

## Postprint of Research Report on Cross-Media Communication of Yue Opera in the Bilibili Ecosystem

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### Abstract

**[Objective]** How Yue Opera can better adapt to and effectively utilize dissemination mechanisms within cross-media domains. **[Method]** This study conducts a media audience analysis based on data from the questionnaire “Audience Motivation Survey for Yue Opera Videos on Bilibili” and statistics from high-view-count Yue Opera-related videos. **[Results]** The highly interactive and fragmented danmu (bullet comments) have facilitated the establishment of a new-era opera criticism system, with decentralization achieved across critic subjects, genres, and carriers. Simultaneously, leveraging Bilibili’s cross-regional linkage advantages, “intruders” and “circle-breakers” can collaborate internally and externally to maximize media efficiency. Cross-analysis reveals that audiences more knowledgeable about Yue Opera demonstrate more negative attitudes toward Yue Opera fusion creations. **[Conclusion]** Opera dissemination must address the contradictions in video demands between head fans and long-tail groups within the “long-tail effect,” and utilize “circles” to achieve “targeted publicity.” Only thus can Bilibili’s advantages be fully leveraged to better facilitate cross-media dissemination of Yue Opera.

### Full Text

#### Preamble

#### A Research Report on the Cross-Media Communication of Yue Opera Under the Bilibili Ecosystem

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#### Abstract:

**[Objective]** This study examines how Yue opera can better adapt to and effectively utilize cross-media communication mechanisms. **[Method]** Based on a questionnaire survey of audience motivations for engaging with Yue opera videos

on Bilibili and statistical data from high-viewership Yue opera-related content, the paper conducts a media audience analysis. **[Results]** The highly interactive and fragmented danmu (bullet comments) have facilitated the establishment of a new-era opera commentary system, democratizing the commentator base, genre, and medium. Leveraging Bilibili's advantage in cross-regional linkage, "intruders" and "boundary-breakers" can collaborate internally and externally to maximize media efficiency. Cross-analysis reveals a paradox: audiences with deeper knowledge of Yue opera demonstrate more negative attitudes toward fusion creations. **[Conclusion]** Opera communication must address the contradictory demands of core opera fans and the long-tail audience within the "long-tail effect," utilizing "circles" to achieve "targeted promotion." Only then can Bilibili's advantages be fully leveraged to enhance Yue opera's cross-media communication.

**Keywords:** Yue opera; opera communication; opera audience; long-tail effect; cross-media communication

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## 1. Research Background

Traditional opera represents the essence of Chinese national culture and crystallization of civilization. Facing the impact of new media, achieving more efficient communication has become an urgent challenge. Yue opera, which has developed into China's second-largest opera genre over the past century, has gradually expanded its communication scope from traditional media to new media platforms. Bilibili (officially Bilibili Danmu Video Website) currently stands as China's most influential danmu video platform. According to its Q2 2022 financial report, monthly active users reached 305.7 million, a year-over-year increase of 33%, while daily active users hit 83.5 million, also achieving 33% growth [1]. In terms of age distribution, users aged 18-24 account for 70% of Bilibili's user base, significantly higher than other video platforms, with the 19-24 age group alone comprising 61%. Bilibili has thus established itself as a stronghold in youth culture. Beyond user growth, the platform's content has expanded beyond its original "ACG" (anime, comics, games) culture into traditional culture sectors such as opera, ancient-style music, and Hanfu.

Yue opera has successfully expanded its territory on Bilibili, viewing the platform as a crucial communication channel. Based on the "Uses and Gratifications" theory, which posits that "audiences use mass media purposefully, always approaching media based on certain needs and motivations to obtain satisfaction,"

Bilibili's unique danmu advantages provide audiences with strong interactive experiences. Increasingly, crossover fusion creations have become a distinctive feature of the platform, fostering growing stickiness among Yue opera audiences on Bilibili. In 2017, pop singers Zhou Shen and Zhang Jie's Yue opera versions of "Big Fish" and "A Young Lady Descends from the Heavens" received widespread acclaim on the platform, heralding a new era of crossover fusion in opera-style singing. In 2019, a submission titled "Gradually Irritable," excerpted from the Qin opera "Black Ding Ben," achieved an impressive 8th place on Bilibili's overall ranking, accumulating 6.39 million views and 20,000 danmu comments to date, which brought new-style traditional opera creations into the spotlight for Bilibili users. Surveying video click rates in Bilibili's opera section, the Yue opera film "Five Daughters Pay Their Respects" stands out among northern opera genres as the undisputed "top stream" in opera films. This demonstrates that whether as a "collection" of operas or a "subset," Yue opera has carved out significant space on the platform.

