



Research on the Application of Traditional Chinese Cultural Elements in Animation Based on Semiotics Theory

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Citation: Wang, B. (2025). Research on the Application of Traditional Chinese Cultural Elements in Animation Based on Semiotics Theory. *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry*, 25(1), 112-121.

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 01 April 2024

Accepted: 23 April 2024

ABSTRACT

Traditional Chinese visual elements are one of the unique artistic elements of Chinese civilization, which is a group of visual information evolved through time and space by China's specific social and cultural structure and collective aesthetic consciousness. It covers all aspects of material, spiritual and social life. With five thousand years of splendid civilization, China has created a great variety of traditional cultural elements. In animation works, these traditional visual cultures are used as a kind of cultural symbols to convey the national culture and national image of Chinese people through typical visual expressions. This paper focuses on how traditional Chinese visual elements in animation works can be used as cultural symbols to convey national culture and make the audience have cultural identity. Through the theory of animation semiotics, this paper studies how traditional Chinese visual elements as cultural symbols in animation creation can express the spiritual values needed in animation, and summarizes the experience in animation creation. Finally, it synthesizes the basis of the previous discussion and takes Chinese traditional visual elements as the direction to study their application in animation characters and animation scenes..

Keywords: Chinese traditional cultural elements; aesthetics; semiotic theory; animation

I. PREFACE

In recent years, China's animation industry has been developing rapidly, and animation theoretical research and practical activities have made great achievements and produced good social and economic benefits, with the emergence of animation works that have both market and word-of-mouth success, such as "The Rise of the White Snake" and "Nezha - The Descent of the Magic Boy". However, it is undeniable that although these animated films with Chinese elements have achieved high box office in China, their performance in the international arena is unsatisfactory, facing the difficulties of nationalization and globalization. Besides, in the field of traditional animation, Chinese traditional visual culture has received attention from countries all over the world, such as the Kung Fu Panda in the American animation Kung Fu Panda, which is unique to China; and the images in the Japanese animation games, such as Zhang Fei, Guan Yu and Liu Bei, which are all from the classical Chinese folk writings. These animation works not only have high visual expressiveness and characterization power in the market circulation, but also are good at constructing their core values from traditional Chinese visual culture.

Therefore, in the process of global integration, how to strengthen the cultural identity among nations and improve the international competitiveness of the animation industry in China is one of the most important problems facing the animation industry at present. Since the last century, China has produced a number of animation works with very national traditional characteristics, which include many classics, and to a large extent have determined the status of Chinese animation in the world. In recent years, the role of animated films in cultural communication has gradually been emphasized by all walks of life, and the emergence of animation bases and various types of animation support policies has provided opportunities for the development of domestic animated films. However, at the same time, a lot of problems have surfaced. The misinterpretation phenomenon in the process of animation movie dissemination has seriously affected the dissemination effect of traditional Chinese visual elements, and the application of traditional Chinese visual elements in animation movies is not as harmonious and perfect as imagined.

Based on the above background considerations, in order to improve China's animation industry and create more internationally competitive animation works. Firstly, this paper summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of

traditional Chinese visual elements in the process of animation creation at home and abroad, and combines the theory of animation semiotics to promote the development of the theory of animation creation in China, so as to improve the depth of research on traditional Chinese visual elements. Secondly, although the research scope of traditional Chinese visual elements is wide, materializing them as a kind of cultural symbols and applying them in animation creation can increase the audience's cultural identity and cultural self-confidence, which is of great help in building a national image with deep cultural heritage. Finally, from the perspective of cultural communication, it is easy to arouse the audience's full affirmation of excellent traditional culture. Externally, it is a powerful means to tell a good Chinese story, shape China's image and spread Chinese culture.

II. TRADITIONAL CHINESE CULTURAL ELEMENTS

(I) Connotation of traditional Chinese visual elements

China has a civilized history of five thousand years and a vast territory, and at the same time is a multi-ethnic country. The unique geographical conditions make the working people create a special Chinese culture in the process of life and production. These cultures cover the customs, moral concepts and aesthetic interests of various ethnic groups over a long period of time, and have a high degree of regional cohesion. The traditional Chinese visual elements are the visual culture based on Chinese culture, from the three major aesthetic systems of China, "Confucianism, Taoism, and Zen", integrating a large number of ideological and cultural and textual graphic systems, and conveying the value orientation of the Chinese nation^[1]. The understanding of traditional Chinese cultural elements can start from both material and spiritual levels.

