

PROCEEDINGS ARTICLE

Discussion on the Innovative Practice of the Cai Diao Opera "Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate" and the Peking Opera "Oil-Tea Camellia Censor"

Qianwei Jin^{1,*}¹School of Humanities, Arts and Design, Guangxi University of Science and Technology, Liuzhou, China

ABSTRACT

Choreographing and creating the drama stage art around the real historical achievements of Yaomin Zhou Wei, the Cai Diao opera "Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate" and the Peking opera "Oil-Tea Camellia Censor" demonstrated the artistic charm of drama creation and innovation through different types of dramas. Both have the common theme of national unity and serving the country, and have their own advantages in narrative legend, character design and artistic features. According to the needs of the times, society and the people, the drama art has been used to practice the new mission, new concept and new method of creation and innovation, showing the cultural charm of traditional drama and local drama, which achieves the purpose of being brave in innovation, strengthening cultural self-confidence, and daring to produce high-quality products, and meets the spiritual and cultural needs of the people.

ARTICLE DATA

Article History

Received 11 April 2022

Revised 21 April 2022

Accepted 14 October 2022

Keywords

Cai Diao opera "Oil-Tea
Camellia County Magistrate"
Peking opera "Oil-Tea Camellia
Censor"
Innovative practice

1. INTRODUCTION

Drama creation, especially the stage art innovation on historical themes, needs to carry out bold creations in line with artistic laws in terms of narrative legends, character relationships, and artistic characteristics, in order to achieve artistic enjoyment that satisfies the audience's aesthetics. Zhou Wei, a historical figure of the Northern Song Dynasty in Gongcheng, Guilin, Guangxi, has become a benchmark celebrity of the Yao nationality because of his outstanding political achievements and served the country for the people. Based on the real experience of his life, the creators use the practice and innovation of theatrical art to create literary and artistic works of value in the new era, which can provide the people with high-quality artistic masterpieces. Guangxi literature and art workers are not afraid of difficulties, take the initiative to undertake the mission of prospering and developing literature and art, and launch the Cai Diao opera "Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate" (2013) and the Peking Opera "Oil-Tea Camellia Censor"

(2017). Both operas were created around Zhou Wei. In addition to using different types of operas, they also had the courage to innovate in creative and innovative techniques. They successfully used dramatic language to contribute to a model of artistic innovation and practice.

2. NARRATIVE LEGENDS HAVE THEIR OWN MERITS

Both dramas use Yao people and oil-tea camellia as the entry point, giving the plot a legend in the narrative. However, the two dramas are not only in the same time of creation and have different emphases, but also have obvious differences in the specific design story and narration, which shows the charm of drama art innovation.

*Corresponding author. Email: ajqw365@yeah.net

2.1. Narrative Plots Are Different

Both dramas revolve around the same character Zhou Wei, but with different emphasis and different legends. "Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate" is mainly to show benefiting the local people when the official is appointed. Zhou Wei does both hard and soft to seek more benefits for the people. The soft thing is to guide those officials and wealthy owners to pay for the local people's food, and the hard thing is to behead the Royal Highness Wei's followers according to the law, angering the Royal Highness Wei and being falsely accused. Under such circumstances, Zhou Wei did not think of personal gains or losses, but wanted to complete the livelihood of the people by building dams. Based on the truth of history, Zhou Wei was indeed strict with law enforcement and dared to attack evil forces. Of course, in order to focus on the contradictions and conflicts, the drama will reasonably integrate the events. Zhou Wei dared to punish the evil people for the sake of the common people, and asked to repair the dam before he die for the common people's request. The theme of single-mindedness for the people becomes more and more obvious in the conflict of dramatic narratives.