## 2. Research Design

This study classifies Yue opera videos in the broad sense into complete Yue operas, aria or excerpt collections, opera-style songs, mixed clips, Vlogs, parodies, related crossovers, costumes/props/makeup, interactive videos, behind-the-scenes recordings, popular science, and other categories, based on general definitions of Yue opera and existing content resources on Bilibili. Centered on audience contact motivations and attitudes toward Yue opera fusion creations, the research investigates both opera fans and general audiences to explore Bilibili's unique ecosystem for Yue opera and potential breakthrough strategies for the art form in the new era.

### 2.1 Questionnaire Survey Method

The questionnaire survey collected 118 valid responses. Leveraging the researcher's identity as a Yue opera fan to maximize coverage of the target audience, the survey found that 93.37% of respondents had watched complete Yue operas, with 16.1% having watched 15-30 productions and 44.92% being senior fans who had watched over 30 productions. Among all respondents, 95.41% preferred watching Yue opera-related videos on Bilibili.

### 2.2 Literature Research Method

Through literature analysis, this paper collects and organizes materials related to "opera communication" and "opera fusion," focusing on analyzing the current state and communication challenges of opera dissemination on Bilibili while examining and sorting out the textual mechanisms of danmu. On this foundation, combined with communication studies and semiotics, the study accumulates necessary research materials for in-depth discussion of this topic.

### 2.3 In-Depth Interview Method

To compensate for the inherent limitations of questionnaire depth, in-depth interviews were conducted with four frequent Bilibili Yue opera video viewers (two opera fans and two non-fans).

### 2.4 Statistical Survey Method

This study utilizes statistical 归纳 of existing Bilibili videos and leverages Bilibili's built-in video backend analysis system to expand the data volume.

## 3. Analysis of Yue Opera's Cross-Media Communication on Bilibili

### 3.1 Establishment of a New-Era Opera Commentary System Through Real-Time Interaction

According to the survey, 88.9% of respondents believe that Yue opera-related videos on Bilibili differ from those on other platforms, and among this group, 77.23% identify danmu and interactivity as the most attractive aspects of watching Yue opera videos on the platform. Danmu, in essence, represents fragmented text that appears synchronously with video content, characterized by interactivity and fragmentation. What distinguishes danmu from traditional comment sections is precisely this interactivity. "Internet interactivity refers to two-way interactive communication between sender and receiver. When a communicator disseminates information online, the receiver immediately provides feedback, supplementing and modifying the content according to personal preferences and transmitting it back to the sender, thereby achieving bidirectional information exchange" [2]. Users can see their real-time danmu comments flying out from the right side of the screen, a publishing feature that enhances their sense of participation. In particular, when danmu achieves unconscious resonance, it creates a "danmu field" where users' viewing experiences become conversational and responsive.

Taking the Yue opera film "Five Daughters Pay Their Respects" with 12,000 danmu comments as an example, during the "Serving Soup" scene featuring star performers Mao Weitao and He Saifei, a rich wave of danmu emerged. Some comments offered humorous critiques: "They could perform 'Three Times Covering with Clothes' here," immediately followed by "The one who mentioned Three Times Covering with Clothes is mixing up operas." Others expressed emotions: "Mao and He are amazing," "My dear Mao is so cute." Some quoted lines: "Ah, who are you? Where is this place?" followed instantly by "This is the husband you prepaid ten taels of silver for." Others provided popular science: "This is the Yin school opening aria," "Applaud when the opening aria ends." The interactivity of danmu provides audiences with broader associative space. Under anonymous conditions, front and back comments can even 串联 into a danmu dialogue. Combined with Yue opera's characteristic elongated opening

arias that leave sufficient time for danmu, this creates numerous humorous yet professional comments that greatly enhance interactivity.