First of all, those elements that are obviously marked with Chinese imprints and processed by art, and can be perceived by our visual senses, belong to the material level of traditional Chinese visual elements. For example, totems and characters. These traditional visual elements carry specific cultural connotations and have fixed norms in terms of content, form, shape and color. These norms have evolved into people's aesthetic guidelines in the process of artistic processing, and have been passed down from one generation to another, thus giving rise to the traditional Chinese visual elements known to the general public today. However, it is biased to explore traditional Chinese visual elements purely on a material level. Traditional Chinese visual elements are born out of Chinese culture, and when we talk about culture, we have to analyze its spiritual dimension. The spiritual dimension of traditional Chinese visual elements is the spiritual connotation of our traditional culture, which is the visualization of Chinese cultural temperament. Whether it is the Chinese temperament of the elephant in the invisible, or the charm of the elephant in order to exhaust the meaning, these spiritual connotations are the core values behind the traditional Chinese visual elements, which convey thousands of years of cultural history of the Chinese nation.

The two elements, material and spiritual, constitute the traditional Chinese visual elements, in which the decisive role is played by the spiritual level. However, since the spiritual level cannot be visualized, and the audience cannot perceive it through visual images, the connotation of the spiritual level has to be expressed through the form of the material level. In the face of the interdependence of form and connotation of traditional Chinese visual elements, in order to reasonably integrate these visual cultures into animation creation, it is necessary to have a full understanding of their forms of expression and characteristics of the times.

(II) Characteristics of traditional Chinese visual elements

1. Abstract and figurative forms of expression

According to the explanation of general psychology, abstraction refers to extracting some common attributes of certain things and expanding them into a universal thinking activity. Figurative can be regarded as a method of image thinking, which is characterized by logic, wholeness and concrete sensibility. Applied to modern graphic design, abstraction refers to the graphic image to deviate from or abandon the artistic expression of the appearance of the control image. Figurative is a concrete or generalized depiction of real things, both of which exist in the expression of traditional Chinese visual elements.

Typical Chinese traditional visual elements, most of which present abstractness, are based on Chinese Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and other ideas and derived from human subjective thinking. For example, "Taiji Bagua Diagram" and "Ten Thousand Characters". There are also simple dots, lines, surfaces and geometric shapes as the main framework for the formation of patterns, such as the "human face fish pattern" in the half-slope culture, the Yangshao culture in the "geometric pattern", are abstract geometric symbols, the expression of a specific form of law and ideology.

In addition to conveying ideas and concepts in abstract forms, most traditional Chinese visual elements depict things in a figurative way. They are divided into three categories: the first is the full depiction of real things; the second is the generalized depiction of real things; and the third is the depiction of subjective imaginary things.

In the full description of the real thing, we can see the mountains and rivers, flowers and animals and other specific images, these are specific things of the full description. Most of them restore the original appearance of the real world, and we don't need to think too much to understand how the visual elements convey the information.

Among the things produced by subjective imagination, although these visual images are derived from human subjective imagination, they are still figurative categories. Take the Chinese dragon and unicorn as examples, although they are

fictionalized by people through myths and legends, we can find the shadow of the real world in them. Although the unicorn is a fictional animal, the lion's head, the antlers, the tiger's eyes and the horse's tail can be seen in its appearance, which is a visual image created by a collection of various animals.

2. Symbolism of Cultural Connotation

From the perspective of expression, both abstract and figurative visual elements need symbolism to convey meaning. As far as the abstract visual elements are concerned, if there is no special cultural symbolism, the value of its existence only lies in a few simple geometric shapes. The understanding of abstract visual elements can only be interpreted by those who have some Chinese cultural background.

Among the figurative visual elements, many of them are also given symbolic meanings. For example, plants such as plum, orchids, bamboo and chrysanthemums, due to their growth habit, are often used to describe the noble qualities of people, that is, the so-called "objects to express their will"; dragons, phoenixes and other animals from ancient times are symbols of power, representing the social hierarchy; cranes, turtles are symbols of longevity, often used as congratulatory gifts. Used in animation creation, these visual elements not only become the image of the coat, but also be given a symbolic meaning. For example, the face of the demon king in "Journey to the West and the Return of the Great Sage" shows the Chinese Peking Opera culture, and the white face symbolizes the treacherous character of the demon king.

