

# **Research on Inheritance and Innovation Development of Traditional Door Gods Culture from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence**

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**Abstract:** The Chinese door god is a unique cultural carrier in China's traditional culture. Its rich connotation and unique shape are the concentrated reflection of people's real life and ideas. In the new era context, based on the spiritual connotation of the door god culture, this paper explores the inheritance and innovation of the door god culture, aiming to provide new ideas for the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture.

## **1. Introduction**

General secretary Xi Jinping pointed out in the party's 19th congress report: "without a high degree of cultural confidence, without cultural prosperity, there will be no great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." The prosperity of a nation cannot be separated from cultural prosperity, and even more from the people's firm recognition of their own cultural values. The Chinese gate deity contains unique and rich contents, positive value pursuit and diversified forms of expression. It survives and thrives in the vast and profound cultural soil of China. It is a unique cultural carrier in China's traditional culture and an artistic form with a deep and broad mass base. The excellent traditional Chinese culture is the foundation of our cultural confidence and the important cornerstone of our future development [1]. In order to inherit and develop Chinese traditional culture, one must have firm confidence in one's own national culture. From the perspective of cultural self-confidence, based on the connotation, characteristics and evolution law of the door-god culture, this paper analyzes the current development situation of the door-god culture, and puts forward the development idea of the integration of the door-god culture and creative industries, so as to "live" the traditional door-god culture, make it better integrate into the daily life of the public, and build the strength of cultural self-confidence.

## **2. The Emergence and Development of Door Gods**

### **2.1. Door sacrifice and witchcraft, totem worship, folk phenomenon door sacrifice and witchcraft, totem worship, folk phenomenon**

The door sacrifice originates from the primitive witchcraft activities of totem worship and is also the origin of the ancient folk custom of "door god". Primitive witchcraft is a kind of behavior that exerts extraordinary influence on people and everything with the help of supernatural mysterious forces in order to achieve some special utilitarian purpose. Some data show that the earliest door god was Shen Tu and Yu Lei. Book of han 53 volumes: "The doors of the temple have Cheng qin paintings, short coats, large trousers and long swords" [2]. However, the emergence of private ownership developed from social groups to separate portals, and the door became a symbol of home. It was the only place for people to go through every day. At the same time, it was also considered the only way for ghosts and evil people to invade their homes. Therefore, people paid attention to the common heritage in ancient times. The processing and selection of animal heads and the making of wood carvings led to the appearance of the door god, the earliest artistic form. In the study of the origin of fine arts, witchcraft theory has certain guiding significance to the study of the occurrence of door gods. At the beginning of ancient times, the ancestors carried out witchcraft sacrifice,

divination, prayer and other activities for hunting, farming and other important events to meet the psychological needs that the reality could not reach. Therefore, for thousands of years, from the king down to the common people, it has become a natural thing to worship the gate during the Spring Festival. Thus, the concept of the gate god came into being and developed.

In the primitive period, when the ancestors built their own houses, they prayed to the ancestors and gods to protect their houses and their owners. Before building a house, "implements" or "animals" are buried under the gate site for sacrificial ceremonies in witchcraft activities [3]. It took hundreds of thousands of years for human beings to take the first step in human life. They experienced a phase of narcissism in which witchcraft was omnipotent, totem worship and natural worship. In this case, the traditional culture of the door god is in urgent need of people's recognition, protection and innovation. Under the control of the ideology of "all things have spirit", the primitive ancestors were full of high reverence for everything they faced. No matter what they did, they had to concretize witchcraft activities with certain rituals in advance ... Wicca is the origin of many social customs [4]. With the changes of society, people have also come to believe in heroes who can defend their country. The shape of the door god gradually evolved into the image of the warrior door god.