Beyond danmu interaction, Bilibili is widely promoting interactive videos. The interactive opera video “The Unicorn Purse” test version represents one successful case. Centered on “Prologue: Choosing the Dowry,” the video offers simple and difficult modes for gameplay, achieving 20,000 clicks within two months of release. Unfortunately, no similarly popular interactive videos currently exist in the Yue opera section, though this could become a future direction for Yue opera communication on Bilibili.

Danmu is essentially fragmented text. In communication studies, “fragmentation” serves as an evocative description of contemporary social communication contexts. New technologies diversify communication platforms and media forms, resulting in information pluralization and textual fragmentation, while simultaneously shaping disseminated, fragmented subjects through communication practices. Danmu increases audience information acquisition channels, as information no longer radiates from a single center, while expanding the scale of information-sending subjects. Everyone can freely express themselves in Yue opera videos, which invisibly dismantles authoritative, standardized commentary systems.

The survey categorizes common danmu in Yue opera videos into eight types: complaints, related comments, related praise, related popular science, emotional expression, lines or arias, punctuation symbols, and check-ins. The three most popular danmu types are related praise (67.89%), related comments (59.63%), and emotional expression (43.12%). These three categories generally constitute evaluative text attached to videos. Drawing from literary theorist Umberto Eco’s concept of “the open work,” danmu can be viewed as “open text” that possesses qualities of both Barthes’s “writerly text” and Fiske’s “producerly text.” This manifests in three ways: first, its meaning field is not closed, providing possibilities for audience secondary production; second, it inherently contains multiple meanings contrary to its purpose, with cracks and gaps in its content; third, it is not a fixed text but a generative one.

This derivative product, born from the era of rapid internet development and facilitated by various communication media—particularly mobile digital terminals—has formed a unique, fragmented, and immediate “pan-commentary” system. First, the composition of commentators has shifted from traditional opera criticism professionals to mass opera enthusiasts, amateur performers, and general netizens. These groups mostly have long-term exposure to opera and are intimately familiar with hidden “memes” within the art form, even achieving mastery through comprehensive understanding. As mentioned earlier, when Zou Shilong tremblingly covers Cuiyun with clothes in “Serving Soup,” danmu immediately associates it with the famous excerpt from “Jade Hairpin • Three Times Covering with Clothes” where Li Xiuying covers Wang Yulin three times. Without certain knowledge of Yue opera, one likely cannot understand the humor, making this danmu content for insiders. Similarly, in “[Honor of Kings 5th Anniversary]

Mao Weitao and Zhou Shen Crossover: Yue Opera Version of ‘Lovesickness,’ ” numerous popular science danmu from opera fans appear: “Teacher Mao is a Yue opera Yin school Xiaosheng (young male role), inheriting from Yin school founder Yin Guifang,” “Teacher Mao’ s characteristic Yin school ending notes.” Such popular science danmu fills professional gaps in Yue opera fusion videos, enabling general netizens to understand basic Yue opera knowledge, making it content for outsiders. Bilibili’ s Yue opera fans have democratized the entire commentary subject, integrating extensive information from both inside and outside the circle, filling professional knowledge gaps while enhancing video 趣味性—a win-win outcome.

Second, commentary genres and forms have shifted from professional papers published in specialized magazines and columns to online impromptu critiques. Such danmu abandons the complex theoretical support of traditional opera criticism, typically landing precisely on key points within 15 characters—whether about acting, props, stage design, or scriptwriting. For instance, “Hunan Satellite TV Spring Festival Opera Show: Beautiful Young Ladies” is a gala opera medley where each opera genre only has a few lines, so all arias were cut to accelerate the pace, resulting in uneven quality. Danmu such as “A large section of lyrics was deleted here,” “The enunciation is unclear in the back,” “Used to listening to Xin Fengxia, this is subpar,” and “The rhythm is slow and loses flavor” directly pinpoint issues, providing real-time critiques of Ping opera’ s “Flower as Matchmaker” excerpt enunciation, Yue opera’ s “Beating the Golden Branch” format, and other aspects. The text is brief but the problems are clear. However, due to danmu’ s anonymous nature, some comments contain war-mongering 嫌疑. When someone posts “This actor’ s posture is poor,” immediate retorts follow: “Those who say the posture is poor probably haven’ t been hit by her water sleeves.” Such back-and-forth argumentative danmu is not uncommon in the opera section, with similar disputes over schools, acting skills, and appearance beauty—arguments that have persisted in opera circles for centuries. Lacking authoritative standards, danmu easily leads to entrenched positions, unreasonableness, and confrontation, ultimately achieving nothing.