3. Highly generalized symbolism

Highly generalized symbolism mainly refers to the symbolism of visual art style and the symbolism of shape shaping, which have special implied meanings in color expression and image structure. For example, red represents loyalty, white represents treachery, and gold and silver represent gods and demons. The visual graphic of round square holes of ancient coins is the symbolization of the concept of interest and money. In animation representations, special symbols are often used to reflect the character's inner spirit, occupation, personality and other characteristics. For example, Taishang Laojun in "The Palace of Heaven" has a Taiji pattern drawn on the back of his clothes, identifying him as a Taoist deity; and the county magistrate in "The Wonderful Book of Tianshu" has coin symbols on the two ends of his hat, which show his greedy nature and money-mindedness in the best possible light.

(III) Advantages of traditional Chinese visual elements in cultural communication

1. Audience's sense of cultural identity

Chinese traditional visual elements have become a bit of gravel gold in the long river of history through the precipitation of time, and they are the most representative symbols of each dynasty and each generation, which together converge into the unique Chinese traditional culture. As a strong spiritual pillar, Chinese traditional visual elements have the unique advantage of arousing a strong sense of national cultural identity among Chinese people.

The wave of globalization has made countries all over the world realize the importance of national culture, and traditional Chinese visual culture has become the source of creativity in all walks of life. As a kind of cultural performance, animation can subtly influence the aesthetic interest and value judgment of the audience and promote the progress of the cultural industry, which in itself is a manifestation of cultural soft power.

Under the background of globalization, domestic animation, because of its special visual expression form and the consistency of Chinese audience's aesthetic habits, is more likely to make the audience produce cultural identity in cultural dissemination, which can not only make the audience identify with Chinese culture, but also produce cohesion in social groups, thus forming a kind of collective solidarity. This visual and cultural advantage is the unique communication advantage of Chinese traditional visual culture animated movies compared with other categories of animated movies. Compared with other categories, Chinese traditional visual elements of animated movies are based on the instinctive emotions of human beings tracing back to their roots, which can increase the adhesion between the movie and the audience groups.

2. Content integration in cross-cultural communication

In 1959, Hall mentioned "intercultural communication" for the first time in his book "The Language of Silence". The book emphasizes the influence of culture on communication, intending to eliminate barriers at various levels in cultural communication, as well as the sense of boundaries and various cultural exchange activities brought by culture ^[2]. Through the mutual integration of traditional Chinese visual elements with animated films, the cultural information is penetrated into the audience's mind in an entertaining way, completing the delivery of ideology and becoming a window for the world to understand Chinese culture. While spreading Chinese traditional culture, such movies pay more attention to weakening the gap between Chinese traditional culture and the aesthetics of the world audience, taking into account the cultural background of the audience and the aesthetic interests of different nationalities.

For example, the American animated film "Kung Fu Panda" borrows the shell of traditional Chinese culture, integrates traditional Chinese visual elements in many aspects of animation design, such as clothing, food, housing and transportation, and embeds the value concepts of American individual heroism, thus completing the cross-cultural dissemination of the American spirit. China has also exported Chinese traditional visual elements such as ink painting, paper-cutting art, custom

painting and other traditional visual elements in traditional visual elements animated movies. Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea have been deeply influenced by such animated movies and have expressed a high sense of identification with such images.

China's traditional visual culture, which has a long history and is profound and profound, is a powerful source of domestic animation creativity and the most competitive cultural soft power. Chinese animated films with traditional visual elements not only shape the values of the Chinese people, but also let the world know more about Chinese traditional culture through the characteristics of cross-cultural communication.

III. THEORY OF ANIMATION SEMIOTICS

(I) Overview of animation semiotics

1. The concept of animation semiotics

Similar to movie semiotics and art semiotics, animation semiotics is the introduction of semiotics research method, taking animation as ideographic phenomenon and symbol system. To study animation semiotics, the concept of semiotics should be clarified first. "Semiotics" was proposed by the linguist Saussure. Any symbol is made up of the energy and the reference, the energy is the concrete thing, that is, the symbol form, can be words, sound, image; the reference is a psychological concept, that is, the content of the symbol. The value of symbols comes from the specific cultural and social environments, but also lies in the conventional connection between the referents and the denotations.

