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Overall Design of Costume Imagery of the Qinghai Qiang Ancestors in the Xindian Culture: "Striped Painted Pottery Boots · Legend of the Past"

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Abstract

As the fourth season and eighth issue of the large-scale cultural and museum exploration program "The Nation's Greatest Treasures" of the Central Radio and Television Station, "Striped painted pottery boots · Legend of the past" leads the audience into the Qinghai Provincial Museum Plate, and took the striped painted pottery boots of Xindian culture as the starting point, it tells a story about the Qiang ancestors developing shoes for the great migration. This paper focuses on the costumes of the Qiang ancestors in Qinghai from 1400 BC to 700 BC. In view of the research dilemma posed by the lack of physical remains in this period, this paper expands the geographical and historical scope to improve the field and background of the times. Through unearthed objects and related documents corresponding to painted pottery patterns and other image remains, which add more information about the ancestors of Qinghai. Therefore, we can conduct a concrete analysis and textual research on the clothing shapes, fabrics, colors, and patterns at that time, and outline the characteristics and features of the costumes of the late Neolithic period. It also provides a reference for the design of character costume images in the subsequent period, and helps in the contemporary dissemination and inheritance of costume culture.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, China has attached great importance to the inheritance and innovation of its excellent traditional culture, promoting cultural self-confidence to the national strategic level. With the support of relevant policies, several cultural programs have broken away from traditional formats, presenting audiences with a new look full of vitality. The "The Nation's Greatest Treasures" came into being and became a masterpiece with cultural depth, artistic height, and emotional temperature. The program pioneered innovative visual storytelling and achieved unprecedented success, particularly among young Chinese audiences, earning widespread acclaim from China's mainstream media and academic circles (Cong, 2017; Trimmel et al., 2022). It sparked a new wave of public enthusiasm for cultural relics and museums. Building on the high-quality production standards of its first three seasons, the show continued to innovate. By incorporating narratives and interpretations from national treasure guardians, it bridged the gap between cultural

relics and the audience, strengthened viewer immersion and program appeal, and fostered public affection for and pride in Chinese culture.

What was the shape of leather boots in ancient times? What is the shape of the costumes of the Qiang ancestors in Qinghai? What is the decoration? The "Striped Painted Pottery Boots · Past and Present Life" program, organized by the Qinghai Museum, has solved these mysteries for us. It takes the Xindian culture period from 1400 BC to 700 BC as the story background. It tells the story of the Qinghai Qiang ancestors Danmuji as the protagonist (Guo Junchen plays) to study the boot making process to cope with the geographical climate change and the great migration, leading the tribe to continuously explore the story of the survival boundary, showing the wisdom and courage of the ancients, and becoming the origin of the exploration spirit and aesthetic culture of the Chinese nation for thousands of years. Therefore, based on the analysis of the historical period and geographical environment of the Qiang ancestors, this article aims to refer to the pictures and literature of pottery relics unearthed in the relevant historical period, and to carry out the overall construction and specific demonstration of the costume image of the Qiang ancestors in the late Neolithic Qinghai area.

2. Danmuji 's life and the relevant definition of his historical period

2.1 The relevant definition of the identity of the Qinghai Qiang ancestor Danmuji

The character of Danmuji in the drama is a 20-year-old male of the Qinghai Qiang ancestors. After being assigned the task of making boots by the patriarch, he created the unique footwear design of "striped painted pottery boots" to help people cope with climate change and complete the Great Migration. This story is rich in wisdom and myth. The "Qiang" in terms of identity refers to the ancient Qiang, also known as the Western Qiang, which thrives in the Hehuang area of Qinghai Province. The Hehuang Valley is located in the eastern part of Qinghai Province. It has a long history, being one of the earliest areas of human activity in the Yellow River basin. In ancient times, the Qiang were not a single ethnic group but a general term used in the Central Plain for nomadic tribes from the west, and they were among the oldest ethnicities in China. Throughout history, the ancient Qiang people have undergone multiple migrations. During the pre-Qin period, the ancient Qiang tribe migrated southward on three large-scale occasions into areas south of the Yellow River, including Luoyang and southern Shanxi. They continued to interact with the Central Plain powers, and some tribes fused with the Han people, scattering across various regions. Today, several ethnic groups still carry the bloodline of the ancient Qiang people.