"Oil-Tea Camellia Censor" jumped out of the field of ordinary folk narratives, and immediately brought Zhou Wei in front of the emperor. After artistic imagination, Zhou Wei's talent passed the interview of the highest authority, and he was directly named Censor by the emperor's order. He carried out the hard-core review of food relief for the common people and quickly found out the truth. These all blame to the deputy commander of the Royal Highness Wei. He used the emperor's suspiciousness to frame and blame the Royal Highness Wei. He was afraid of being punished, and even put the blame on others. He directly reported to the emperor and framed the Royal Highness Wei for treason. It can be said that he understood the psychology of the emperor of the Song Dynasty who did not believe in military generals. Historically, the Song Dynasty did suppress military generals, and it can be said that the creation of dramas conformed to the historical background. After all, screenwriters in the new era are not copying history. They want to tell the concept of people reading history for thousands of years. With the help of Zhou Wei and the emperor to debate whether to be loyal to the monarch or to serve the people, and to protect the world from the disaster of swords and soldiers, Zhou Wei chose to serve the people. . The narrative legend and the conduct for the people are completely combined to create an artistic image that conforms to modern aesthetics.

2.2. Carriers of the Operas Are Different

"Narrative is a communicative behavior; the completion of a narrative requires not only a story, but also a narrator and a listener" [1]. Because drama completes the preset narrative in limited time and space, it must take into account the aesthetic concept and psychological feeling of the appreciating subject. The audience level of the two dramas is different. "Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate" uses a local drama Cai Diao opera. Even if it absorbs some cultural elements of Guangxi, it still shows that the drama belongs to the cultural category of Guangxi. Because local opera has a deep relationship with the local culture, whether it is singing, movement, stage beauty, etc., all reflect the aesthetic awareness of the local people, and also express the appreciation tastes in line with the local people, that is, the biggest audience is the local people. Of course, it is a must to admit that the value embodied by the drama itself transcends geographical restrictions, and is also appreciated by audiences in other regions for serving the country for the people, being strong and firm, daring to take responsibility, etc.

"Oil-Tea Camellia Censor" uses Peking Opera, an art form known as Chinese opera. After years of baptism, it has been accepted all over the country. It can be said that the main body of the screenwriter and creator is very conscious of transcendence, and historical and cultural celebrities do not belong to a specific place, but belong to history and the whole people. Zhou Wei went from Gongcheng in Guangxi to other places as an official. In essence, he still used his own talents to serve the country. Therefore, the audience was not only from Guangxi, but also faced audiences from all over the country. From this, the author thinks that Guangxi can explore history and culture, boldly innovate to create literary and artistic works, and have a broader vision. It is completely possible to conduct research along the actual footprints of Zhou Wei during his lifetime, carry out cooperation between two places and multiple places, and organize cultural elites from all over the world to discuss and create together. It will launch cultural and artistic works that are suitable for more audiences. It is to tell a good story of national unity, and forge the consciousness of the Chinese people's community.

2.3. Narrative Styles Are Different

The drama needs a limited time to complete a limited event, and it is very important to arrange the narrative carefully. Generally speaking, there are linear narratives and two-line narratives. "Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate" adopts a linear narrative, closely following Zhou Wei's every move, and designing a narrative unit around the male No. 1

character. The location was Yongji County. Due to the dyke burst, the disaster victims were all over the place. They needed food to save the people and money for the construction of the dam. Zhou Wei, as the head of the county, took an active role to let the local wealthy people put food and ask the court for special funds. However, the evil forces will not let the slightest profit go. The drama is mainly designed to be a gangster with a heinous crime. Liu Siyu not only has the money of the people, but also dares to bully men and rape women, killing the father of the innocent poor girl Yuzhu. Of course, Zhou Wei wanted to punish him according to the law, which led to the danger of death of his life, and he still asked to build a dam for the people.

Not only Zhou Wei, but also his wife, Chamei, went north in "Oil-Tea Camellia Censor". After the two separated, they still did not forget to look for each other. Of course, Chamei is a completely fictitious character. Based on Zhou Wei's political achievements as an official and the people, there must be events where the two acted separately, and then they gathered together dramatically. In this way, there are two main narrative lines. One is that Zhou Wei made a living from oil-tea camellia, kindly helped the emperor who visited privately to treat his stomach pain, and was appreciated by talking about it and obtained an official position. When he went to investigate the case, he didn't think that the truth was that the Royal Highness was framed. Zhou Wei still insisted on justice, and made the real prisoner vice-commander be punished. For the sake of country peace, he tried his best to protect the Royal Highness Wei from angering the emperor and was given imperial poison wine. At the time of life and death, Chamei came, learned the truth, and was willing to die for the peace of the country. The true feelings of the two pushed the plot to a climax. In terms of artistic imagination, through artistic processing, it tells the shocking dramatic story of the people and the imperial power, and the narrative legend has created a chain of contradictions and conflicts that are very infectious.

