

A Comparative Analysis of the Visual Art Language between the “Mud Dogs” in Huaiyang, Henan and Huangping’s Mud Whistle in Guizhou

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Abstract:

Objective: The visual art language of “Mud dog” in Huaiyang, Henan province and mud whistle in Huangping, Guizhou Province is compared and analyzed, and the artistic value and folk culture behind it are deeply explored. At the same time, in-depth research, analysis of their respective background, emotion, historical origin and other cultural factors. **Methods:** This article takes Huaiyang Mud dog and Guizhou Huangping mud shao as the research object, discusses the functional basis, modeling characteristics, color vocabulary, decorative patterns, topic content and cultural ideas, and discusses the differences between the two kinds of folk arts and crafts. **Results:** It provides more theoretical basis for the extended application and cultural extension of traditional cultural and artistic elements represented by the Huaiyang “mud dog” and Huangping mud whistle in modern art design, and has played a role in the protection and inheritance of the intangible cultural heritage of folk crafts. **Active promotion.** **Conclusion:** It provides detailed and practical cultural and artistic resources for the protection and cultural excavation of traditional folk crafts such as mud dog and huangping mud whistle.

Keywords:

Clay Sculpture, Mud Dog, Huang Ping Mud Whistle, Visual Language, Traditional Handicraft

1. Introduction

China has a vast territory and a long history. Under the development background of different regions, different periods and different nationalities, a diversified cultural and artistic form with regional characteristics has been formed [1]. In the long history of the development of the Chinese nation, there is a primitive, long-lasting and interesting art form called clay sculpture. Clay sculptures are traditional Chinese folk art crafted from clay by hand. They can be small clay sculptures and children’s toys for desk appreciation, or religious statues displayed in public places such as temples

[2]. It has been passed down for thousands of years and it embodies the wisdom of our working people and the yearning for a better life.

“Mud Dog” is a kind of folk handicraft product from Huaiyang County, Zhoukou City, Henan Province, and it is a folk handicraft that contains ancient totem culture; “Huangping mud whistle” is popular among folks in Huangping County, Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture. Children’s toys [3], “Mud Dog” and Huang Ping mud whistle are both folk crafts with black background and colorful patterns. They are similar in appearance and have a certain decorative appreciation value. At the same time, they are also children’s whistle toys and have a certain practical value. At present, many experts, scholars and art workers have carried out a lot of research work, focusing on the historical origins, cultural background, modeling crafts, color patterns, inheritance and development of the “mud dogs” and Huangping mud whistles. Discussion and analysis of innovation and other aspects have established a relatively complete knowledge system. However, the soil and water on one side raises the people, and at the same time it creates the local climate and cultural characteristics. The clay sculptures in each place have their own unique artistic characteristics. Although the “mud dog” in Huaiyang, Henan and the mud whistle in Huangping, Guizhou are similar in appearance, the two, because of the historical origins and the differences in the culture of the north and south, the visual art language of mud toys shows differences in similar species. Visual language is the foundation and content of folk crafts. Only by generalizing and categorizing the visual art language of mud dog and Huangping mud whistle can we have a systematic understanding of them. Therefore, this paper focuses on Huaiyang “mud dog” Contrasting and analyzing the visual art language of Huang Ping’s clay whistle, starting from their history, rooted in tradition, analyzing the visual artistic characteristics of clay sculptures from two different regions, looking at the reasons for the existence of cultural connotations behind the vision, while studying Find their differences and compare them to provide better historical materials and inspiration for modern design.

