

Cultural Aspects of Ethnic Tujia Elements in Ye Mei's Novels

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Abstract

Chinese minority literature was incorporated into the contemporary Chinese literature system and flourished in the new period. A large number of outstanding Tujia literature writers emerged, among whom Ye Mei is an outstanding one. The novels she created ushered in a new chapter on the basis of Chinese culture. The interpretation of Chinese culture in her works is not only conducive to the establishment of a complete identity of Tujia nationality, but also provides a paradigm for the development of minority culture.

Keywords

Ye Mei; Tujia nationality; ethnic minorities; culture.

1. Introduction

In the history of Chinese literature in the new period, national literature, as a new literary concept, appears in the reader's field of vision, and the creation of national literature, which has long been among the folk literature, has embarked on a new journey. Since then, writers of all ethnic groups have actively created, and ethnic literature has begun to flourish. Among them, a number of excellent literary works emerged, such as Tibetan writer Alai's *Dust Settled*, Zhang Chengzhi's *History of Mind*, Zhaxi Dawa's *Tibet, Soul Tied on a Leather Rope Buckle*, and so on. As a member of the big family of the Chinese nation, the family does not have its own writing, so its written literature appeared rather late, leaving a gap in the history of minority literature. Since the new period, several representative writers have appeared in Tujia literature, such as Sun Jianzhong, Li Chuanfeng, Ye Mei and Tian Ping, among which Ye Mei is the most outstanding Tujia female writer in the new period.

Ye Mei, born in Enshi, Hubei Province, Tujia nationality, is currently the editor-in-chief of National Literature. Ye Mei published her debut novel *Sweet Pond* in 1978. Up to now, she has written nearly 3 million characters, including novels *Sayou's Dragon Boat River*, *The Last Chieftain*, *Back to Enshi*, *My Sister Wants to Cross the River* and so on. Ye Mei's literary creation is a dazzling star in contemporary minority literary circles. Unlike Zhaxi Dawa and others, Ye Mei has a multicultural background. Her father came from the hometown of Confucius and Mencius, and her mother grew up in the magical and magnificent Tujia mountain area. They gave Ye Mei the dual identity of Han nationality and Tujia nationality, and brought about the uniqueness of his literary creation. In her writing, Ye Mei always adheres to the idea of "seeking roots", looks for the foundation of Tujia nationality, sublimates national characteristics from national history, customs, daily life and national spirit, constructs vivid national images, and expects to arouse the sense of belonging and national identity.

2. The Construction of Tujia Ethnic Culture

"Nationality is not a label, but an element that is born and flows in the blood. What we have to do is not to deliberately copy, but to fully understand and know each nationality and portray it wholeheartedly." Ye Mei constructed a vivid picture of Tujia nationality with the rigorous attitude and sincere belief of a minority writer, showing the rich cultural connotation of Tujia nationality.

2.1. Trace of the Tujia Ethnic Historical Memory

In the tide of root-seeking literature in the literary world in the 1980s, reproducing national history and evoking national memory have become important contents of literary writing. "When modernity dispels spatial heterogeneity with time, which leads to the continuous collapse and uncertainty of spatial organizations of ethnic minorities, their self-identity has an unprecedented sense of fracture and crisis, which urges them to return to the past and try to construct an 'imaginary community' in the past language, culture, history and religious beliefs to make up for the present trauma." [1] The ambiguity of self-identity and the "rootless" state of spirit force minority writers invariably adopt the way of reconstructing national history to gain the identity of ethnic groups. Tibetan writer Mei Zhuo's *Sun Tribe*, Alai's *Empty Mountain*, Manchu writer Mei Zhao's *Women in Our Family*, etc., all seek the recognition of national culture by looking back profoundly at the national history. Similarly, Ye Mei of Tujia nationality feels the impact and dissolution of Tujia culture in the new era. She tries to explore the national roots by looking back at the national history, sublimate the national characteristics from the national history, and complete the personal identity and national identity to complete the continuation of national culture.