## **2.2. "Tao Ren", "ShenTu", "Yu Lei" and Folklore**

The myths of "Tao Ren", "Shen Tu" and "Yu Lei" have profound historical origins in our country, and the myths and stories are widely circulated among the people. According to records in Shanhaijing, people are afraid of evil spirits entering their homes, so they use peach stalks to carve images of Shen Tu and Yu Lei. On New Year's Eve, they hang reeds on the doors and draw a tiger on the two doors to avoid the harassment of ghosts. ShenTu and Yu Lei can control ghosts [5]. Where did "Shen Tu" and "Yu Lei" come from? "The prototype of Shen Tu and Yu Lei is flowers, Shen Tu is *Curculigo orchioides*, and Yu Lei is lotus. It is the worship of the forefather gods that follows him. During this period, the first day of the first month, two sacred images were drawn and pasted on the door, right sacred tea and right Yu Lei. Becomes the true meaning "the door god". Later, totem evolved into the image of "God of God" to pray for ancestors' protection. During the New Year, the two statues of "Shen Tu" and "Yu Lei" were pasted on the door to resist ghosts, which was later passed on to folk customs.

## **2.3. Qin Shubao and Yuchi Gong Model**

The image of ShenTu and Yu Lei as gate gods has been used until the Tang Dynasty. By the end of the Tang Dynasty, they were replaced by the images of Qin Shubao and Yu Chigong. Legend has it that Emperor Taizong was ill and heard ghosts calling all the time in his dream. He could not sleep and was in great pain. When the generals Qin Shubao and Yu Chigong heard this, they were armed and guarded by the door. "The profound influence of mythological thinking concept on design activities of creation cannot be ignored" [6]. The imagination and creativity of mythological thinking have deeply influenced the modeling activities of folk arts. The image of the door god has changed from warrior door god to civilian official door god, and finally fell to Wen door god of New Year pictures. The door god's original function of exorcising ghosts and evil spirits also became diversified after the Song and Yuan Dynasties, adding emotional sustenance such as praying and expecting. Modern society pays more attention to the sense of form and novel expression methods, and fewer people are willing to know the true meaning of its existence from the source. The redesign of traditional culture can not only give it a new form of existence but also give it an important cultural symbol. Qin Wei's model has the greatest influence among the people and is the most widely circulated. Even now, people are still posting the images of the two generals.

## **3. Inheritance of Door Spirit Culture in Contemporary Times**

As a folk art form with a long history of the Chinese nation, the door god, in the process of its evolution, reflects the traditional life customs, folk beliefs, ideas and so on of the Chinese nation, and is a symbol of the development of the times and the changes of folk customs. With the

evolution of history and the changes of ecological environment of primitive folk culture, the form and connotation of door gods have changed, and this change is a long and complicated process of evolution. There are two stages in the shaping of the gate deity, one is the animal head carving stage in the embryonic stage, and the other is the drawing and engraving stage of the divine image [7]. The first stage revolves around totem worship to select and carve animal heads, which is a very primitive art form. In the second stage, the idol is shaped according to people's desire to avoid ghosts and eliminate evil, and to analyze and protect peace. Due to the division of regions, the representative figures of the door gods, which bear a history of thousands of years, are generally Yuchi Gong and Qin Qiong. The division of regional characteristics also represents the local customs and cultural characteristics. Under the background of globalization, what kind of image should the door god appear in the contemporary cultural life, and how to better play its value of the times and release its inner spiritual and cultural connotation is worth pondering.

### **3.1. The evolution of the image of the door god in the contemporary era**

The image of the door god was gradually replaced by the mythical figures of Shen Tu and Yu Lei, who were in charge of ghosts, and by the real figures of Qin Qiong, Yuchi Gong and Zhong Kui. After that, the image of the door god was represented by tall and powerful military commanders such as Guan Yu and Yue Fei. Today, people's imagination of the door god is full of people's ideals of life. The origin, development and evolution of the door god also reflect the development of the times and the changes of customs. At the same time, with the understanding of modern conceptual painting, the door god has experienced a long history of human development, starting from the witchcraft activities of primitive worship of natural gods and totem worship, from the evolution of material character to personality and from deification to secularization. In the past, people only put up door-to-door divine paintings during the Spring Festival to exorcise ghosts and bring peace. At present, we can see the door god element in all kinds of design products, painting works and even clothing and apparel. The creation of door god paintings has become diversified, and its decorative and artistic performance is gradually increasing.