The earliest written record of the word "Qiang" appears on oracle bones from our country, dating back over 3,500 years (Figure 1). The origin of the Qiang people in Qinghai is described in the Kunlun myth of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, which features the Queen Mother of the West. This legend is an artistic reflection of the life and struggles, wishes and pursuits of the matriarchal clan society of the ancestors of the Western Qiang people. (Cui et al., 2017). In "Commentary on the Zuo Tradition of Spring and Autumn Annals", it is recorded that Emperor Yan is the fire master, and the surname Jiang is his descendant. And "Guoyu · Jinyu" contains: The Yellow Emperor grew and grew in the Jishui area, and the Yan Emperor grew and grew in the Jiangshui area; the two people formed different clan characteristics due to different water and soil, so the Yellow Emperor took. "Ji " as the surname, and the Yan Emperor took "Jiang" as the surname(Xu et al., 2002). These records show that the surnames Jiang and Qiang were the same word in ancient times, and "Qiang" is also "Jiang".



Figure 1. Oracle "Qiang" Image (Imitation). Source: Maoxian County Qiang Museum

From the Han Dynasty historian Sima Qian's "Historical Records" in the "Dayu Rise in the Western Qiang" to the

many documents of the Jin Dynasty, it is also recorded that Dayu was born in the Western Qiang. Many scholars have deduced that the main tribes of the first dynasty in Chinese history, the Xia Dynasty, were the Qiang people, and the ancient Qiang people were an important part of the Chinese nationality, the predecessor of the Han nationality. As the Qiang people's nomadic way of life is the main way of life, and they live in places with trees and grass, their wide distribution and long duration are incomparable with those of other ethnic groups. Based on excavated archaeological data, the numerous artifacts unearthed from the Majiayao, Zongri, Qijia, Kayue, and Xindian cultures indicate that most archaeological sites in Qinghai are ancient Qiang relics, and most ancient cultures are Qiang cultures (Liu, 2002).

2.2 The relevant definition of the historical period of the Qinghai Qiang ancestor Danmuji

The background of Danmuji 's story is judged to be the period of Xindian culture by the unearthed time of "striped painted pottery boots", with Carbon-14 dating range from 1400 BC to 700 BC. Xindian culture inherits Qijia culture, which belongs to the late painted pottery era. Its predecessor is the "Xindian period" named by Swedish scholar J. G. Andersson. It was named after the excavation of the new store site in Dashi Town, Lintao, Gansu Province (then known as Taosha County) in 1924 (Andersson, 1925).

The Gansu and Qinghai area is among the earliest in the world to produce painted pottery. It has a history of more than 5000 years. The Xindian culture is distributed in the Taohe River and Daxiahe River Basins in Gansu Province, and the Huangshui River Basin in Qinghai Province. The period is presumed to be from the late Neolithic to the Bronze Age. Its development has spanned at least the early Central Plains Shang Dynasty to the middle of the Western Zhou Dynasty. It developed from the Qijia and Machang cultures, as evidenced by the remains at Shanjiatou, and coexisted with the Kayue and Siwa cultures. For a long time, the Xindian culture period has been considered by the academic community an important period in the transformation of the ancient subsistence mode from agriculture to animal husbandry in the Hehuang area of Northwest China (Yuan, 2019). As a product of the exchange between nomadic and farming cultures, it is a relatively independent cultural type formed in the Gansu and Qinghai regions. It is also an important part of Gansu's splendid ancient painted pottery culture. The style and production process of its painted pottery patterns are clearly different from those of the earlier Qijia and Machang cultures.