3. CHARACTER RELATIONSHIP DESIGN IS VERY DIFFERENT

If the characters in the drama live, it means that the drama is successful. The two dramas have put a lot of effort into the main character Zhou Wei and his related personnel, which is to combine historical documents and the method of interpretation of folk stories to create vivid characters. The creators carefully design the relationship between stage art

characters: "they play a vital role in the development of the plot, and these factors need to be explained in some way" [2]. It has played a positive role in setting off Zhou Wei's aesthetic artistic image.

3.1. Cleverly Setting Up a Relationship Between Men and Women

The relationship between the characters in "Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate" basically follows the historical truth. Zhou Wei went north alone, saying goodbye to his fathers, villagers, and his wife. Because the future is uncertain and unpredictable, it is also helpless to go alone in the society. A man who dares to take responsibility is full of charm, let alone he is Zhou Wei, who is upright and good-looking and appointed as magistrate of Yongji County, Shandong Province. He rescued the father of the poor girl Yuzhu and avenged her grievances. Regardless of personal advance or retreat, he beheaded the murderer, Liu Siyu, close friend of Royal Highness Wei in accordance with the law. According to the ancient practice of men taking concubines, it is reasonable to arrange that Zhou Wei, who is far away, has a woman to take care of, and the plot also designed Yuzhu to be sincere to Zhou Wei. Through Zhou Wei's refusal of Yuzhu's affection, the plot shows Zhou Wei's traditional virtue of being devoted to the people and rejecting the private relationship between men and women.

"Oil-Tea Camellia Censor" is based on the logical truth of art, and the main body of the choreography and creation showed the courage to be bold and innovative. Zhou Wei went north, and his wife Chamei followed him. Compared with historical reality, this is a completely fictitious character, but why did the creators design it like this? It is because women in Lingnan culture have a high status, and they are just as daring as men. They have the masculinity to run the house and serve the country, and they have the masculinity of others. The development of the plot confirms this. The kind and affectionate Chamei used folk songs to cheer up Royal Highness Wei, and she also found clues of her husband. Chamei, who found out the truth, deeply felt the love of her husband and was willing to die together with Zhou Wei for the common people of the country. The combination of true love between men and women and true love for the people can be described as earth-shattering.

3.2. Official Recommendation Is Different

Zhou Wei, a person of Yao nationality, went north, and caught up with the great opportunity of the founding emperor, Zhao Kuangyin, to secure the country,

opening a magnificent chapter in his life. Rational analysis shows that the Yao people Zhou Wei, who was nurtured by Lingnan culture, wanted to become an official within the Song Dynasty system, not only had to overcome the cultural differences between the North and the South, but also various obstacles to promotion to the official position. The guide Xue Juzheng appeared in "Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate". Not only did he actively recommend it to the court, but he also reminded Zhou Wei of the stakes of advancing and retreating at the critical moment. He tried every means to deal with Zhou Wei, who was upright and decisive and benefited the people, and let Zhou Wei let go of his hands and feet to build dams, which fulfilled Zhou Wei's political achievement of dedicating himself to the people. In the play, the role of Xue Juzheng, the servant of the household department, is designed to introduce the character, which is in line with the development of the story and makes people feel natural and credible.

The drama "Oil-Tea Camellia Censor" abandoned Xue Juzheng and designed Zhou Wei to directly connect with the emperor. The emperor became the introducer, and it was even more dramatic through oil tea. Zhou Wei, who went north for three years, made a living selling oil tea on the street, and it can be said that he was reduced to a family of street sellers. This way of making up stories is in line with the life of ordinary people who went north in history. He encountered the emperor who visited the emperor privately in a micro-service, and after some arguments of camellia oil and the country, convinced the emperor, and directly took office as the imperial censor. Through the verification of the disaster relief food and the truth that the deputy commander of the Royal Highness Wei blamed others, it showed that Zhou Wei was intelligent, honest and upright, and did not hesitate to argue with the emperor, directly confronting the conflict with the highest authority in the empire, pushing the drama to a climax.