"Cultural root-seeking is to replace direct foresight by looking back." [2] Looking back at history has become Ye Mei's habitual creative way. In her novels, she writes about the love and hate of Tujia people with Tujia history in Enshi as the background. "The novel is the perceptual history of the nationality" [3], "I lived in the land of the Three Gorges since I was a child, and even if I go further, I can't do without the review and imagination of that land." [4] In Ye Mei's literary world, she built a tunnel through time and space. From the origin of the nationality to the bureaucratization of native officers and to the evolution towards modernization, she leads readers to savor profound national history. Ye Mei's reconstruction of history mainly includes two kinds of narratives. One is to describe the grand history in the way of personal memory, and to reconstruct the history from the front, such as *The Last Chieftain*; the other reflects the history and reality of Tujia region from the perspective of family narrative, and reveals the mystery of ethnic origin and existence through family narrative, such as *Back to Enshi* and *There is a Hole in the Mountain*.

In *The Last Chieftain*, Ye Mei described the end of the chieftain system from the memory of the chieftain Qin Yao and the outlander Li An. Outlander Li An strayed into the Tujia territory while evading military service. He offended God, lost a leg under the Tujia rules, but unexpectedly gained the love of Tujia girl Wu Niang. To win the Tujia traditional "right of first night", he began to fight with the chieftain, who finally exchanged for descendants at the expense of aphasia, and outlander Li An lost his love forever. Here, Li An is undoubtedly the spokesperson of foreign culture. The chieftain lost his right to speak because of the invasion of foreign culture, symbolizing the decline of Tujia chieftain system. The birth of the son to "carry on the family line" implies the continuation of Tujia culture to a certain extent and the "root" of the nationality. With the "hole" as the clue, Ye Mei tells the hundred-years story of the historical changes of the Tian family in *There is a Hole in the Mountain*. From national origin to the chieftain system and to the bureaucratization of native officers, from the revolutionary period to the contemporary Tujia, she basically restates the history of the whole Tujia nationality. In Tujia origin myth, "hole" has archetypal significance, and Ye Mei focused historical development on the image of "hole": Tujia ancestors competed to set up the "Ba" state in the cave; Chieftain Tian was subject to "bureaucratization of native officers" and sacrificed himself to save the whole family in the cave; Tian Hongjun bravely resisted the enemy, and Tian Kuaihuo searched for treasures in the cave. From glory to decline, the Tian family alluded to the development of the whole Tujia nationality. Tian Kuaihuo was not as brave and responsible as his ancestors, which represented the fracture of national inheritance. In the end, Tian Kuaihuo, who had experienced a narrow escape from treasure hunting, suddenly felt that wealth was not so important and wanted to do

some practical things again. To a certain extent, this was a revival of the spirit of the ancestors, and a metaphor used by writer Ye Mei in the hope of rescuing the declining Tujia nationality and regaining its ethnic foundation.

2.2. The Display of Ethnic Customs

Writing about the rituals and customs of ethnic minorities in China is very common. For example, Tibetan writer Alai's description of Tibetan sacrifice in *Dust Settled*, Hui writer Huo Da's recount of pilgrimage and festival etiquette in *Muslim Funeral*, and Miao writer Shen Congwen's description of Miao nationality's antiphonal singing in the west of Hunan, etc., all added rich colors to the ethnic emotions, ethnic psychology and ethnic style described in their works, and made the presentation of ethnic customs a beautiful landscape under the pen of minority writers.

"It is generally believed that different ethnic groups have different ethnic characteristics and ethnic characteristics come from the ethnic spirit. But the national spirit is not visible; it must be expressed in various cultural forms. Etiquette happens to be one such cultural form, and it can also be said to be one of the main cultural forms embodying the national spirit." [5] Etiquette is a form that reflects ethnic particularity, and the writing of folk customs is one of the ways to show ethnic uniqueness. At the same time, the collectivity side of etiquette and custom makes ethnic etiquette and custom one of the most important ways of cultural inheritance. On the one hand, the description of folk customs by minority writers reflects the uniqueness of ethnic culture in numerous cultures; on the other hand, it awakens the sense of ethnic identity and belonging in the form of rituals and customs in the process of assimilation of minority cultures.

