

The Classic Shaping of Typical Female Images by Mulan Motif in Historical Times—Historical Review and Textual Sorting of the Motif*

XIAO Yuwei, ZHANG Pei

Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication, Beijing, China

The image of Mulan is well known to the public as an important symbol in the dissemination of Chinese excellent traditional culture. This paper aims to summarise the mother-title from traditional canonical texts, to explore the content and value of sustainable IP development, and to study a large number of derivatives with the image of Mulan as the mother-title, based on the wide circulation of the prototype of the mother-title “The Poem of Mulan” (木兰辞) and the positive values conveyed by the content. Through the processing and imagination of scholars and writers on the mother text in the past generations, the image of Mulan has gradually formed a relatively stable cultural communication theme in the process of dissemination in China’s historical period, and many adaptations with international influence based on the mother title of Mulan have emerged in the foreign dissemination, so through the combing and summarisation of the textual works of various periods both at home and abroad, we will dig out the textual transmission of the mother title of Mulan, which is representative of the mother title of China’s excellent traditional culture, and the development of the Chinese spiritual core. The Development of the Chinese Spiritual Kernel. This paper adopts research methods such as documentary evidence method and discourse analysis to show the textual flow of Mulan’s parent theme in a more diversified form.

Keywords: Mulan motifs, feminine power, textual transmission, literature review, identity

Preface

Mulan, as a spiritual icon image set up for the image of oriental women, is a female power and model, but also a representative of the model image of oriental women. Therefore, the study of the dissemination and development of Mulan is conducive to the promotion of the excellent traditional Chinese culture and the extraction of the genetic connotation of the Chinese nation. The text of Mulan’s mother text with the new form

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XIAO Yuwei, undergraduate, School of Publishing, Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication, Beijing, China.

ZHANG Pei, Ph.D., post-doctoral, Associate Professor, Master Instructor, School of Publishing, Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication, Beijing, China.

of literature and art in the field of its text system continues to grow into a story genealogy, as the collective memory of the country and the Chinese nation to promote the inheritance of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, in terms of the characteristics of the times, Mulan's vivid character image reflects the distinctive characteristics of the times in different periods, and through the analysis of the image of Mulan, it will be found the creator of the times under the background of the values given and the cultural psychology. Mulan's image ranges from that of a filial daughter under the traditional concept of family to that of a filial heroine of loyalty and filial piety, as well as the image of female identity and the pursuit of individuality and liberation in the new era.

Original Literature Presentation of the Mulan Matrix—Conducting a Literature Review

This section will introduce the flow and dissemination of texts under the unit of the Mulan motif. First of all, the motif, as a cultural identity formed by a certain social group, has a certain unchanging and summarisable structural form, and the traditional cultural motif derived from Mulan's experience has been widely disseminated in the later generations as a classic model of Chinese folklore and popular literature, and Mulan's military service is a model for the development of Chinese folklore and the excellent traditional culture of China. As a model for the development of Chinese folk literature and excellent traditional Chinese culture, Mulan's military service contains many themes such as "gender disguise", "female power", "heroine", "gender consciousness (identity)", etc., and many other matrices.

Reviewing the existing literature research on Mulan's theme by scholars in recent years, at the level of the background of the creation era and the process of copying, among them, scholars permit to believe that the story in "The Poem of Mulan" is located in the pre-Northern Wei Dynasty, and the historical excavation starting from the word "Montenegro" provides a strong argument for the investigation of the origin of the theme of Mulan, which is included in the *Lefu Poetry Collection*. Recorded in *Lefu Shiji* (Collected Poems of the House of Music) (《乐府诗集》), cited in *Gujin Leju* (Records of Ancient and Modern Music) (《古今乐录》), and its 12 volumes were recorded in *Records of Sui's Classic Books* (《隋书经籍志》), which researched the textual sources of the prototype of the story of Mulan. Scholar Zhao Congren examines the history of the word khan in the "The Poem of Mulan", which was first seen in the Zoran tribe during the Northern Wei Dynasty. Cao Xi, through her study of Mulan's family name, suggests that it is similar to the "Mulan" of the Xianbei tribe in the historical period, echoing the image of Mulan with the surname of Hua, which appeared in many later creations.

Evolution of the Vertical Transmission of the Mulan Matrix—Acceptance in Historical Periods

The study of Mulan's mother-title begins with the excavation of its source, the story framework of Mulan's archetypal character, and its related textual records in the North and South Dynasties' Lefu Folk Songs "The Poem of Mulan", the current version of which is the *Lefu Poetry Collection* edited by Guo Maoqian of the Song Dynasty, which recounts the story of Mulan's journey from the army on behalf of her father to the return of the dynasty to the final resignation of her post and return to her hometown. With the development of history, "The Poem of Mulan" has given rise to dramas, novels, and other genres, and the literati and scholars have made secondary creations on the image of Mulan, making the Mulan mother-title widely circulated in the later generations. From this, we can summarise the direction of dissemination of the cultural motif created with the image of Mulan and the transmission of the text in the historical period.