3. The textual research and analysis of Danmuji 's clothing styles and accessories

3.1 The textual research and analysis of Danmuji 's clothing styles

The Qiang nationality in Qinghai is deeply influenced by the geographical environment and historical changes, as one of the oldest ethnic groups in China. At late Paleolithic sites in northern China, such as Shuidonggou in Ningxia and Hutouliang in Hebei, drilling holes were excavated, indicating that the Qiang ancestors in these two places also mastered the technology to make bone needles. Comparative studies show that bone needles first appeared in China around the same period as in Europe, both to adapt to the increasingly severe glacial climate that was approaching. The need for people to make more close-fitting sewn garments may have transcended different geographical regions (Wang et al., 2020). The Qiang ancestors used bone needles to sew the line made of animal tendons or clam skins, and when the skins and felts were sewn together, they were made into the most primitive clothes, which could effectively resist the invasion of cold, wind, rain, and snow (Fang, 1992). Among them, the "felt cape", as one of the oldest costumes of the Qiang people, is still worn in the current Qiang village. The Qiang costumes in later generations basically inherited the robe system of ancient Qiang and retained their simple, concise form over the long term.

Judging from the painted pottery currently retained, the clothing shape at that time should have been a thin-waist, long coat with flat shoulders, knees, and upper and lower edges. It is folded and stitched by two narrow cloths. The middle of the upper part is left open, and the arms are left on both sides. There is no collar and no sleeves. The seam is simple, and the back ties at the waist, which is convenient for labor. As Zhou Xibao described the style of the "Guanshouyi" in "History of Ancient Chinese Clothing": Clothes are two pieces of cloth that cover the front and back, stitched together with bone needles to form underwear, that is, the skirts of later generations. This upper body and this lower body are both clothed, which can be considered the basic form of the earliest clothing system in China (Zhou, 1984). In addition, materials reflecting the clothing styles of prehistoric humans are evident on the dance-patterned pottery unearthed at Sunjiazhai, Datong County, Qinghai Province (Figure 2). Among them, three groups of 15 dancers are dressed in knee-length skirts. Later bronze figurines from the Warring States period show that the ancient Qiang people's clothing, characterized by its bagginess and waist ties, shares a common origin with Tibetan attire. Therefore, Danmuji's clothing can adopt a looser, draped robe style, referencing the Guanshouyi's basic style. The cut is simple, with a one-piece upper and lower body, and can be worn with a belt woven from hemp rope or cloth strips. The fabric of the clothes retains frayed edges and stitching marks, further showcasing the simplicity and ruggedness of primitive society.



Figure 2. Sunjiazhai Dance Pattern Painted Pottery Basin, Majiayao Culture. Source: National Museum of China

3.2 The textual research and analysis of Danmuji 's accessories

In terms of accessories, the bronze pipes, bone pipes, and bone rings unearthed in the tombs of the Xindian culture in Lianhuatai, Linxia, Gansu Province, are arranged in a circular pattern around the neck of human bones, which can be interpreted as the ornament material for the necklace of the Qiang ancestors (Pu & Nan, 1988). At the same time, two human bones were excavated from the tomb of Midixian in Gaolan, Gansu Province, and 1830 bone beads were also worn on the neck. At the Majiayao and Qijia Culture sites in the Hetaomin area, headwear is mostly made of bone hairpins or bone combs. In addition to bone beads (Figure 3), there are numerous jade, stone, and pottery beads. It is inferred that the decorations of the Qiang ancestors also included marble beads, agates, turquoise (Figure 4), and other materials. They are not only beautifully shaped but also serve to show regional or clan characteristics (Ning, 2013). Taking turquoise ornaments as an example, the turquoise bead-stringing craftsmanship of the Qijia Culture did not develop in isolation. Instead, it inherited local traditions of the upper Yellow River region and successfully integrated the techniques and concepts of the Majiayao Culture. Gradually, these ornaments evolved from "mundane ornaments" into "markers of social power" and ritual objects within ancient communities (Zheng, 2026).