2.2.1. Sheba Day

Sheba Day is a Tujia dance. The word literally means "hand-waving dance", which is an established ceremony in sacrifice ceremonies in the first lunar month of each year. The Last Chieftain begins the story with a thrilling Sheba Day: "When you hear two drums ringing, a yellow cow is dragged out ... The shouting people are naked, with straw ropes around their waists and a broom handle between their hips. They dance around the cowhide drums happily, sometimes on their backs, sometimes kneeling down on the earth ... and blend with the sun." [6] The spectacular scene is strange and dramatic to outlander Li An, who was shocked by it and was stunned for a moment, forgetting his pain. Sheba Day is a unique sacrificial dance of Tujia people, and participating in Sheba Day is an important way for Tujia people to gain ethnic identity.

2.2.2. Funeral Dance

Funeral dance is a unique part of Tujia funeral etiquette. It has a far-reaching history in Tujia settlements. "In Qingjiang County, the neighborhood teenagers of the 'Man Zuo' ethnic group started to sing around the ruler with bows and arrows, and celebrated. Their lyrics said, 'Life happened ... and dozens of songs were missing, but they were sent to the mountains covered in clothes and coffins ...'" [7] Whenever a Tujia elder died, the clansmen would get together and dance in memory of the deceased's "Saerhe", telling the stories of their ancestors and the dead and bidding farewell to them. The funeral dance lasts for a long time. In *Flower Trees*, "Tai" said that he would hold a grand ceremony for "Rong Ge Er", and asked the men in Longchuan Village to dance for him for seven straight days and nights. There are many kinds of ceremonies in the process of funeral dance. Ye Mei completely reproduces the whole funeral dance process from Ba Cha's composure in arranging the funeral of Qin Laoda, to the singing and dancing of relatives and friends in the hall, to the ritual under the tree, and to the Tima ritual in which the coffin was carried up the mountain.

At the same time, Tujia people have different understandings of life and death. In the eyes of other ethnic groups, death is a very sad thing, but in the eyes of Tujia people, death is only the starting point of a new journey. "Funeral dance continued for thousands of years, and the Tujia people never shed tears for those who knew their destiny and died decently. Obviously, they know that those who met a violent end would seek revenge but those who died decently were just crossing another threshold. In their view, sincere and happy songs and dances were suitable for seeing them off." [8] At the well-arranged funeral site, "The bamboo fire is as bright as day, the wine in the big altar is brought up, the meat in the big bowl is served up, and the people in the stockade are closely surrounded by the main room, the courtyard and the ginkgo tree, and they are happy to see off Qin Laoda." [9] The Tujia people show their respect and nostalgia for the dead through the funeral dance so that the dead can unload the human burden and leave worry free. Only in this way can the Tujia people treat life and death as usual and perform such a shocking ceremonious Saerhe.

2.2.3. First Night Right

There are both downsides and upsides to a nationality's traditional culture. From an objective point of view, Ye Mei not only tells the excellent cultural traditions of Tujia people, but also exposes the backward and ignorant side of ethnic customs. The right of first night is a traditional custom of the Tujia nationality. According to *The Last Chieftain*, "Any woman who is married to Longchuanhe is presented to God on her first night." [10] And God is the chieftain revered by Tujia people. "The right to the first night has been passed down from generation to generation by the ancestors, and it has become natural for the natives to offer their virgin daughters to gods. This is a long-standing tradition" [11]. Therefore, the right to the first night is unreasonable in the eyes of outlander Li An and contrary to modern civilization. Chieftain Qin Yao, who has received modern education, also knows that the right to first night is backward and ignorant. Therefore, amid the collision between traditional culture and modern civilization which upholds "taking the essence and discarding the dross", the right to first night is set to be replaced by modern civilization.