2. “Mud Dogs” in Huaiyang, Henan and Huangping Mud Whistle in Guizhou

2.1. “Mud Dog” in Huaiyang, Henan

“Mud Dog”, also known as “Ling Dog”, is the collective name for the small clay sculptures of Taihao Mausoleum in Huaiyang, Henan Province. It is a clay toy left over with ancient religious rituals and folklore activities. Huaiyang, Henan Province is one of the birthplaces of Chinese civilization. In history, the country was founded three times and the capital was built five times. There is a Taihao Mausoleum in Huaiyang, which is known as “the first mausoleum in the world”. It is the mausoleum of Fuxi, “the head of the three emperors” and “the ancestor of humanities”. [4] Every year in the second month of the lunar calendar, Huaiyang will hold a “February Fair” temple fair. At the “February Meeting”, the pilgrims burned incense, paid homage to Fuxi, and after making a wish or repaying a wish, they would always bring back some clay toys called “mud dogs”. Because in the legend, the “mud dog” has the mysterious effect of dispelling disasters and diseases, and is auspicious and safe. The Huaiyang “mud Dog” truly records the development of human culture, is the cultural carrier of ancient customs, and reflects the “blood relationship” between folk art, folk customs and customs. [5] The “mud dogs” that are contaminated with the aura of the

grandfather of Taihaoling people come from 12 villages east of Huaiyang City, namely Jinzhuang, Wuzhuang, Chenlou, Xulou, Duanzhuang, and Wugutai. There are many people who make a living by making “mud dogs”, and some are still passed on from generation to generation. As a kind of folk art, the regional characteristics of its decoration and modeling have been passed down by artists from generation to generation. It has a high cultural connotation and is known as a “true totem” and a “living fossil”. As shown in Figure 1.

2.2. Guizhou Huangping Mud Whistle

Huangping mud whistle is a popular children’s toy in Huangping County, Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture. According to the records of “The Annals of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture-Light Textile Industry”, during the Jiaqing period of the Qing Dynasty, Jiangxi potter Zhong Heming developed mud whistle toys in Shiniuizhai, Jiuzhou, Huangping. After the early years of the Republic of China, later generations made improvements and innovations. Wu Guoqing, a Miao nationality in Shiniuizhai, developed and enriched the subject matter of mud whistle on the basis of traditional skills. By the end of the Republic of China, it had developed into dozens of varieties. Wu Guoqing, an old Miao artist, is a pivotal artist in the history of the development of Huangping mud whistle. According to the traditional art of the Miao nationality, he innovated a muddy children’s toy on the basis of traditional mud figurines and pottery figurines [6], leaving a return hole in the lower part of the whistle. It can make a sound, it is loved by children, and it is affectionately called “mud call”. Huangping Nishao has a history of more than 90 years since its development in the 20th century. Its unique craftsmanship, simple use of tools, and rich features of the Miao nationality are a heritage of national culture and have eternal charm. As shown in Figure 2.



Figure 1. "Mud Dog" in Huaiyang, Henan.



Figure 2. Huang Ping mud whistle.

3. The Visual Art Language of the “Mud Dog” in Huaiyang, Henan and the Mud Whistle of Huangping in Guizhou

In the art system, language, as a tool of artistic expression, is consistent with epistemological philosophy, focusing on the essential subject matter to be narrated, and advocating that rationality and subject matter precede language and form. However, in the current era of picture reading, photos are readily available. Some art critics believe that realist style works cannot be regarded as art, but only the refinement of life. The expressive art system has been naturally integrated into the visual culture, and the philosophy of language theory has penetrated the field of visual culture, paying attention to the language form in artistic expression itself has become the thinking mode of art creators and appreciators [7]. The Huangping Miao mud

whistle is very similar to the Huaiyang mud dog. The materials used are the same animals and are decorated with bright colors on a black background. The following will be made from the functional basis and modeling characteristics, the selection of materials, the same processing technology, color vocabulary and decorative patterns, and topic selection. The content is the same as the cultural thoughts, and four aspects are used to compare and analyze the visual art language of the “Mud Dog” in Huaiyang, Henan and the Miao mud whistle in Huangping, Guizhou.

3.1. Functional Basis and Modeling Features

3.1.1. Folk Handicrafts Based on Toys

Most of the “mud dogs” in Huaiyang, Henan and Huangping mud whistle in Guizhou can make noises regardless of their shape. On the basis of considering the whistle shape and the way of playing, the artists set the whistle on the top and tail when modeling. This clay sculpture has a crisp and sweet sound and has become a toy that children can't put down.