To study the semiotics of animation, first of all, we should clarify the meaning of animation. The English word for animation is "animation", and its verb "animate" means: to make something alive, vitalized. The basis of animation creation is to make the static things move, this process of anthropomorphization is the prerequisite for animated films. But the value of animation does not lie in "moving", but in the symbolization of animation. Animation workers in the creative process of their own behavior, aesthetic value, social culture into the animation image. After the initial completion of the symbolization of the animation image, then through the behavioral activities of the animation characters in the film, to convey the creator's emotions, there are many ways to convey, but the ultimate goal is to resonate with the audience. Therefore, the visual symbolization of the animated image is an important part of the production of animated films, and whether or not this visual symbol can be successfully shaped will have a direct impact on whether or not the film can attract the audience. From the point of view of semiotics, it is the process of completing the process of energy reference and the process of completing the process of reference. When we talk about the image of the Monkey King in Journey to the West, we will not only think of his furry appearance, fiery eyes and other external images, but also associate it with strong, bold, vigilant and other synonyms.

2. The application of animation semiotics in animation creation

Nowadays, animation involves various fields such as culture, politics, mythology and the future. For example, sci-fi animation constructs the future, and mythological themes trace the origin of mankind. Animation has long been more than a children's pastime tool, it has become a carrier of culture, spreading the way of thinking and containing a rich spirit of the times.

As a communication medium, viewers get meaning from animation works. The key word of animation semiotics is "meaning", and it is necessary to understand whether it is "denotative meaning" or "value meaning" [3]. The so-called denotative meaning means that in animation works, animation images become more and more real, movements are more fluent, emotions are more infectious, and animation viewers can accurately understand the intention of animation creation, that is, animation expresses the "significance" and "meaning". But when the production level of animation reaches a standard, the audience needs to understand another layer of meaning through this simple reference to meaning, as we say: "people not only need to live, but also the meaning of life", "the meaning of life" can lie in the cause, The "meaning of life" can be in career, family, friends and so on. The meaning of life can be in career, family, friends and so on. At this time, "meaning" emphasizes the spiritual value and refers to its value and significance.

In the process of watching cartoons in daily life, lively and active preschool children will be quietly immersed in the animation field when they are brought in front of the screen. However, there exists a situation when an international cartoon is shown at this time and the children neither understand the dialog nor the subtitles, but still manage to watch it with great interest. How is this phenomenon caused? First, due to the hypothetical nature of animated symbols. Compared with live-action movies and television, animation is created with simpler and more abstract artistic symbols, combined with animation technology. Animation is not subject to the constraints of the real world, nor is it ostracized by cultural differences in terms of geography, actors, and subject matter. In addition, young children, who are single-minded and have not been systematically molded in their outlook on life and the world, look at the superficial logic of things and are better able to understand what animation is referring to, which is why children are able to watch animated works from other countries without any barriers. However, young viewers who have received a certain amount of education understand the objective world very well. When watching animation works, the mirror reflection of reality by animation symbols is no longer enough for them to meet their viewing requirements, and they attach more importance to the value meaning of things. This characteristic has also caused the two-level division of the animation audience: the first is the younger

children's audience, the simplicity of animation is more in line with their way of thinking and cognitive ability. On the other hand, there are young audiences, who know the popular visual elements very well and have active thoughts, so they can't be moved by focusing on the meaning of things at all.

Substituted into the creation of domestic animation, the animated film "Jiang Zi Ya", released in 2020, faced an embarrassing situation of bifurcation of word of mouth. Compared with previous animated movies, "Jiang Zi Ya" has made some progress in terms of visual effects. However, from the point of view of the theme and story development to be expressed in the movie, there is a phenomenon of logic disorder and unclear moral. After watching the movie, the audience said, "I can't understand what the movie is going to say" and "the whole movie gives people a feeling of confusion". The reason for this is that the movie fails to fit the audience's "expectation vision", and fails to create the value and meaning that satisfies the audience's expectation. The picture effect and special effects of "Jiang Zi Ya" are of course very good, but the film emphasizes too much on the visual effect and ignores the compatibility with the audience's mind, which makes the theme of the film deviate from the original state of conception. In terms of emotional performance, the overall construction of the worldview is too grandiose, but the incompleteness of the storyline can be difficult to carry such emotions, presenting the emergence of the work of neither laughter nor tears. Children may care about the meaning of the reference when watching, satisfied with the visual effect, but the adult audience can not find emotional resonance when watching, can not explore the value of meaning to fill the spiritual world, will inevitably give it on the label of failure.