2.2.4. Chieftain and Tima

In *An Essay On Man*, Cahill emphasized that man is a "symbol". According to him, everyone is defined by a certain "symbol", and the nationality, as a collection of people, is of course composed of certain symbols. An independent nationality must have its own unique symbol. Chieftain and Tima (witches) are the representative figures of Tujia nationality, who assume the identities of wise men, decision makers and doctors and represent the essence of Tujia culture. "Tima is a half-man-and-half-ghost wizard of Tujia people." [12] After learning Tima spell, Qin Laoer stopped working in the fields and began to specialize in arranging weddings and funerals. They could communicate with the gods. In *Flower Trees*, the spirit half of Qiguniang predicted the fate of newborn girls and the abortion of Ba Cha in Sayou's Dragon Boat River and the conception of Wuniang in *The Last Chieftain*. However, in Ye Mei's view, chieftain and Tima are not only mysterious, but also have humanistic care. The chieftain, as the god that the natives look up to, originally had no worldly desires. But when facing the beloved Wu Niang, he became emotional. Although Tima was half man and half ghost, he acted as a doctor and a wise man. It can be said that chieftain and Tima, as nationality symbols, are the combination of divinity and humanity, and are the noble and folk embodiment of Tujia culture.

2.2.5. Pan-God Worship

"Anthropological and folklore studies have long proved that from the origin of a nationality, rituals and customs have a symbiotic relationship and structure with myth, religion and belief." [13] Religion often contributes to some customs of ethnic minorities, such as Muslim worship, Tibetan sacrifice and so on. Unlike Tibetans who believe in Buddhism and Hui people who believe in Islam, Tujia people have no fixed belief, and they believe that everything is spiritual,

so they worship all gods. This is reflected in Ye Mei's works. For example, in order to make a unique Dong Dong Qiang, Tian Miejiang cut down a bright black bamboo, without knowing that the black bamboo was the dragon vein of Banqiao. The waterway was cut off, causing continuous drought in Banqiao. Tian Miejiang sought shelter under a slate. He was finally forgiven by god.

"White Tiger Totem" is also a kind of universal worship of Tujia people. The tiger is thought to be the ancestor—the worship of ancestors from another angle. Tujia people worship their ancestors and put them in the same position as gods. "Chieftain Qin Yao crossed his legs under the ancestral memorial tablet with the names of 33 generations of chieftains with the family name of Qin. Thirty-three generations of chieftains enjoyed human worship together with the gods in heaven." [14] Tujia descendants have never forgotten the grace of their ancestors. Tujia advocates animism, has a heart of reverence for everything in heaven and earth, and is in awe in their actions. With the rapid development of the economy in the 1980s, modern individuals pursued fame and gain. Ye Mei's description of pantheistic worship is intended to arouse the national traditional culture's sense of identity, cohesion and appeal, and seek the reconstruction of national spirit, which has a profound modern meaning in the social transformation period.

2.3. The Writing about the Reality of Ethnic Life

The Tujia people's life has changed greatly in the new period, but the solid value system within the ethnic culture makes ethnic cognition naive and simple in spirit. Tujia people experienced psychological impact in the new transition period. Ye Mei, starting from her personal experience, reflects the great historical turning point with the life, psychological changes and struggles of ordinary people.

Ye Mei's way of pursuing the ethnic foundation is to write the past glory of Tujia nationality and the symbols of representative nationalities. However, Ye Mei not only traces history, but also looks back on the road the nationality has taken from the chieftain period and the period of bureaucratization of native officers, and tells the real life of contemporary Tujia people in close quarters. There are Tujia people who can't get out of the mountains, and there are also Tujia people who began their own careers, conform to the trend of the times and pursue a better life in the works of Ye Mei. They are open-minded and heading for a civilized world amongst historical changes taking place. In Sweet Lake, Xiangchi sacrificed herself for the family, and the kind Cuicui succumbed to it and eventually died of poverty and ignorance. Ye Mei "mourned their misfortune but lamented their failings". In *People Going Back to the Mountains*, the "Brother in Western Suits" travels across the country, earning money and insight. "Sun" develops tourist attractions in Sayou's Dragon Boat River... These are Tujia landscapes appearing in the new period. Even the rural woman "Er Mei" has found her place in the city through her own efforts. In these places, "modernity" has been displayed to the greatest extent.