In addition to headdresses and necklaces, the ancestors also placed particular importance on adornments for the wrists, arms, and fingers, as well as waist and foot ornaments. As a young adult of the Qiang ethnic group, Danmuji was a key participant in hunting activities. Guided by elder clan members, he mastered survival skills and hunted various animals. The bones left behind were polished and drilled, and the layered bones and stone bead ornaments, necklaces, and waist ornaments were hung around his neck and on his belt. These adornments fully expressed his wild spirit and vitality, and also served as symbols of survival, wisdom, and honor.



Figure 3. Bone Beads Chain, Qijia Culture.

Source: Gansu Museum



Figure 4. Turquoise Necklace, Qijia Culture.

Source: Gansu Museum

4. The textual research and analysis of Danmuji 's clothing fabrics and patterns

4.1 The textual research and analysis of Danmuji 's clothing fabrics

Xu Shen said in "Analytical Dictionary of Characters": Qiang, a shepherd in the Xirong area. Therefore, the costumes and customs of the Qiang people differ from those of the Central Plains tribes and are influenced by long-term nomadic life (Li, 2013). The herding-based nomadic lifestyle laid the material foundation for the Qiang people,

especially reflected in their traditional costume. Archaeological discoveries provide evidence for this: animal bone analysis from the Xindian culture shows that sheep accounted for as much as 83% (Yuan, 2017), which fully proves the core position of sheep in its economic and social life. In line with this livelihood pattern, the clothing of the Qiang people is largely made from pastoral products, commonly featuring garments of sheepskin and wool, and they often wear heavy outer garments of wool felt or cowhide felt to adapt to nomadic life in high-altitude areas. Later, the "Book of the Later Han: Biography of the Western Qiang" also records that during the Han Dynasty, the Qiang people of Gansu and Qinghai wore "Dahua felt", which can serve as a reference for the fabrics used in the early clothing of the Qiang nationality.

Although no direct textile objects have been unearthed in Xindian culture to date, combined with the regional background and historical development clues of the Hehuang area, it is possible to make a reasonable speculation about the textile technology mastered by its ancestors. From the perspective of the origin of textile technology, clear cloth-print marks are evident at the bottom of a pottery bowl unearthed from the Yangshao culture (Figure 5), which are caused by lining undried pottery blanks with linen during pottery making. The thickness of the cloth texture is uneven, the diameter of the thick line is about 0.4 cm, and the diameter of the thin line is about 0.05 cm, which exactly indicates that there was a certain level of spinning and weaving at that time. In addition, textile tools, such as pottery spinning wheels (Figure 6), were unearthed at the Banpo Site in the upper reaches of the Yellow River, further confirming the prevalence of textile activities in the Neolithic Age. However, in the Qijia Culture tombs that were earlier and adjacent to the region, traces of linen clothing were clearly found. Tomb No. 34 in Dahezhuang, Yongjing, yielded traces of red cloth on the head of the human skeleton, and a red cloth layer wrapped a buried pottery jar (Xie, 1986).

From this, it can be inferred that the types of fabric used in the clothing of the Qiang ancestors during the Neolithic period serve as a reference for the fabric of Danmuji's costume. Combined with archaeological evidence from contemporary and early neighboring cultures, it can be inferred that the Qiang ancestors at Xindian had already mastered certain textile techniques, and their clothing was likely made of plant fibers such as hemp, as well as fur and leather. When presenting the stage costume of Danmuji, we aim to restore the natural and ancient fabric characteristics as much as possible, increase the visual bulk by layering fabrics, further conveying the regional climate features, and reflecting the story's background.



Figure 5. Textured Patterns on the Bottom of the Pottery Bowl, Yangshao Culture.

Source: National Museum of China



Figure 6. Pottery Spinning Wheel, Banpo Culture.