Folk art often reflects a strong tendency of folk custom practical functions in its modeling form and style. As folk handicrafts, “mud dog” and Huangping mud whistle have their own different functions. Some people simply regard mud dogs as children's toys. With the deepening of research in recent years, it is not appropriate to evade its true use value and aesthetic value, whether in terms of its practical functionality or its manifested artistic taste. For many years, it has been regarded as a mascot from Taiwu Mausoleum. It can pray for blessings, eliminate disasters, and cure diseases. The various folk myths and legends contained in it reflect the cultural connotation of the concept of reproductive worship in the ancient matrilineal society. “True totem” and “living fossil” of human prehistoric culture. Up to now, mud dogs have not only become art gifts and collections of people, but also for the study of totem worship culture in primitive society. And it has very important academic value for studying the living conditions, customs and customs of human beings in society. As a unique handicraft in southeastern Guizhou, Huangping Nishao has distinctive local ethnic characteristics, is a kind of inheritance of ethnic culture, and has eternal charm. Since the 1990s, mud whistles have not only become children's playthings, but have entered the Daya Hall and become art furnishings for families, tourist souvenirs, gifts for relatives and friends and foreign affairs activities.

3.1.2. Abstract and Charming Shape

In the primitive art period, the division of labor between class and society has not yet been established. There is no such thing as ideology and ideological trends that we call today. Therefore, art cannot talk about expressing emotions and shouldering thoughts. The overall shape of folk art often reflects its practicability and perfection characteristics. In the folk craft modeling of “Mud Dog” and Huangping Clay Whistle, the craftsmen embodied the following characteristics from the practicality of folk customs: (1) Pay attention to the sense of hand. As a kind of children's toys, “mud dog” and Huang Ping mud whistle are mostly things that children play with, so the whole is round, round and full, and the hand feels fine and smooth. (2) Clumpy. Due to the unbreakable mentality, most of the clay and pottery are clumpy, such as “Fat Ah Fu” in the Wuxi Huishan clay figure, the clay pottery toys of Changsha Tongguan Kiln, and the white clay figure of Niejiashuang in Gaomi, Shandong. In fact, the same goes for “Mud Dog” and Huang Ping's mud whistle. (3) Highlight the main features.

Clay sculptures often omit some minor details in order to highlight their main features. In order to highlight the overall image, the “mud dog” and Huang Ping mud whistle will simplify the animal’s limbs and highlight the main facial and body shapes, thereby grasping the demeanor. It looks cute and full of life. Out of simple emotional and aesthetic needs, the Chinese people pursue perfection of folk art modeling, that is, completeness, integrity, beauty, perfection, organic integration, and harmony and unity. In the modeling concepts of Huaiyang “Mud Dog” and Huang Ping’s mud whistle, they have formed an idealized aesthetic psychological orientation of completeness and perfection of things. Few incomplete images are seen in their works, and they emphasize the integrity of the overall shape and image. Shaped the characteristics of roundness, solidity and fullness. In terms of modeling, the “mud dog” and the Huang Ping mud whistle have their own merits. The performance of folk art modeling usually abstracts their common form from a certain type of similar things. Artisans focus on the frank expression of inner emotions in their creations, using exaggerated, refined, omitted, and simplified modeling techniques. When shaping images, they often do not directly copy and simulate real life and visual impressions, but based on their own emotions and Purpose, generalize and reform it. Folk art often adopts the method of “giving up its shape and seeking its god” when modeling. The modeling of Huangping mud whistle is characterized by highlighting the main body and omitting details. The craftsman refined it from the prototype of life, and then produced it after transformation, modification, and standardization. “Significant form”, for example, the shape of “Wild Boar”, the head and mouth are exaggerated. The protruding fangs and long mouth of the head account for two-thirds of the total. The torso is simplified, the main features of the object are grasped, and the vigor of wild animals are added. As shown in Figure 3. “Mud Dogs” tend to pursue subjective and emotional truth in modeling processing, instead of focusing on the truth in images, “do not look for similarity, but for spirituality”. The modeling is extremely exaggerated and deformed, abstract and simple, and very simple. The generalization and refinement completely broke the normal proportions, reflecting the randomness of folk art modeling. Among them, the shape of “Herician Swallow” is extremely concise, with exaggerated head features, wearing a crown, its face resembling a dog and a monkey, and its body shape resembling a swallow. It is painted with prominent ornaments representing reproductive worship, showing people’s respect for life at that time. As shown in Figure 4 .