With the evolution of the social, cultural and ecological environment, the door gods show complex and diversified deductive features. The evolution of gate deity from "peach stalk" to "peach symbol" is an evolution from natural form to humanistic form. "Door God" has gradually faded out of our life. More and more people do not understand the culture of door gods and abandon the custom of "sticking door gods" during the Spring Festival. The traditional culture and folk customs are the carrier of our Chinese nation's material life and the reflection of our nation's spiritual life. In the preserved postures of some door gods and the image-building of some door gods handed down in reality, the god of the male soul also shows a gentle, clever and lovely image. Our cultural confidence does not come out of thin air. The excellent connotation of Chinese culture, the objective law of cultural development and the correct guidance of central documents are the solid basis for our cultural confidence. It reflects the aesthetic view of our country's folk art and conforms to people's good and beautiful aesthetic desire. The purpose of repetition is consistency, so that a certain element in the design can appear repeatedly in the work, which can not only increase consistency, but also appear more organized and unified. With the evolution of the times, people can see its historical track of gradual change with the changes of the world, and its diversified features and manifestations are becoming more and more obvious "[8].

### **3.2. The modern inheritance and application of door gods**

Door gods are the spiritual and cultural products of the continuous development and evolution of human society, which have continued to this day. They are cultural heritage and historical memory. In recent years, Lin Jinliang, a contemporary Chinese designer, has taken the traditional Chinese symbol "door god" as his design inspiration. His bold color and graphic design have unique mysterious color and oriental implication. At the same time, the separation and reorganization of the door spirit elements are applied to the pattern design of square towels, handbags and handkerchiefs, deepening the multi-level deepening and deduction of the door spirit series works. With the passage of time, folk customs have also been continuously integrated with new progressive factors. Many

museums, art galleries and related collectors regard the door gods of different times as art treasures to collect and study. Some artists study and create on the theme of door gods. There are also many creative designs of cultural and artistic categories, which draw nutrition and essence from the ancient art of door gods. Cultural development must adapt to economic and political development, which is the external law of cultural development. The contradictory movement and critical inheritance among truth, goodness, beauty, falsehood, evil and ugliness are the internal laws of cultural development. Although the process of creation and production is very simple, the prototype of the door god appeared. As a folk custom, the door god is a model for the inheritance of cultural groups and the preservation of history and culture in our country. It represents the belief and spirit of the Chinese nation and symbolizes the inheritance of Chinese traditional culture and folk life. From the folk activities of "door gods", we can see that people's faith in God has been shaken and they have begun to turn to the worship of heroes. This is an affirmation of human's own strength [9].

Door god is an important carrier to express Chinese traditional culture with folk art, which contains rich emotional connotation. "Through the meaning pattern of symbols handed down from generation to generation in history, it expresses the concept of inheritance in the symbolic ceremony. The door god's modeling is changing, but the deep structure of its modeling always runs through a mysterious "collective consciousness" and "collective representation" passed down from generation to generation. The door god inherits the cultural phenomena of various times, continuously enriches its significance, and has been handed down, making it a carrier with profound cultural connotation. People once said that the mask of Nuoxi is the living fossil of drama, while the door god can be called the "living fossil" of earlier and more primitive art and belief worship. Through the symbol system of culture, people can communicate with each other, pass on and on, and display their understanding of life and their attitude to life "[10]. As a traditional custom of the Chinese nation, the door-sticking god is also a constantly changing cultural phenomenon, which bears the collective memory and spiritual sustenance of the nation for many years. The change of form should not only have the characteristics of the times and visual expression, but also the rich and colorful connotation of traditional culture transmitted to the audience. The accumulation of traditional elements can provide more novel inspiration for modern design. In modern design, the similarities between traditional and modern design can be found and compared with modern design elements. Therefore, folk art modeling is not only closely linked with folk beliefs, but also profoundly reveals the changing track of folk traditional beliefs and reflects the evolution of folk cultural spirit.

The Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China has put forward a key task in its artistic creation plan for the 13th Five-Year Plan period: "Inherit and carry forward the excellent traditional Chinese culture. Adhere to "creative transformation and innovative development" and vigorously promote the transformation and innovation of Chinese excellent traditional culture in sublation and inheritance, so as to stimulate the vitality of the times of Chinese excellent traditional culture. Traditional culture and folk culture exist at the same time and space, and folk culture will not exist separately from the general environment of traditional culture. They communicate and influence each other continuously. People accepted the artistic form of door god in the process of spiritual activities of worshipping faith. The door god is integrated into the content of belief, which makes the door god have soul and life. Door god culture is accumulated by people's different thoughts, feelings and cultural identities in each period. As a spiritual and cultural heritage, it can apply value concepts to cultural products through creativity. Door god has evolved into a cultural symbol and has been applied in modern art design. Such as the application in packaging products, and the door god holding a mobile phone to make a phone call in TV advertisements, and designers deconstruct the door god through design ideas. There are also many cartoon designs that combine the aesthetic tastes of young people today to design many Q-version door gods with vivid and interesting images. Another example is the 2016 animation film "Little Door Gods" which shows the reality that the door gods, as classic traditional artistic symbols, fade out of public view and are gradually forgotten by people through the prototype of the door gods. This work not only enables the public to understand the door god culture, but also hopes to arouse the public's attention and