Finally, opera commentary carriers have shifted from traditional media like print, television, and radio to mobile digital terminals. Objectively, this phenomenon relates to the 普及 of smartphones and networks, but it is also inseparable from subjective choices. “Due to the short duration of short videos, their 传播 content contains highly limited information, which aligns with the fragmentation of audience time. This brief expression form satisfies audience shifts in video content consumption habits, enabling information acquisition needs within short timeframes.” With the rise of short videos, a large number of viewers have been driven to watch videos on mobile phones. According to surveys, the ratio of mobile to PC viewers for long Yue opera videos (over one hour) is nearly 1:1, while the ratio for short Yue opera videos (under 15 minutes) exceeds 4:1.

Data from the 200,000-click excerpt collection “Yue Opera: Those Classic Arias

Never Tire of Hearing” shows mobile viewing accounts for 84% versus 16% on PC. For UP 主 Yin Su Ye Sha’s submission of “Five Daughters Pay Their Respects” –the top-clicked opera film on the platform–mobile accounts for 58% versus 42% on PC. The contrast clearly demonstrates mobile’s absolute dominance in the short-video domain, providing commentators with more convenient access. They can open an excerpt during commutes, meals, or work breaks, leave a few danmu comments, and check for responses before bed. Combined with Bilibili’s excellent community concept, this may become a new social method in opera circles.

### 3.2 Breaking In and Breaking Out

To outsiders, Yue opera appears as an art form oriented toward elderly audiences, with young people knowing little about it. However, with recent Yue opera reforms and innovations by pioneers like Mao Weitao, Yue opera has gradually attracted a new generation of young viewers, becoming one of the most youthful and vibrant opera genres. Among 87 respondents aged 17-25 in this survey, 18.39% have watched 5-15 Yue operas, 18.39% have watched 15-30, and 36.78% have watched over 30. Although this data may be skewed due to the respondent pool being mostly opera fans, it is undeniable that young opera fans’ understanding of Yue opera is no less than that of middle-aged and elderly fans. This group has gradually become the main force for Yue opera communication on Bilibili.

A major characteristic distinguishing Bilibili from other video production platforms is its unique cultural reproduction capacity. Users have developed an exclusive symbolic system through long-term creation, decoding and recoding original videos for secondary production. According to the author’s statistics on the top 214 videos under the Yue opera topic, primary creation videos account for 60.28%, while secondary creation videos account for 29.44%. This proportion of secondary creation may seem modest, but it is actually limited by topic constraints. Bilibili has not yet established a dedicated section for Yue opera, only treating it as a branch under the opera category, making comprehensive statistics difficult. If the scope is expanded to the opera topic (top 178 videos), the proportion of secondary creation reaches 45.51%, revealing that Bilibili’s secondary creation capacity is gaining strong momentum in the opera section.

These secondary creations can be roughly divided into “intruders” and “boundary-breakers” based on creative subjects. “The best-performing medium—that is, the medium with the best cost-efficiency relative to previous media—dominates. It is the medium that can reach broader and faster, with the lowest information-sending cost and the least effort required for information reception (a synonym for most comfortable)” [1]. After internet 普及, major video websites have undoubtedly become among the best-performing media. The internet has lowered opera reception costs, expanded opera reception groups, and improved information dissemination efficiency, enabling traditional culture to spread more widely among broader populations at lower costs. Intruders leverage their built-in fan

groups to enable numerous Bilibili communities to rapidly access Yue opera (and opera in general), while boundary-breakers strive to instill professional and pure elements. Working together internally and externally, they maximize media efficiency.