Source: Gansu Dadiwan Museum

4.2 The textual research and analysis of Danmuji 's clothing patterns

The ancient Qiang nationality lacked a written system, so the pattern has become the main means of ethnic cultural inheritance. Xindian culture lacks the physical data of clothing unearthed. However, through the features and rules of pottery patterns, we can still understand the aesthetic orientation of the Qiang ancestors. Xindian culture pottery is relatively rough in texture, often mixed with sand and red-brown or orange-yellow clay. The painted pottery is adorned with black or red paint, and its color combinations are simple, harmonious, and unified, giving it a natural beauty.

The main decoration on the painted pottery is usually a figurative ram's horn pattern (double-hook pattern) (Figure 7) or some animal motifs. The abstract symbols are interspersed, which is of little significance in the overall picture. It is more likely to fill in blanks, such as whirlpool, broadband, broken-line, and "S" patterns (Zhou, 2023). However, these abstract patterns are very fluid and decorative, which makes the single-colored painted pottery base rich. From the Tangwang type in Xindian culture, it can be seen that the trajectory of the nested square (Figure 8) and the whirlpool patterns (Figure 9) on the pottery often penetrates the whole situation in a "two-party continuous" or "four-party

continuous" way, so that the pattern decoration has a strong sense of rhythm. The main feature of this ornamentation is the combination of virtual and real elements, expressed through black-and-red contrasts to form a "pun ornamentation". It blurs the relationship between the hook pattern in the image and the red pottery background, creating a mysterious sense of change.

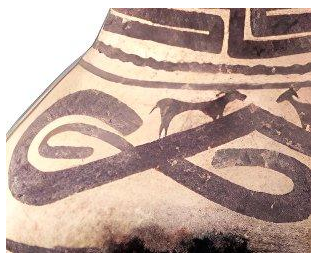


Figure 7. Double-hooked Sheep Pattern, Xindian Culture

Source: Qinghai Provincial Museum



Figure 8. Nested Square, Xindian Culture (Tangwang Type)

Source: Linxia State Museum



Figure 9. Whirlpool Pattern, Xindian Culture (Tangwang Type)

Source: Linxia State Museum

In Danmuji's costume design, we can adopt the simple, harmonious color system of painted pottery, with brown and yellow as the main color tones, symbolizing clay and earth; interspersed with black and red decorative elements to create a strong visual temperature. Then, by combining and arranging fabric materials, coarse-woven linen and felt are selected for mixing and matching. Through certain weaving techniques, the rough texture of pottery is reproduced, the fluidity of painted patterns is simulated, and the audience is guided through the abstract patterns. Spell out the spiritual picture of a primitive nation.

5. The textual research and analysis of Danmuji 's headwear (or hairstyle) and footwear

5.1 The textual research and analysis of Danmuji 's headwear (or hairstyle)

According to the records of "The History of the Later Han Dynasty·The Biography of the Western Qiang", the Qiang people covered their faces with their hair, regarding it as a custom. Archaeological discoveries can also support this record. The figurative pottery sculptures from the Majiayao culture period in the Gansu-Qinghai region often feature prominent hairstyles, such as braided, disheveled, and draped styles, which differ from the bun hairstyle popular in the early Liangzhu culture. Other scholars believe that the human figures depicted on the painted pottery basin from the Sunjiazai dance pattern illustrate scenes of primitive shaman dances (Figure 10), reflecting that the ancient Qiang people had customs of wearing hair loose or tied and adorned with tails (Jiao, 2014). The hunting figures on the pottery related to the Gansu Xindian culture (Figure 11) also exhibit similar features, further confirming the continuity of this custom in Qiang culture.



Figure 10. Sunjiazai Dance Pattern Painted Pottery Basin (partial), Majiayao Culture.

Source: National Museum of China



Figure 11. Hunting Figures Pattern (partial), Xindian Culture.