Figure 3. “Mud Dog” “Herician Swallow”.

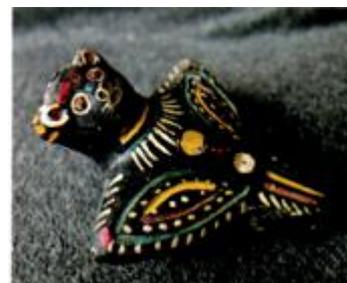


Figure 4. “Mud Dog” “Herician Swallow”.

3.2. Material Selection and Process Production

3.2.1. Selection of Materials Based on Regional Characteristics

Artists generally take clay locally. As the most important material for clay sculptures, the choice of clay is particularly important. The thickness of the soil, the hardness, the humidity, the strength and time of the beating are all important. Huaiyang “Mud Dog” and Huangping mud whistle are obviously different in terms of their geographical location, so they are slightly different in the choice of materials. The “mud dog” in Huaiyang is a folk art in eastern Henan. Its material is taken from a kind of mortar on the edge of the local Heihe River. This mortar is washed by the river for a long time, and the soil and sand components inside are taken away by the river water. Many of them are reddish in color and more viscous, providing a good basic material for the production of “mud dogs”. Huangping mud whistle is a folk art in the southwest region. The materials are selected from a kind of red mud and white mud on the hillside opposite Huangping Feiyun Cave. The locals call it “chicken blood mud” and “white mud”. They are all in the next layer of loess and black soil. The mud is very waxy and sticky, which is good for making mud whistle.

3.2.2. Complex and Unique Processing Technology

The production process of “mud dog” generally adopts two methods. One is mold making, which is used to make mud embryos and then further processed. The processed clay products are often simple in shape and small in size; The other is pure hand kneading. First, the mud is repeatedly beaten with a large wooden stick, and the mud is beaten into yellow glue mud, which is then kneaded and kneaded to shape, and then dyed with carbon black, dotted and drawn. Such clay sculpture works are often large in volume, with diverse modeling levels, complex structures and artistic features, and are rich in content and difficult to copy. The production process of Huangping mud whistle also adopts two methods: mould making or hand kneading. The difference is that after making a rough shape, take an appropriate amount of rape oil and evenly smear it on the surface of the mud whistle. This is done to make the surface of the mud body smooth and beautiful, and the other is to help the carburizing reaction of the body when smoldering. Then use simple tools such as bamboo sticks to press out the details, and then use a hard mold to press the required small decorative patterns, and burn them on a flat ground. The burned mud whistle are black, and then painted and varnished. Each piece of work embodies unique artistry and craftsmanship, showing the superb skills and profound connotation of local folk artists.

3.3. Brilliant Colors and Mysterious Patterns

3.3.1. Diverse and Profound Color Vocabulary

Color produces a colorful effect through the mutual contrast between colors. For this reason, the contrast formed by the color is an important factor that affects the visual effect, and it is a higher-level visual effect. [8] There are some similarities in the treatment of the background colors between the two clay sculpture art works. The background colors of both are black, and they are embellished with red, yellow, green, blue, white and other colors.”Shanghei Culture” is a deep culture, an early cultural language and symbol, a symbol of totem worship. Black has solemn and deep meanings, reflecting the honest and majestic character of the ancient Chinese, as well as the nature and gods. The feeling of reverence shows that the two clay sculpture works represent profound national heritage and connotation. Although the “mud dog” and Huang Ping mud whistle are both decorated with bright colors on a black background, different cultural contents are reflected behind their colors. As a kind of folk art handed down, Huaiyang “Mud Dog” has many unique characteristics. The