cognition to the traditional culture of the nation through a brand-new artistic form. There are also many artists who have combined the theme of the development of the times and created some artistic works of door gods. For example, Professor Qi Xu has created a series of artistic works of door gods. Among them, the multicolored wooden board painting "New Interpretation of Door Gods" reveals the internal law of development in the continuation of tradition. The modern silk screen print "East, West, North and South" is based on history, and horizontally expands and thinks about the hot topic "Internet social security", which extends the functions of door gods to ward off evil spirits and protect security from the real society to the virtual society. Another example is the period of fighting new pneumonia in 2020, when many artists took up brushes to draw a variety of "new door gods". They wore masks and took "weapons" to protect our "safety". The most typical examples are that Zhong Nanshan and Li Lanjuan became the "door gods" of this period. The essence of modern interpretation of the cultural symbol of the door god is the return of a diachronic national spirit and the promotion of a synchronic national culture in the process of cultural change. It is based on historical background, thinking about the development of traditional culture and keeping pace with the times, and it is cultural consciousness.

#### **4. Creative conversion of traditional door God culture**

At present, we are at a good time for the development of cultural and creative industries, and many excellent creative products have been born. However, due to the late development and scattered spatial distribution of China's creative industries, the industrial structure and industrialization mode have yet to be optimized and upgraded, and creativity is still lacking in general. We should grasp the correct direction to carry forward traditional culture and promote its modernization, popularization, commonweal and industrialization. Door gods have permeated the entire development period of human history and are still full of artistic life. They not only embody some cultural connotations in various historical periods, but also convey cultural phenomena and people's beliefs in various periods. In the process of historical evolution, the original mystique of the door god disappeared, and with the development of social production and life, it gradually became secular and life-oriented. The cultural confidence we advocate is mainly confidence in China's excellent traditional culture, Chinese revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture. Door god is an important carrier to express Chinese traditional culture with folk art, which contains rich emotional connotation. Through the meaning pattern of symbols handed down from generation to generation in history, it expresses the concept of inheritance in symbolic ceremony. On the one hand, they show their own form, meaning and profound cultural connotation. On the other hand, they add modern elements to make the design more in line with modern aesthetic features, or they use other design methods to make the design easier to identify. Starting from the external image features and internal cultural connotation of the door god, an independent brand image design is established. In addition, the image, design and color of the Chinese door god art have the characteristics of Chinese traditional culture, which can enter a new era with strong vitality and show new vitality and value.

Contemporary artist Qi Xu once wrote in "Praise of Life" that "I am eager to reinterpret the traditional" Door God "song of praise of life with the concept of modern people and infuse the spirit of the times into it" [11]. Therefore, the protection, inheritance and development of folk arts depend on the continuation of folk activities. The Chinese government has attached great importance to the inheritance of traditional culture and has made a decision to resume traditional folk festivals, providing policy guarantee and support for the inheritance of traditional culture. The design elements of today's creative products are mostly derived from daily life, the current hot spots and the redesign of traditional elements, and its carrier has gradually become more diverse, becoming another reform to transform paper media in this fast-selling era. The five colors recognized as positive colors in Chinese traditional culture and ideology are green, yellow, red, white and black. These positive colors represent the orthodox position, while other colors are considered as intermediate colors. The aesthetic characteristics of the door god are integrated into the thinking of modern society so that the functionality of the "door god" breaks through the limitations of tradition

and is given a modern interpretation [12]. All social forces should vigorously carry out publicity activities for traditional cultural festivals. Government organizations and non-governmental organizations should jointly organize folk activities during festivals and give full play to ethnic folk resources in various regions. When we appreciate and comment on artistic works, we often refer to the life, soul and other related words of the works. This must have a deep and inner connection with the phenomenon of door gods.