3. The influence of animation semiotics on animation creation

Animation viewers can "know themselves" and "know the world" in the process of watching animation. The process of children's babbling and learning to speak is originally a process of understanding themselves and their unfamiliar environment. In the infinite time and space, human beings need to find a home, and this home is to find the definition of the self and the knowledge of the self. Children love to watch cartoons, but more than that, they use animation as a tool to learn about the world, to know themselves, and to establish the appropriate order. Both adults and young children can find a kind of "giving meaning" in this process, which is like what we call value meaning, which can be perceived and spread, and is a kind of self-improvement and reflection.

In animation semiotics, the value meaning is much higher than the denotative meaning. The audience of a live-action movie pays more attention to the acting skills of the actors, costumes, etc., and values a relatively real denotative meaning. In animated films, on the other hand, no audience cares about the authenticity of the animation because animation itself is hypothetical art, and they care more about its value meaning. They care more about its value meaning, which depends on the spiritual value it creates. Counting the successful animation works at home and abroad: *Journey to the West: The Return of the Great Sage* leads the audience to find their true selves, break free from restrictions, and seek for self-growth and self-awakening while repeating the classics; *Paprika* uses "DCMINI" as a tool to shuttle between reality and dream world, treating contemporary people's mental illnesses and panics; *Valley of the Winds* The Valley of the Wind" satirizes the greed of human nature by human's behavior of plundering natural resources, and expresses the worry about the living environment and the theme of harmony between human and nature; *Journey to Dreamland* tells the story of adhering to the dream and the principle of the supremacy of family love in the "world of fame and fortune" through music and death.

Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the spiritual value is the core, which is the Archimedes pivot point of animation semiotics research. [1] For animation creation, the spiritual meaning created under the guidance of value meaning is the direction of animation creation.

(II) Enhancing the Cultural Identity of Traditional Chinese Visual Elements Based on Animation Semiotics Theory

1. Definition of culture and elaboration of cultural identity

The definition of culture can be traced back to the British anthropologist Taylor, who in his book "Primitive Culture" considers culture as a general term for all economic bases and superstructures, such as knowledge and art, morality and science in human society. In modern Chinese, the word "culture" is taken from the Latin word "cultura", which means to cultivate and raise animals. The philosopher Cicero elevated the word "cultura" to a spiritual level and interpreted it as the cultivation of the human soul. Therefore, in ancient Rome, through specific education, people were cultivated to become Romans with souls, separated from uneducated barbarians, and culture gradually took on the function of preliminary identity.

Cultural identity is one of the important theories of cultural studies, and "identity" originates from the Latin word *idem*, which has the same meaning, as well as psychological cognitive similarity, consistency, and the resulting social relations.[5] The term "identity" is used to describe the social relations between people and their families. [5] "Identity" exists as an agreed concept, emphasizing the commonality between the subject and object, and the recognition, acceptance and attachment of the object to the subject. In real life, cultural identity is always associated with national identity, which is the basic value of the nation established by human beings in long-term life.

In the previous article, traditional Chinese visual elements are divided into material level and spiritual level, from this perspective to examine culture, culture can be divided into surface level and deep level. Surface culture permeates daily life with a form of physical expression, such as food, clothing, utensils, architecture and other cultural symbols; deep culture is hidden within the national culture, covering social, customary, religious, linguistic and other categories. Cultural identity can also be distinguished from superficial and deep culture. Surface culture is easy to recognize and imitate, easy to produce

cultural identity, as a tool to strengthen cultural identity in daily life, such as Chinese kung fu is loved and imitated by other countries, which objectively transmits Chinese culture; while deep culture is the kernel of the culture, which is often only understood and accepted by those who have experienced the same cultural background, and it is difficult to form cultural identity. As in the case of traditional Chinese festivals, only by understanding the sentiment behind the folk culture can individual people manifest their acceptance of the national culture and achieve empathy.

