For instance, the facial makeup, elements of the plays, and classic poses of special effects of Sichuan Opera can be used for cultural and creative promotion. the combination of Honor of Kings and traditional culture provides a development idea for the information dissemination of Sichuan Opera - in this game, multiple ethnic cultures are presented and interpreted merely through a competitive gameplay.

Take the game character skin "Flying Kite to Explore Spring - Li Yuanfang" of the Honor of Kings China Festival series launched in the Qingming Festival of 2021 as an example. With the theme of "Kites Bring Back Spring", it aims to reawaken people's memory of the traditional folk custom of "flying kites in the east wind". In terms of echoing the theme, the game character's line "The half-thin swallow can withstand the wild dash, the little boy gets up early" is an adaptation of the allusion from Cao Xueqin's "The Southern Kite and the Northern Kite: the Examination of Workers". the childlike innocence of the game character Li Yuanfang evokes memories of childhood poetry and a sense of nostalgia for traditional folk customs. In the sixth-anniversary limited skin "High Mountains and Flowing Water - Zhuangzhou" of Honor of Kings, the allusion derived from "High Mountains and Flowing Water" tells the story of Boya and Zhong Ziqi, Guqin and Zhiyin. In Sichuan Opera, there are more ideas to make new attempts - launching new game skins with face-changing as an

element or integrating the lines into the singing style of Sichuan Opera, all of which provide ideas for the integration of Sichuan Opera.

In recent years, "Honor of Kings" has continuously explored local cultural collaboration. Following the joint launch of the "Thousand Colors in the Clouds, Discover the Silk Road" digital cultural tourism plan with the Gansu Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism in July 2022, another local cultural and tourism cooperation between "Honor of Kings" and Tengwang Pavilion in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, has now officially been implemented. Taking the collaboration between "Honor of Kings" and traditional culture as an opportunity, and leveraging the power of digital IP and technology, jointly promoting and facilitating the integration of Sichuan Opera dissemination can serve as a sustainable development path for Sichuan Opera. Liu Yexi, as a virtual "Internet celebrity" incubated by Chuangyi, the first "metaverse blogger" IP incubation institution on Douyin, is positioned as a virtual beauty expert who can catch demons. On Halloween Day, October 31, 2021, Liu Yexi officially debuted with a two-minute video that incorporated elements of suspense, special effects, makeup, and plot. In November of the same year, Liu Yexi gained over 2 million followers and more than 4 million likes in just one day with two videos. Then, in the expansion of Sichuan Opera, could this be used as an example to break through the traditional barriers?

According to statistics, Douyin has over 800 million daily active users, which means that half of Chinese netizens use Douyin as a medium for entertainment, making friends and obtaining information. But expand Sichuan Opera.

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