Door god is a traditional culture, a symbol, representing national characteristics and regional culture, showing thousands of years of social development, changes in the process of material and spiritual changes and many other aspects, is the key to open the door of national culture, history and civilization. For example, the planning of the Forbidden City is to turn its cultural products into a systematic cultural industry. With modern design and ancient details to reinterpret the history of the Forbidden City, let more people not only see and listen to the Forbidden City, but also can "take home" the Forbidden City [13]. The Forbidden City also cooperates with several e-commerce platforms. For example, a wide range of creative products can be seen in Tmall's flagship store. The forbidden city Taobao wechat public number regularly introduces a cultural relic story in more detail through the wechat platform. however, it can be found that the article is funny and humorous in words, mostly using popular internet language, and there is no lack of "parody" of historical figures, which is very in line with the preferences of young people nowadays. In 2018, an article titled "I don't allow others to say you are poor" on the public issue introduced Chinese landscape painting while analyzing the public's misinterpretation of Chinese landscape painting, and finally did not forget to promote the related literary creations. Another example is "I know about adhesive tape", "Chaozhu earphone", "Forbidden City lipstick" and so on, which are widely favored by young people. We can see that in the new era, the development of science and technology and the optimization of industrial structure have provided a broad space for the development of China's cultural industry, allowing cultural resources to be shared and complementary advantages to be formed between cultural industries. To carry out folk festivals, folk village tourism and other activities, to protect and rescue the material and intangible cultural heritage, to train the descendants of the door god painting, to provide a good folk ecological environment for the inheritance and development of folk art.

The door gods are rich in modeling styles, which are deeply rooted in the hearts of people in different historical periods and represent the social development and changes in specific historical periods. Heroes in each period can be used as materials for creative design. The design of creative products should combine the aesthetic needs of the public and think about how to transform this unique cultural symbol functionally under the background of the times, so that the door spirit creative products have practical functions besides "pleasing to the eyes". Through investigation, we found that there are many door gods' creative products in the market, but there are common problems such as single types and serious homogenization. Such creative products are difficult to form personalized advantages in creative products of many cultures. The successful experience of cultural creation in the Forbidden City shows that in the digital information age, the use of science and technology can enrich the types of door gods' creative products and effectively enhance the added value of cultural products. For example, the imperial palace meow series picture books combined with scientific and technological means designed theater-style stereoscopic scenes, AR experiences, etc. to tell stories and spread traditional culture in the casino scene. meanwhile, the imperial palace meow picture books are also very competitive in the international market.

In view of the integration and development of the door god culture and the creative industry, the following suggestions are put forward: first, let the door god enter the daily life of the public, the creative design should build a systematic design mode based on the profound cultural connotation of the door god, make a brand-new interpretation and deduction of the door god, make the door god culture "live" and tell "the story of the Chinese door god" in the most vivid form at the same time; Secondly, combining modern scientific and technological means, we should enrich the types of door gods' literary creation products, so that door gods' literary creation products can break through the shackles of tradition and become the new era "door gods" conforming to the development of the

times. At the same time, we should use the network media platform to carry out diversified promotion, so that more people like door gods to understand the culture of door gods. Finally, both Wen Chuang's products and marketing promotion need a professional and systematic model. Therefore, the integration and development of gatekeeper culture and creative industries need the support of the government and other relevant departments in terms of policies and other aspects, and the formation of scientific design teams to guide the joint participation of social forces, especially the participation of young people.

## 5. Conclusion

China's traditional gatekeeper culture has undergone thousands of years of evolution. It is a concentrated reflection of national culture, spiritual concepts, people's beliefs and folk aesthetics in various periods of social development. It is an important component of China's traditional culture and is also the driving force and cultural support for the development of creative industries. Under the background of "cultural self-confidence", traditional culture has received more extensive attention. We should actively respond to the demands of social development with a positive attitude. Based on the connotation of the door spirit culture, this paper discusses the creative transformation of traditional door god culture with specific cases, on the one hand, inherits and develops the traditional door spirit culture, on the other hand, it is an active response to the development of the times, which should be a kind of cultural consciousness.

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