“Mud dog” has a black background. This aesthetic sentiment has a lot to do with the long-standing national character, which reflects the ancient nature of folk art in the Central Plains. The Central Plains people have always pursued a stable living environment and settled for a long time, with a strong internal tolerance. The black tone reflects the requirements of this point. No matter what the nature of the object is, a black background is used, and the black color is used to form a solemn and active color that is gorgeous and strong, gorgeous and not vulgar. The outline is unique and mysterious, full of folk flavor. The black background of the “mud dog” comes from the worship of ancient times, while the black background of the mud whistle reflects the profound national culture. The mud whistle artists were all born in the Miaoling Mountain Township, which has rich and colorful folk customs. The color patterns of Huangping mud whistles are very similar to the color patterns of local Miao costumes, embroidery and batik. The Miao costumes are mainly black with bright colors. The embroidered silver jewelry has distinctive local ethnic characteristics. Shows the local people’s love for the origin of life and national history, and inherits the Miao culture through their own means [9].

3.3.2. Abstract and Symbolic Decorative Patterns

The ability of human beings to abstract shapes can be traced back to the primitive society. There are a large number of patterns expressed in abstract forms such as dots, lines, and surfaces on primitive pottery in China, which reflects the abstract characteristics of folk art modeling. This abstract pattern shows the stylization of folk culture, brings the customary formula of folk art in the form of collective representation, and forms its own creative thinking method and aesthetic criteria for selection judgment. Both “Mud Dog” and Huangping mud whistles have adopted abstract forms in the processing of patterns and patterns. The two images express the same way but convey different cultural connotations.

The “Mud dog” was handed down from the time when Nuwa “made people from the earth”. For many years, it has been regarded by people as the mascot invited from Taiwuling to the home, it is both sacred and mysterious. The pattern of its whole body is based on the lines and dots of various colors, forming sun patterns, triangle patterns, horseshoe patterns, zigzag patterns and other patterns that are very similar to the original painted pottery patterns. These decorative symbols have the meaning of “female reproduction worship”, convey the mysterious atmosphere of primitive totems, symbolize the worship of reproduction, and also reflect people’s respect for life at that time, and pray for many children and many blessings. As shown in Figure 5. The decorative pattern and overall style of the mud whistle are very similar to the folk style of the Miao nationality. As a historically farming nation, the Miao nationality’s decorative patterns on mud whistles are mostly abstract agricultural crops and animals. These patterns are simple and innocent, expressing different meanings. For example, ordinary people often say: “The owl is the king of rodents”, so the artists of the mud whistle “Owl” use many abstract mice as decorations, so that everyone knows that owls eat mice and are beneficial birds for humans, and they all come to protect them.

3.4. Variety of Topics and Deep Thoughts

3.4.1. Animal-based Topic Selection

Most of the clay sculpture artists use animals that the common people like to hear and see as their subject matter. These images often entrust people's thoughts and emotions, and their works often resonate with people and are intriguing. Both the "Mud Dogs" in Huaiyang, Henan Province and Huangping mud whistles use animals as their topics. Not only do they draw a wide variety of animals, but the same animal can also be made into a variety of shapes with different moods, with vivid depictions and strong local characteristics. Although both are based on animals, their performance and the spiritual thoughts conveyed by them are different. There are many animal themes of "Mud Dogs". Except for horses, cows, sheep, elephants, chickens, frogs and other images that reflect real life, most of them are based on extracting certain characteristic elements of animals, and most of them are based on ancient and distant myths and legends. The overall image is more like some strange birds and monsters that cannot be named, and it is impossible to accurately say which animal or two animals are combined. From the overall perspective, there is a weird and mysterious visual experience. According to "Huaiyang County Chronicles", "mud dogs" can be divided into four types: small mud turtles, small medium plates, baby heads, and large flower products according to their different shapes. The representative images include human-faced monkeys, hericium swallows, cats and monkeys, and straw hat tigers. The various shapes reflect the tribal totems and various life phenomena of the ancient society. Most of the shapes of "Mud dogs" can be found in the "Shan Hai Jing" similar basis. For example, "Human Face Monkey" comes from the ancient legend of the beast "Zhu Wei" in "Shan Hai Jing". It looks like an ape with a long white head and red feet. Every time it appears, it indicates a major war. It can be seen that Huaiyang clay toys are mostly based on ancient and distant myths and legends, with a long history, and each image is endowed with profound cultural meanings. As shown in Figure 6.