3.3. Royal Highness Wei and His Crony Changed Positions

Dramatic conflicts are generally binary oppositions such as kind and evil, good and bad, and progress and backwardness. Most historical dramas follow this pattern. The two dramas are loyal to the truth of history and art, and both positively affirm Zhou Wei's noble conduct that he did not hesitate to die for the people. However, the plots of the two dramas are different, and the relationship between the design characters has also undergone major changes. The roles of the Royal Highness Wei and his crony have been switched in the two dramas. The role of the Royal Highness Wei in "Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate" does not appear much, mainly through his

crony Liu Siyu to express the darkness and interests of the officialdom, thus showing Zhou Wei's uprightness and responsibility. It is generally said that the upper beam is not right and the lower beam is crooked. Liu Siyu withheld the special silver taels allocated by the imperial court for the construction of the embankment, and dared to embezzle public funds; he also bullied men and raped women. He was purely a lecher. He became angry when he was blocked from seizing the common daughter Yuzhu. He killed Yuzhu's father. He was rectified by Zhou Wei. But Zhou Wei was falsely accused by the Royal Highness Wei, which resulted in his danger of death.

In "Oil-Tea Camellia Censor", the emperor appeared, and it was a new dynasty. The main body of the choreography and creation interpreted the storyline based on the release of the military power with a cup of wine. The Royal Highness Wei did not dare to respect himself, because he was afraid of the emperor's over-heartedness, so he would drink and have fun without asking about political affairs. It didn't expect that King Wei, who was content with the status quo, was exploited by his crony and took the property for himself in the name of the Royal Highness Wei. In order to protect himself, the crony not only fabricated the ten crimes of Royal Highness Wei, but also framed Royal Highness Wei of treason, and wanted to send him to the eighth hell. It can be said that he was ruthless. The battered the Royal Highness Wei couldn't find a way out, and it was Zhou Wei's efforts to protect and argue with the emperor, and only then did he end up returning home. Because of the emperor's appearance, the power struggle is even more intense. The drama basically uses historical reality for artistic processing, and the contradictions and conflicts in the plot can better show the artistic image of Yao people Zhou Wei, a great husband who is dedicated to the people and stands above the ground.

4. DIVERSIFIED SYMBIOSIS OF ARTISTIC FEATURES

Drama creation can reflect the characteristics of the times, social reality, national spirit and people's aesthetics, the core is to present artistic characteristics. Just as scholars have emphasized, "the national spirit and national characteristics in drama cannot be lost. This is the basic principle of the innovation of traditional national drama" [3]. The reason why the drama works created by Zhou Wei and his people are recognized by the society and appreciated by the audience, and won professional awards, is that the dramas show rich artistic characteristics.

4.1. Type of Roles in Performance Is Appropriate

The drama has a typical mode, and role-playing is arranged according to the needs of the plot. Although the two dramas use different types of dramas, they have different type of roles in performance of the main character Zhou Wei. One is a harlequin and the other is a young male. "Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate" uses Cai Diao opera, combined with humorous local slang in northern Guangxi, to create a strong comedy atmosphere. Zhou Wei, as the main character, is designed as a harlequin. According to the plot, the official rank of a county magistrate is too low, especially in the face of high-ranking officials such as the court and princes. He can only do what he wants with his witty, cheerful and easy-going performance. After all, he can't count on his integrity to challenge high-ranking officials. For example, in order to relieve the victims, he can only make efforts to let local officials and gentry reliving the food. The image of Zhou Wei, the harlequin, makes people feel that he is typical of the common people, makes people feel very close, and is a member of the common people.