3. The Promotion of the Tujia Ethnic Spirit

As Wu Daoyi said, Ye Mei "strives to explore the inner essence of Tujia culture, and focuses on comprehensively displaying Tujia's ethnic life state and character from all aspects of material life, historical struggle, cultural tradition and ethnic customs. Thus, to a great extent, it constitutes the statue of Tujia ethnic spirit and character, and is a sub-text for studying Tujia history and culture." [15]. In the new context, Ye Mei remoulds the national self-imagination and cognition by publicizing the national spirit permeated in daily life, and completes the construction of national identity.

3.1. The National Character Cultivated in the Predicament of Existence

"The river is a hundred and twenty miles away, and it originated in Longchuan Village ... Sometimes it is like a bunch of lilac arrows." [16] "The power of Fu Santiao is huge, and the boat is like a carriage bumping on an uneven mountain road ... A huge stone is coming face to face, and it seems to hit the boat into pieces ... Beyond Fu Santiao is the deep pool, in which water seems to be boiling, and the whirlpools are like a curling dragon." [17] The regional environment breeds special regional culture, and the steep natural geography of Tujia gathering places cultivates Tujia people's unusual national character. The hard living environment creates Tujia people's resilience. Amid historical evolutions, it has become the core of the ethnic spirit that Ye Mei is struggling to pursue.

Tujia people are martial, and Tujia men are persevering. In *Back to Enshi*, gallant Tujia bandits seek to survive in the jungle. They lived in a difficult living environment without any fear. The same is true of ordinary people, who are righteous and fearless in the face of threats and torture. Xiang Huaitian in *Official Uniform*, under the extreme sadness that all his parents and brothers died and his family property was gone, still summoned up his spirits and wanted to rebuild the stilted building and let the family survive. The hard living environment gives Tujia men a mountain-like back. They can live a day in a tough environment, and bring up the toughness of the nationality.

The mountains give men the tenacity of mountains, and the amorous water gives Tujia women the flexibility. "Tai" in *Flower Trees* gave birth to a son and brought him up after "Rong Ge Er" joined the Red Army. After being ravaged by the Home Returning Corps, Tai climbed out of a pool of blood and drew a long blood chain on the winding mountain road. Before such suffering, Tai took on the hardships given by history and survived with a tough heart. In *Official Uniform*, the sister-in-law lost her husband and care in the face of family disaster. But she did not abandon her moral principles, forgiving those who hurt her husband and persuading her younger brother to emigrate for the construction of the Three Gorges Dam. These women as flexible as water. Zhu Nv, Er Mei, Ba Cha, Li Yuxia ... bear the hardships and progress of Tujia people.

3.2. The Love Formed in the Pursuit of Freedom

Love is the eternal theme of literature, and it is also the most basic part of both sexes' emotions. In the context of Han nationality, the relationship between the sexes is implicit and restrained, while Tujia people who grew up in natural mountains are open about both sexes. As described in Ye Mei's *Back to Enshi*: "The marriage custom here has been open since ancient times, and the love songs that are heard here and there in the mountains are witnesses. During the Women's Festival on March 3, young unmarried women are free to sing with men. They dated and entered into a lifetime contract." [18] Enshi has experienced a long-term matriarchal system, and the status of women is relatively lofty. The free love system centered on women has remained until this day, and the love system with love songs as matchmakers has continued in the primitive natural environment and humanistic environment. The Tujia people of all ages advocated the pursuit of freedom, and the concept of freedom inherited from all ages cultivated open soil for ethnic psychology.