There are more than 400 varieties of Huangping mud whistles, which are very rich. Most of the works are based on poultry, birds and animals. These mud whistles can be enjoyed individually, or can be formed into groups with certain content such as "Cockfighting lying", "Bullfighting", "Zodiac", "Four Spirits", and "Eight Horses" according to the favorite of the viewers. Through the ingenious depiction of animals and poultry in nature, the mud whistle works reflect the intersection and fusion of various thoughts and feelings of the Miao people's hope for the life of all creatures and six animals, and pray for the protection of the gods to lead to a peaceful life, expressing auspicious happiness. The pursuit and aspiration of the Miao people demonstrate the interest of life of the Miao people. As shown in Figure 7.



Figure 5. Female reproduction in "mud dog"



Figure 6. "Human Face Monkey"



Figure 7. Huangping mud whistle Chicken shape.

3.4.2. Strong and Long-Standing Cultural Ideas

As a cultural carrier, folk art carries and records the folk customs and customs that have been accumulated in the long history. Clay sculpture is a popular form of artistic expression. It has low cost and less labor. It is often associated with seasons, etiquette, and customs, and reflects the local cultural background and cultural content. The Huaiyang “Mud Dog” was born in the transition zone between the Taihang Mountains and the North China Plain, one of the main cradles of traditional culture in the Central Plains. It has a long history and rich cultural heritage. From ancient times to the present, it has experienced countless times and dynasties, so the folk crafts produced here are more primitive. The “mud dog” is related to the ancient legends of Fuxi and Nüwa. It is the mascot given the totem of “ancestors”. Therefore, in order to pursue a spiritual aspiration, the “mud dog” is exaggerated in its modeling characteristics, and it is integrated into faith and religious culture. It is a “sacred object” that people pray and worship, and it is a synthesis of imagination and reality. In addition, the artistic modeling symbols of the female reproduction worship culture contained in the “mud dog” figure and ornamentation also reflect the local people’s yearning for life and the spiritual aspiration of hope that everything in the world will continue to flourish and prosper. Similarly, the folk customs of the Huangping Miao people give people a sense of simplicity, honesty, diligence and artistic creation, and the Huangping mud whistle carries the local customs and customs. [10] The artistic inspiration of these traditional humanistic styles subtly enters the creation of mud whistle of folk artists. The overall shape of Huangping mud whistle is taken from common local birds and animals, and the overall color is very similar to the embroidery color style of local Miao women. It is an authentic Miao folk tone, which is closely related to the aesthetic appeal of the local Miao people. Huangping mud whistle reveals the wisdom and artistic creation of Huangping Miao people from the style of modeling characteristics and color vocabulary. It is a handicraft with unique Miao characteristics, showing a stronger tradition and nationality.

4. Conclusions

As one of the oldest folk art forms, the clay sculpture art of “Mud Dogs” in Huaiyang, Henan and mud whistles in Huangping, Guizhou, When making clay sculptures, the artists inadvertently sum up their own understanding of life and understanding of objects and sublimate them into folk art works with unique regional styles, reflecting the vivid and lively life of the people. Mud whistles are the enrichment of the folk culture and art of the Miao nationality in Huangping, and the “mud dogs” are also the carrier of the extension of the folk clay figurines of the Central Plains. Their artistic value far exceeds the clay sculptures themselves, and they express the cultural content and spirit of different regions. Thoughts express different and profound national heritage and connotations. Through the research, analysis and comparison of the visual art language of the “Mud Dog” in Huaiyang, Henan Province and Huang Ping’s Mud Whistle, we have a more in-depth understanding of the modeling and color characteristics of the two folk crafts, and a more in-depth understanding of the culture of folk arts in different regions. And spirit to promote the spread of the culture of various ethnic groups. To provide more theoretical basis for the extended application and cultural extension of traditional cultural and artistic elements represented by Huaiyang “Mud Dogs” and Huang Ping Mud Whistle in modern art design, and to promote the continuous development of regional traditional arts. It is worthy of us in-depth research and thinking.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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