From the two sets of statistics, it is evident that popular opera-style adaptation videos constitute the largest number of secondary creations. In terms of creative principles, these songs deconstruct opera melodies and combine them with pop song rhythms and instrumentation to complete secondary creation, employing both opera-style and pop vocal techniques. Although lacking in opera 专业性, they currently receive widespread attention across various multimedia platforms. Examples include Zhang Jie' s "A Young Lady Descends from the Heavens," Zhou Shen' s Yue opera version of "Big Fish," Tan Jing' s "Chi Ling," and Huang Ling' s "Qian Si Xi" —all cross-boundary creations by non-professional opera actors that have achieved remarkable click rates on Bilibili, driving numerous 联动 creations by cover singers, choreographers, and makeup UP 主 s. The 热度 cannot be underestimated.

Cross-boundary UP 主 s like Zhou Shen and Tao Yang possess massive built-in fan bases and traffic within the platform. Having them 闯入 the opera section from their respective expertise areas—music, crosstalk, and makeup—can achieve cross-regional integration and maximize 传播 efficiency. The questionnaire survey shows that 74.58% of respondents have listened to Zhou Shen' s Yue opera version of "Big Fish," with 89.83% expressing neutral, supportive, or very supportive attitudes, indicating generally high acceptance levels, which its over-one-million clicks also demonstrate.

If the above videos belong to the category of breaking in, then what Yue opera and the entire opera circle are striving to achieve belongs to breaking out. People habitually refer to an art form as a circle, which includes performers, behind-the-scenes personnel, fans, etc. Insiders are well-versed in dynamics, but no matter how lively the activity, it remains within the circle, with outsiders knowing little. To break this invisible boundary, insiders seek extensive cooperation, attempting to create professional collaborations with professional perspectives. The opera 联动 skins launched by Honor of Kings represent one of the most 出圈 works. In the first year, they collaborated with Kun opera master and Plum Blossom Award winner Wei Chunrong to release a Zhen Ji skin; the following year, they joined forces again with Yue opera "Three Plum Blossom" performer Mao Weitao to release a Shangguan Wan' er skin, using motion capture to complete a full set of Xiaosheng (young male role) performances from "The New Butterfly Lovers • Returning to Eighteen." All motion capture was performed by top actors, with every voice line professionally recorded. Whether in enunciation, vocal style, or posture, all represent top-tier standards within the circle, allowing players to experience the most authentic opera during gameplay. Table 1 statistics show that Yue opera and game 联动 videos account for 9 out of secondary creations, one-seventh of the total, all from Honor of Kings—an impressive 传播 achievement.

### 3.3 Targeted Promotion of Opera Under the Long-Tail Effect

As analyzed previously, most respondents support Yue opera-related fusion creations, with considerable click and danmu volumes. However, when respondents are further categorized, a paradox emerges: audiences with deeper understanding of Yue opera demonstrate more negative attitudes toward such creations. This leads to the following three analyses.

First, cross-analysis of “your understanding level of Yue opera” and “whether you support fusion creations of Yue opera with music, makeup, and dance” reveals that more knowledgeable viewers are less supportive of fusion creations. This shows no obvious correlation with age as an independent variable; instead, the 17-25 age group has the highest proportion of opposition.

Second, analyzing respondents who have watched over 30 Yue operas on the question “How do you view the opera-related program ‘Astonishment’ at Bilibili’s New Year’s Eve Gala?” shows that over 40% selected very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, or neutral regarding creativity, content, and performance—a significant proportion worth noting. In contrast, public opinion shows the program received excellent 口碑 at the 2020 Bilibili New Year’s Eve Gala, quickly trending on Weibo with overwhelmingly positive comments. There is a clear 口碑 discrepancy between the two groups.

Third, the penultimate questionnaire question asked: “Do you believe fusion creations like ‘Big Fish’ in ‘Astonishment’ can promote opera inheritance and development?” Continuing the analysis with understanding level of Yue opera as the independent variable shows a similar trend. Respondents who have never watched a complete Yue opera 100% believe it has promotional effect; as understanding deepens, the proportion believing it has no promotional effect increases, reaching up to 25%.

The above three analyses may be affected by sample size limitations, as the category of those who have never watched Yue opera is relatively small and may be biased. However, other groups with some understanding of Yue opera come from major opera fan communities and represent currently the most active Yue opera fans. Combined with the author’s observations and interviews within the circle, the final analysis yields: (1) Understanding level of Yue opera is not proportional to support for Yue opera fusion creations. (2) Senior opera fans (those who have watched over 30 productions) show lower-than-expected support for opera fusion programs. (3) Regarding the 反哺 effect of opera fusion creations on opera itself, opera fans and general netizens hold opposite attitudes.