Source: Lanzhou Museum

As Shen Congwen explained in the "Study of Ancient Chinese Costumes", the hairstyle of captives or enslaved people in some sacrificial utensils, from the head-shaped painted pottery bottles of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, was also draped hair down until the neck, which proved the hairstyle of the ancient Qiang people (Shen, 2002). The Miaodigou type painted pottery bottle (Figure 12) unearthed from the Dadiwan Site in Qin'an County, Gansu Province, has a round carved head statue at the bottle mouth. The portrait's hair is draped, and a perforation is visible at the earlobe. The overall hairstyle characteristics are consistent with the ancient Qiang people's custom of "disheveled hair and covered face" as described in the literature. In the period of the Machang type, the characters on the painted

pottery pot of the naked figure unearthed in Liuwan, Qinghai, were also in a hairstyle, with short hair on the forehead (Figure 13).

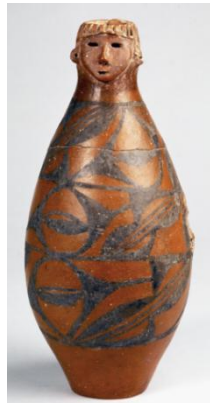


Figure 12. Human-shaped Mouth Painted Pottery Bottle, Majiayao Culture (Dadiwan Miaodigou Type)

Source: Gansu Provincial Museum



Figure 13. Nude Portrait Painted Pottery Vessel, Majiayao Culture.

Source: National Museum of China.

These remains show that the hairstyles and hair ornaments of the region during this period have formed a distinct regional style, and the styles of hair-draping and hair-weaving all reflect the typical customs of the Qiang ancestors. Based on the hairstyle characteristics reflected in the above-mentioned pottery, in the image design of Danmuji, we have integrated two forms of hairstyle and plait, which not only continue the simple image of the ancestors' hairstyle but also enhance visual decoration through their combination.

5.2 The textual research and analysis of Danmuji 's footwear

In the "Striped Painted Pottery Boots·Legend of Past Generations" program, the ancient Qiang ancestors in Qinghai relied on a pair of strong, cold-resistant boots, trekked across mountains and rivers, and communicated with various ethnic groups. It thus embarked on a path of national integration. Ancestors needed to undertake long-distance migration, placing extremely high demands on the durability of their shoes. From the striped painted pottery boots (Figure 14), it is not difficult to glimpse the shape and advanced shoe-making technology of the early boots. The painted pottery boots are 11.4 cm high and 14.3 cm long at the bottom. It consists of three major components: the boot shaft, the uppers, and the sole. The front of the thin sole is slightly rounded and pointed, and the back has a square, straight edge. The boot shaft and the uppers are full and rounded. Its shape is very strange, and its surface is also covered with various patterns (Quan, 2013). The boot is painted black with symmetrical double-line back lines, stripes, and triangles. The clear lines are beautiful and smooth, and the geometric patterns are both simple and elegant, and highly decorative. By speculating on the painted patterns on the boots, it is not difficult to see that the intelligent Qiang ancestors not only paid attention to the practicality of the items, but also attached great importance to beautifying and decorating them.



Figure 14. Striped Painted Pottery Boots, Xindian Culture. Source: Qinghai Provincial Museum

The process of making boots includes the specific details of the boots worn by Danmuji during the Xindian culture period, and the program provides a detailed introduction to them. In the "reverse stitching" process, the sole and uppers are stitched and then turned out. The needles are hidden inside the shoes, and the lines at the sole joints are concave, which can prevent the uppers from wearing. The reverse-stitching process holds an important place in the history of Chinese and global shoe-making and is still in use today.

Besides, the "upper and sole parting" process of making the sole and the uppers separate and then splicing them together, which departs from the original state of wrapping the whole animal skin around the foot, and is better suited to the foot's shape, making the boots more resistant to heel wear and more comfortable. The ancestors also knew how to make boot shafts, uppers, and soles according to the texture of different parts of the animal skin, and applied the wear principle to the shoe-making process. The thinner, softer leather was selected for the boot shaft and uppers, while the thicker leather was used for the soles. Due to the boots' axial symmetry, alternating use between the left and right feet can reduce fixed wear and thus extend service life. It also reflects the Qiang ancestors' adaptation and wisdom to nature.