The second important document in the study of Mulan's maternal theme is Wei Yuanfu's "Mulan Song" (木兰歌) of the Tang Dynasty, which is closer to the reality in the details of the plot, portraying the father's frailty, the image of the eldest brother in the family as the youngest son, and filling in the scenes of Mulan saying goodbye to her parents before she went to the army and reuniting with her family after her return, as well as details of Mulan's cross-dressing as a man. Since the Tang and Song Dynasties, with the development of Confucianism, the literati and scholars would give certain connotations of the times to their characters, and mould Mulan's image close to the moral model of loyalty and filial piety under Confucianism, and Mulan was named "General of Filial Piety and Martyrdom" by the Tang Dynasty, and Mulan shrines and temples and worships were found in different parts of the world.

During the Tang and Song Dynasties, Mulan was highly accepted within the society, and Mulan was used as an allusion in poems. In addition, female temples representing the Mulan Temple in Henan Province appeared in various places for worship, through which it can be judged that the image of Mulan became a folk worship phenomenon at that time, and the representative works of this period are "Inscription on the Temple of Mulan" (题木兰庙) composed by Du Mu and "Play Inscription on the Mulan Flower" (戏题木兰花) by Bai Juyi. In his poem, Du Mu cleverly contrasts the behaviour of a man who kills the enemy on the battlefield with the behaviour of a woman who paints her eyebrows in her daily life, and depicts Mulan's heroine image from the perspective of psychological change. Bai Juyi describes the posture of Mulan flowers in a way that the flowers are in harmony with the people, which is related to the ancient situation of Mulan unloading the male clothes after the army, and Du Mu and Bai Juyi's poetic works both involve the spread of Mulan's mother-title, which can be seen that Mulan's mother-title was widely spread in the folklore in Tang and Song Dynasties.

In the Yuan Dynasty, Hou Youzuo described the scene of Mulan's return to her hometown in "Dialectical Record of the General of Filial Piety and Martyrdom's Ancestral Statue" (孝烈将军祠像辨正记), writing that she was "released from her military uniform and restored to her maiden's attire, and all of them were horrified", and that finally she was "forced by the forces to take her own life". The author portrayed Mulan as a woman's husband and enriched Mulan's feminist hero image by adding to her storyline.

In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Xu Wei's "Female Mulan Joining the Army for Her Father" (雌木兰替父从军) is a classic text in the process of dissemination of Mulan's mother-title, which shaped an image with a high degree of acceptance and popularity in later generations, and most of the subsequent adaptations by creators retained the narrative structure and the marriage plot, and the family name of Hua was retained as well, which provided a key textual model for the transmission of Hua Mulan to the later generations, and the name of Mulan with Hua's family name became the most popular image in the Qing Dynasty through the text. The image of Mulan was preserved in the Qing Dynasty through the transmission of texts in the "Double Rabbit Chronicle" (双兔记), "The Northern Wei Wonderful History of the Lady Xiao Lie Biography" (北魏奇史闺孝烈传), and "The Biography of the Loyal, Piety, Brave, and Strong Wonderful Woman" (忠孝勇烈奇女传), and the image of Hua Mulan was left in the world's mind through the popular novels featuring Hua Mulan as the main character in these key texts.

In the modern period, "The Legend of Hua Mulan" (花木兰传), written by Liu Yazi under the pseudonym of Yalu, embodies the heroic image of feminist heroism and heroism. In the author's writing, Mulan's heroic sentiment of defying the odds for the country and the world leaps off the page, overflowing with the heroine's emotion of pledging her life to the country, rendering Mulan's patriotic sentiment, embodying Mulan's image of a "heroine", and shaping a feminist image of women's heroism.

The application of the Mulan motif in the Peking Opera “Mulan in the Army” (木兰从军) starred by Mei Lanfang in 1912, in which the image of Mulan was portrayed, has a strong imprint of the times with the moral standards and gender concepts of the social background at that time. In the 1956 film *Mulan* (《花木兰》), starring Chang Xiangyu, the plot of disguise was mainly used, and the line “Who says women are inferior to men” was used to convey to the world Mulan’s identity as a heroine and a woman. In 1998, Disney’s animated version of the film *Mulan* relied on oriental cultural motifs to convey to the world the image of a heroic heroine who strives to realise her personal values. In Disney’s animated and live-action films, the image of Mulan as a “princess” who does not need to wear a princess dress is a commonality in addition to the individuality and charm of Disney’s legendary productions.

Conclusion

This paper summarises the important texts of the Mulan motif in the vertical transmission of the historical period, and gives a glimpse of the construction of the image of Mulan under the influence of the ideology of each dynasty, which has been constantly transformed at the level of the national will, the public’s pleasure, and the individual’s emotional support. As a traditional cultural symbol, the Mulan motif reflects the change of China’s excellent traditional cultural motifs. By sorting out the Mulan matriarchal theme in various periods of history, we have gained a deeper understanding of the development and evolution of this classic cultural matriarchal story, as well as the cultural connotations and social values it implies. In the process of historical evolution, the image of Mulan is dominated by family sentiment and valour from the beginning. With the change of time, more character traits, such as wisdom and tenderness, are gradually incorporated into the plot. The storyline is also richer and more varied, expanding from the single story of taking one’s father’s place in the army to family feuds, love entanglements, and many other aspects. By sorting out Mulan’s mother-title in the historical period, we can see its important position in Chinese literature and culture. The Mulan motif not only has rich historical and cultural connotations, but also has a wide impact in cross-cultural communication.

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