This result is unexpected for audiences not well-versed in opera. Opera fan groups have long existed within a relatively closed circle with limited information, and opera crossovers with other art forms are not as frequent as with pop music, leading to a tendency to “only see immediate matters.” The more one understands opera, the easier it is to fall into the trap of “purity,” demanding more traditional costumes, makeup, and posture, and becoming more resistant

to adaptation. The reasons are twofold: first, unfamiliarity with other arts leads to instinctive rejection; second, the uneven quality of fusion works. The opera program “Brilliant Pear Garden” at the Hunan Satellite TV Spring Festival Gala mentioned earlier was mocked by opera fans as directors selecting performers based on Douyin opera looks. Representatives from Yu opera, Ping opera, Yue opera, Huangmei opera, and Peking opera all had high 颜值, but their vocal style and posture were not all satisfactory. When opera fans see less professional actors on major stages, contempt and mockery emerge. Over time, attitudes toward adaptation and fusion within the circle gradually turn negative.

Innovative opera communication with external assistance is already the general trend, making audience segmentation crucial. Only by identifying audience groups can “targeted promotion” be implemented. Chen Juanjuan from the Jiangsu Provincial Institute of Culture and Arts, in her article “Micro-Power and Micro-Inheritance: On New Communication Concepts for Traditional Opera in the Converged Media Era” published in *Modern Communication*, proposed the concept of “micro-power” in opera inheritance. When the X-axis represents opera audience size and the Y-axis represents audience interest level in opera, the resulting curve illustrates opera inheritance micro-power dynamics [2]. The curve’s head consists of fewer opera fans with greater interest, generating the largest individual “micro-power.” The X-axis can extend infinitely, with the end representing general netizens far removed from opera.

It is important to note that opera inheritance is a group behavior. The ultimate goal of contemporary opera inheritance is to bring audiences back to theaters to experience the charm of live traditional art. For the head audience, what should be provided is professional and pure opera art. According to statistics from the final questionnaire question “Please provide opinions and suggestions for Yue opera promotion and publicity on Bilibili,” responses can be roughly divided into four categories: (1) Invite more professional troupes and actors to join Bilibili to enhance video professionalism. (2) Establish dedicated sections for each opera genre. (3) Release copyrights for opera films and stage recordings. (4) Increase behind-the-scenes Vlogs and micro-variety video proportions. Additionally, (5) Bilibili could lead the planning of opera crossover creation competitions. The first three categories can be understood as strategies to stabilize the head opera fans, allowing more professionals to do professional work and refine video quality. The latter two categories target the long-tail audience, lowering opera appreciation thresholds by starting with 趣味性 to leverage 传播 power. “According to the long-tail theory, when opera communication channels are sufficiently broad and communication costs are sufficiently low, the total ‘micro-power’ generated by numerous audiences with average or slight interest in opera can equal or even exceed that generated by the ‘main force’ ” [3]. The purpose of so-called “targeted promotion” is to stabilize head opera fans with professional and exquisite videos while enhancing the 热度 of the tail audience with innovative fusion videos, rather than attempting to cover all groups with one type of creation.

As a video website built on creativity, Bilibili has, under its current communication mechanisms, utilized the high interactivity and fragmentation of danmu to create a commentary system suited to its media characteristics, democratizing commentary subjects, genres, and carriers. Simultaneously, leveraging its cross-regional linkage advantages, it enables intruders with built-in fan groups to rapidly expose numerous Bilibili communities to Yue opera (and opera generally), while boundary-breakers strive to instill professional and pure elements, achieving internal-external collaboration to maximize media efficiency. However, we must not overlook the contradictory demands between head opera fans and the long-tail audience within the “long-tail effect.” Communication strategies should emphasize circles to achieve “targeted promotion.” Only then can Bilibili’s advantages be fully leveraged to better facilitate Yue opera’s cross-media communication.

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**(Responsible Editor: Zhang Xiaojing)**

[Figure 1: see original paper] Long Video Viewing Method Selection Bar Chart  
Yue Opera Video Statistics  
Opera Video Statistics

[Figure 2: see original paper] Opera Inheritance Micro-Power Curve Chart

*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

*Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.*