Zhou Wei, the main character in "The Censor of Camellia", is a role of young male, handsome, daring, and intelligent. Especially when he met the emperor who visited the country privately, although he forced the emperor to drink the oil tea, but it was for the purpose of curing the disease and saving people, showing the eagerness and kindness of him. There is also a humorous scene in which he knocked open the palace of the Royal Highness Wang with oil tea strike, and designed a humorous scene in which the adjudication case made the deputy commander reveal his secrets. As the contradictions and conflicts became more and more serious, especially the debate with the emperor over whether to serve the people or to be loyal to the monarch, pushed the drama to a climax. In order to recuperate the people of the world and enjoy the peace of the world, Zhou Wei was not afraid to annoy the emperor and was given imperial poison wine. This kind of storyline is suitable for a passionate and willing to serve the common people, and dare to confront the supreme power emperor who can take life and death, and the storyline and character design are well matched.

4.2. Cross-Border Integration of Opera Genres

Through the joint efforts of all ethnic groups, Chinese culture has become a common wealth infiltrating the essence of each ethnic group's culture. But as far as

the form of drama is concerned, there are many kinds of dramas all over the country, and they all absorb their own artistic strengths. They have been adjusted according to the living customs, social concepts and aesthetic awareness of people in various places into the drama style that can meet the local people's favor.

"Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate" is based on the Cai Diao opera, and at the same time draws on the artistic techniques of Gui opera, and is cleverly arranged according to the plot to achieve the purpose of complementing each other. In order to highlight Zhou Wei's civilian color and highlight his humorous style, the drama arranged Zhou Wei to push a flatbed car without leaving the oil tea, and used a harlequin to promote the development of the whole plot, which has made a qualitative breakthrough, because the Cai Diao opera generally does not take historical celebrities as the main roles; the use of Gui Opera is very obvious. In order to express the style of the officials in the play, Xue Juzheng et al. adopted Gui opera singing, showing a stable and upright posture.

"Oil-Tea Camellia Censor" mainly uses Peking Opera, with delicate performances, solid singing skills, and well-placed movements, showing Zhou Wei's confidence and integrity, as well as wisdom and responsibility, as a pillar of the country, from Lingnan to the Northern Song Dynasty. Although the drama is based on Gongcheng culture in Guangxi, it has a broad vision and has the strength to promote it to the whole country. It not only shows the harmonious relationship between ethnic groups in terms of theme, but also shows cultural integration in drama. The extensive use of Guangxi folk song culture, especially the echoes of "Oil Tea Love Song" from the beginning to the end, not only reflects the pure and unswerving love of the Yao people, but more importantly, shows the sincerity of serving the country for the people. It integrates the feelings of individual men and women with repaying the people, and sublimates it to the feeling of serving the country, deepening the theme.

4.3. Artistic Conception Is Profound and Natural

"The Chinese stage performance method is original, and we are seeing its superiority more and more, and this artistic performance method is similar to the unique Chinese painting art, and even the artistic conception in Chinese poetry" [4]. Drama creation attaches great importance to artistic life materials. Even dramatic, social and realistic real stories need to be subtly transformed by theatrical performance programs. The aesthetic characteristics shaping conforms to the characteristics of stage art, the

narrative legend shakes the hearts of the audience, the characters affect the audience's emotions, and the dramatic language such as singing, reciting and playing makes the audience mesmerize. In short, people voluntarily indulge in the aesthetic space of theatrical settings.

"Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate" has shaped two art spaces, one is the art space of national unity; the other is the real space of clean government and anti-corruption. The two are effectively unified on the artistic stage of Cai Diao opera, creating a profound artistic conception. The Yao person Zhou Wei is wise, optimistic and confident. He left his hometown in Guilin, Lingnan, and broke into the land under the jurisdiction of the Northern Song Dynasty. By chance, he served as the county magistrate appointed by the Northern Song Dynasty, and he devoted all his energy to the government affairs for the benefit of the people. He was not afraid of evil forces, and did not hesitate to sacrifice his own life, just to free the people from the miserable life of suffering. Neither official history writing nor stage art cares whether Zhou Wei is a Han Chinese or a Yao civilian, as long as he is a good official of the Chinese nation.