6. The overall presentation of clothing image design

In the play, the character Danmuji is a male Qiang ethnic ancestor living in the late Neolithic period in the Qinghai region. At that time, people's lifestyle habits and textile technology had not yet departed from primitive society. Although there were no fixed clothing styles for reference, the overall shaping of the character's image was achieved by combining the forms of ceramic figurines with unearthed fabrics and accessories, satisfying contemporary people's imagination of the clothing of the Qiang ancestors during that period. It further explores the design ingenuity that reflects the character traits and plot settings.

From Danmuji's stage photos (Figures 15 and 16), it is evident that Danmuji's overall style is simple yet capable, with a unified color palette. The clothing design is mainly based on the "Guanshouyi", a one-piece garment with a waistband tied at the waist. The fabric is thick and has a good drape, made of cotton-linen that presents an ancient, rustic texture through its coarse weave. This fabric not only fits the historical setting but also aligns with the relatively cold climate of Qinghai, which supports the narrative that the ancestors of the Qiang people initiated the great migration. Danmuji's shoulder decoration is similar to the "felt cape", which is closely woven by various colors of cloth strips and beads. It creates an irregular pendant shape on the clothes, greatly enhancing the decoration while modernizing the original clothing system. In other accessories, rough hair is adorned with a few braids. The beaded accessories on the hairband, without losing details, restore the decoration of the original bone beads and turquoise. It not only takes into account the characteristics of the ancestors' clothing but also satisfies the aesthetic preferences of the modern audience, enhances the modelling's fineness, more effectively highlights the regional characteristics and role-setting of the protagonist, and enhances the program's stage visual effect.



Figure 15&16. The Stage Presentation of Danmuji 's Costume Image.

Source: "The Nation's Greatest Treasures" Program, 2024

7. Conclusion

As one of the oldest ethnic groups in the history of Chinese civilization, the Qiang costume culture embodies the survival wisdom and aesthetic spirit of human beings in the late Neolithic period and also reflects the strength and achievements of cultural exchanges in primitive society. This paper takes the cultural relics unearthed during the

Xindian culture period as its entry point. It reveals the comprehensive influence of the geographical environment, tool innovation, and aesthetic system on the costumes of Qiang ancestors from an interdisciplinary perspective, aiming to achieve a stage costume restoration effect that balances historical reduction and cultural interpretation. Through Danmuji's costume design, the original style of the Qiang ancestors' costumes in the Xindian culture is restored and displayed as much as possible. More details of their costumes are continually scrutinized. It is not only about respecting and inheriting history, but also about excavating the genes of China's excellent traditional costume culture. Each thread is the rhyme of the civilization epic, and clothing is also an important manifestation of social culture. The exploration of costumes during the Xindian culture period is not only a material production response by the ancient Qiang people to the survival limit at 3000 meters above sea level, but also an aesthetic spiritual practice within the Chinese pluralistic integration pattern. Through the dissemination of the current national treasure program "Striped Painted Pottery Boots · Past and Present Life", it can also let more audiences understand the living conditions of China's primitive period and tap the spiritual foundation and aesthetic source of the Chinese nation.

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Ethics Statement

Ethics approval was not required because this study analyzes published literature and publicly available institutional documents and does not involve human participants, experimental intervention, or identifiable personal data.

Availability of Data and Materials

The core documentary corpus, inclusion criteria, analytical codebook, and source-linked evidence matrix are provided in the accompanying supplementary material. All underlying documents are publicly available through the references and URLs cited in the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

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AI-Assisted Tools Disclosure

Generative AI-assisted tools were used during manuscript revision to support language editing, structural refinement, document formatting, and the technical preparation of author-generated schematic figures. The author independently verified all sources, factual claims, analyses, interpretations, and final wording and assumes full responsibility for the manuscript.

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