It is under the cultivation of open national psychological soil that Tujia children have warm and straightforward expressions. In *There is a Hole in the Mountain*, Tian Kun and Mou Xing'er pledged to get married without parental consent. They never betrayed each other. Tan Qingxiu, the sister of Yesanguan in *Back to Enshi*, was in deep love with "my" father from the hometown of Confucius and Mencius. In *Official Uniform*, Da Er came to Xiang Tiansheng's cave alone to express her love to him. In Ye Mei's works, these free spirits boldly express their persistent love, and women had their lives in their own hands.

The free sexual relationship of Tujia people is not only manifested in the freedom of love, but also allows men and women to have extramarital relations. In this simple relationship between the two sexes, Tujia people only regard the expression of self-emotion as the only basis, and the love between men and women is a natural, comfortable expression of life and an equal and natural social relationship. "It is OK for men and women to meet in the mountains, but you must not lose your soul and forget your wife." [19] Men and women in the mountains can meet freely, but they can't abandon their wives. This is a unique attitude and way of dealing with emotions of Tujia people. It is precisely because of this understanding that, in Sayou's Dragon Boat River, Qin Laoda had a good time with a Hakka girl, and Ba Cha laughed it all off. But when Qin Laoda wanted to leave for the Hakka girl, Ba Cha cursed him in the most vicious way. Hakka girls who have been subjected to the ethics of Han nationality since childhood will be indignant and ashamed because they don't know such a unique way of communication.

3.3. A Philosophical View of Life and Death Nurtured by Natural Belief

In Tujia people's view, happiness is a very simple thing. It is ideal to have "a decent life, children and a death without illness" [20]. In the difficult natural environment, they understand death as "all people who end well just cross from one threshold to another, which is a great pleasure." The Tujia people who believe in animism regard the end of life as a magnificent celebration. In the face of the dead, other ethnic groups tend to cry, but the Tujia people dance "Saerhe" and sing joyful songs so that the dead can easily hit the road. If you live, you will die. If you die, you will live again. Death and life are interdependent. You are happy to live and die. The alternation of life and death represents the prosperity of the nationality. This is the simple world view of Tujia people. In Sayou's Dragon Boat River, Qin Laoda is sent off in a happy way and those who send him off don't shed any tears.

The open-minded attitude towards life and death has cultivated Tujia people's value on kindness. When Xiang Huaishu in Official Uniform wanted to give up leading the exploration team when the family was in trouble, the phrase "your promise counts" pressed down his uneasiness. He continued to lead the exploration team, eventually losing his life in a bid to win reputation. In Black Miao Bamboo, the bamboo ware maker made a wish that "the bamboo girl follows whoever Dong Dong Tang follows". After the bamboo girl inadvertently gave Dong Dong Qiang to Mr. Wu, the bamboo ware maker insisted on sending the bamboo girl to the Wu family. The bamboo girl was forced to accept the decision. It is because of the wish made by the bamboo ware maker that such a sad elegy comes into being. It is in the ethnic psychology of valuing faith and righteousness that the bamboo ware maker did not change his original intention and that the bamboo girls accepted such unreasonable arrangements. Tujia people almost stubbornly value faith and righteousness. They regard faith, emotion and righteousness as more important things than life, and use life to maintain this inheritance.

Ye Mei used Tujia's daily life to construct an ethnic picture, from which she peeped out the representative character and spirit of Tujia. Ye Mei, with her unique identity advantage, proves that Tujia is a tough, open-minded and optimistic nationality in a cultural sense, and completes the construction of national self-imagination through the publicity of national spirit so as to achieve the purpose of cultural root-seeking.

4. The Perspective and Thinking of Ethnic Culture

With the rapid development of science and technology and frequent cultural exchanges in the 21st century, the integration of cultures inevitably leads to the weakening and disappearance of some ethnic cultural characteristics, and the development of minority culture has become a topic of common concern to writers. Facing the anxiety over the cultural changes of ethnic minorities, Ye Mei presented her thoughts in her works: writers should not only conform to the natural development within the ethnic groups, but also find opportunities for development in

multicultural exchanges so that the combination of the two can ensure the infinite vitality and development of the ethnic groups.