"Oil-Tea Camellia Censor" uses Peking Opera, but the cultural atmosphere shaped by the entire stage shows distinct Yao elements. The hero Zhou Wei in the play is upright and loyal, loyal to both the court and his wife. He is not only a good husband among the Yao people, but also a great husband in the Northern Song Dynasty. Oil tea, oil tea strike, long waist drum, folk songs, Yao dance, etc. are skillfully interspersed in the stage plot. From south to north, couples seek a better life home together, but also find each other together, and integrate their personal destiny with the destiny of the people of the country. The artistic conception of the drama is very profound. The Yao people and the Han people are all important members of the big family of the motherland, and they have all made great contributions to the Chinese civilization.

5. CONCLUSION

The Cai Diao opera "Oil-Tea Camellia County Magistrate" and the Peking Opera "Oil-Tea Camellia Censor" are works of art that have contributed to the society in Guangxi drama circles. The two dramas use dramatic language to interpret the legendary experience of the Northern Song Dynasty Yaomin Zhou Wei, as well as the tall image of serving the country for the people. The two male protagonists are the same person and have a common theme, showing the Chinese national community consciousness of national unity and serving the country and the people. However, in terms of narrative legends, character relationships, and aesthetic characteristics, the

purpose is to show the innovativeness of dramatic art that is different from others but alone. "If ideological innovation is the basis for the reality of traditional national drama, then viewing is a necessary condition for attracting audiences to the work, and the innovation in visual aesthetics of traditional national drama will bring it more audience flow" [5]. To meet the growing spiritual and cultural needs of the people, it is a must to pay attention to the unique aesthetics of dramatic art. "The value of traditional culture has been fully affirmed again, and the positive role of traditional opera classics in the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation has been accepted by more and more people, making it a precious cultural heritage that still survives in contemporary society" [6]. The creators should solidly study and comprehend the charm of traditional culture, insist on excavating the materials needed for drama and stage art from life, absorb new achievements of Chinese and foreign drama culture, dare to innovate and practice, strengthen cultural self-confidence, use different theatrical art forms in an eclectic manner, and apply the language of theatrical art, to create masterpieces that the times need.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Fund Project: 2020 Guangxi Philosophy and Social Science Planning Research Project "Guangxi Traditional Drama Innovation Development and "Chinese Story" Expression Research" (No. 20FZW012); 2022 the Ministry of Education's Humanities and Social Sciences Planning Project "Mining, Arranging and In-depth Research on the Oral Data of Endangered Opera Species in the Xijiang River Basin" (serial number: 2200); 2020 Guangxi University of Science and Technology "Course Ideological and Political" Teaching Reform and Research Special Project (Graduate Course): "Exploration and Practice of Curriculum Ideological and Political Reform Based on Blended Teaching "Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection" (No.: 2020KCSZ26); 2020 Guangxi University of Science and Technology "Course Ideological and Political" Demonstration Course Construction Project: "Chinese Folklore" (No.: 2020KCSZ32); Guangxi Postgraduate Education Innovation Plan Project 2021 Guangxi Degree and Postgraduate Education Reform Project: "Construction and Reform Practice of Postgraduate Joint Training Base Based on Innovation and Entrepreneurship" (No.: JGY2021174); 2021 Educational Scientific Research Project for Studying in China "Exploration and Practice of Chinese Cultural Identity Education for Chinese Students under the Background of the 'China-ASEAN Community of Shared Future'" (No.: 2021LJKY01).

REFERENCES

- [1] Sha Kozlov. Narrative Theory and Television [J]. World Cinema, 1993(2): 103. (in Chinese)
- [2] Peisheng Tan. Drama Ontology [M]. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2009: 199. (in Chinese)
- [3] Hongliang Shi, Yundong Li. Research of Protection and Inheritance of Ethnic Minorities Drama in Yunnan Province [J]. Academic Exploration, 2015(8). (in Chinese)
- [4] Baihua Zong. Artistic Conception [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2017: 331. (in Chinese)
- [5] Wei Lu, Jun Chen. The Development and Innovation of the Traditional Drama of Ethnic Minorities: Taking the City of Fishing as a Reference [J]. Guizhou Ethnic Studies, 2018(8). (in Chinese)
- [6] Jin Fu. Eight Years of "Drama Reform" – How to Continue the Lifeline of Excellent Traditional Culture [J]. Southern Literature Forum, 2021(4). (in Chinese)