4.1. The "Norm" of Ethnic Culture--Evolution and Inheritance

Different from other writers in the same period, Ye Mei's literary creation is less anxious about the decline of ethnic culture, but more appreciative, confident and expecting the internal evolution of the nationality. Wailing marriage, Tima (wizard of Tujia nationality) and Sheba Day (dance of sacrifice) are symbols with ethnic characteristics, important carriers of Tujia spirit and components of national culture. Ye Mei thinks that it is the positive aspect of national culture and the guarantee of unique nationality, and the essence inherited from ancestors is worth preserving and developing. The amorous feelings of accompanying the "Ten Sisters" presented in Flower Trees, the song of crying for marriage faintly sounds in the mountain village, "Mother ... there are also grandmothers and grandfathers who go to the shrine ..." Ying Nv and Zhao Nv sing the yearning for a new life, the Tujia women express yearning for a happy life over thousands of years, and their gratitude for their parents' kindness, which marks the inheritance of thousands of years of culture.

There is the preservation of national spirit, and of course there is also the abandonment of its dross. The "right to first night" is a custom that has long been spread in Tujia nationality. When the level of science and technology is low, people's fear of gods and fear of demons are manifested. With the development of history, the natives are fully aware of the irrationality of this custom, and other customs are still being observed one by one. The custom of abolishing the right to first night has become a tacit understanding. Since then, the right to first night has disappeared in national history. Only when a nation constantly introspects itself can it move forward and make great progress for the nation. Ye Mei unreservedly conveyed pride and expectation for the progress and optimization within the nationality.

4.2. The "Abnormal" of National Culture--Differences and Conflicts

Regional culture and minority culture are tributary culture in cultural exchanges. Only by choosing to integrate into mainstream culture can tributary culture be strong and preserve its own subcultures. Tujia culture shrouded by Chinese mainstream culture must break away from cultural autonomy and cultural inwardness, and choose to adhere to and integrate with mainstream culture in order to make progress, which is both inevitable and necessary. However, conflicts and differences arising from cultural integration are inevitable. Ye Mei's works just reflect this situation and reflect on it.

Tujia people live in the Wuling Mountains area, where there is a ban that "we don't leave caves and Han people don't enter our territory". Under the chieftain system, Tujia people basically cut off their contacts with the Han nationality. However, the strong forces of the Qing government broke the tranquility of Tujia area, and Tujia people began to communicate with Han culture. When outsiders enter the closed world, they often enlighten or destroy to break the ignorance or tranquility of the closed world. In the agitation of different cultures, the inherent order of the native place has disintegrated. In Ye Mei's works, strangers exist as a symbol of "national decline". Just like Li An in The Last Chieftain, as the initiator of heterogeneous culture, the spokesman of the original nation lost his right to speak, showing the arduous course of sticking to the culture. Even though he struggled, he declined.

4.3. Thinking about the Future of National Culture

Cultural exchange and collision is a global discourse, and minority culture is a weak link in mainstream culture. In the new century, facing the challenge of heterogeneous culture, some Tujia people with better conditions are influenced by money worship, the traditional moral consciousness is declining, and the national development is facing a new realistic spiritual

dilemma. There are also some Tujia people who actively meet challenges, stick to tradition and publicize the essence of Tujia culture.

In *Moths in May*, Ye Mei discusses how Tujia people integrate into the new world with unique charm, and actively integrate into the new cultural system while maintaining the uniqueness of Tujia culture. As the market economy further develops, Er Mei walked out of the mountains into the city. Facing the challenges from heterogeneous cultures, she did not abandon the fine qualities of tenacity, diligence and strength in national culture, and gained new development opportunities in cultural confrontation. Er Mei, as a representative of the social transformation period, pointed out a road for us: against the multicultural background, while adhering to national identity and protecting national culture, we should keep pace with the times, and take heterogeneous culture as the reference for the renewal of national culture so that the nationality can forever keep young.

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