Cultural identity is the recognition, acknowledgement and approval of the national culture by the members of the nation, thus forming a sense of belonging, and the final result of cultural identity is to gain cultural confidence. Cultural identity and cultural self-confidence are cause and effect of each other. Cultural identity focuses on the affirmation, belonging and support of the culture itself, while cultural self-confidence emphasizes the culture's sense of conviction to solve problems in the face of external challenges in the future. In other words, cultural identity encompasses overall positive perceptions and feelings about the cultural identity itself, whether it is the culture's past, present, or future, while cultural self-confidence ultimately manifests itself in positive expectations about the future and a strong sense of conviction in the face of difficulties and challenges.

2. Construction of cultural symbols of traditional Chinese visual elements

"Cultural symbols" is a country, nation, region in the material culture and spiritual culture of a particular society and group in the emotional and spiritual concentration. [6] Compared with general symbols, cultural symbols have a more cohesive function, and people will naturally develop a sense of cultural pride in the process of recognizing their own ethnic and national cultural symbols, thus creating a cultural identity for the corresponding cultural symbols.

In animation creation, traditional Chinese visual elements exist as an external expression of cultural symbols. Whether using auspicious patterns or words, they are used to convey the special meaning they represent. The external expression of traditional Chinese visual elements only satisfies the aesthetic needs of different people at a certain stage, but the real importance lies in the symbolic meaning it conveys. The audience interprets the surface and deeper cultural connotations of the symbols of traditional Chinese visual elements through the animated film, and this process is the process of constituting meaning, i.e., the process of completing the meaning of value. The relationship between elements and symbols is closely linked. When traditional visual elements are given meaning and formed into marks or symbols, they take on the characteristics of symbols.

From the perspective of animation semiotics, the process of constructing cultural symbols of traditional Chinese visual elements is the process of completing the process of energy and reference. For example, in the animation work "The Return of the Great Sage", the red cape that appears several times carries different meanings. The cape that contrasts sharply with the surrounding scenery in the opening credits refers to the untamed and stubborn character of the Great Sage; the cape that is brighter than the previous one flutters in the wind at the end of the story refers to the completion of the Great Sage's self-redemption and the retrieval of his original heart. With the character design and the red cape, the movie creates an image of self-redemption and return of the great man who is a top-notch character, which conveys the cultural value of recalling the original heart when pursuing success and fame in the society nowadays.

Therefore, traditional Chinese visual elements exist in the animation field as cultural symbols representing national flavor. Internally, people with the same cultural foundation have similar feelings for cultural symbols, which resonates with them, thus generating cultural confidence. Externally, people with different cultural bases are curious about unfamiliar cultural symbols and gradually reach understanding and cultural identity.

IV. CURRENT SITUATION AND PROBLEMS OF THE APPLICATION OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL VISUAL ELEMENTS IN ANIMATION CREATION

(I) Application status of traditional Chinese visual elements in animation creation

1. Application of traditional Chinese visual elements in domestic animation

Since the beginning of reform and opening up, with the large influx of international animation films, domestic animation has been weakening in the international arena. Due to the influence of the planned economy physique, films focusing on commerciality appeared in large numbers. If domestic animation in the past was created for the sake of art, today's animation works are more concerned with market response and commercial returns. Since entering the twenty-first century, Chinese animation has been searching for a balance between artistic value and commercial value. since 2015, excellent works have been released, represented by Journey to the West - The Return of the Great Sage (2012), Big Fish Begonia (2016), and Nezha - The Descent of the Magic Boy (2019).

In Journey to the West - The Return of the Great Sage, the styling of the characters is highly innovative. The Monkey King's facial styling retains the traditional theater face painting and adds some ink painting halo effects. The most visual symbol in the movie is the Monkey King's red cape. At the beginning of the movie, the red cape fluttering in the wind contrasts with his lonely back, depicting the coldness and loneliness of the Great Sage. At the end of the movie, the Sage's cloak shines with fire like it has been forged by a blazing fire, confirming the Sage's self-redemption and rebirth (Figure 5.1). The costume design of Chaos, the villain of the film, is modeled on the clothing of Taoist priests in the Tang Dynasty, embroidered with cloud patterns and some weird patterns, highlighting the complexity and versatility of the character.



Figure 5.1 The Return of the Great Sage

In terms of visual performance, in *Ne Zha's Descent of the Demon Child*, the characters in the play can take a dip in the Jiangshan Shechou Diagram simply by waving their brushes. Based on traditional aesthetic concepts, the designers used symmetry in the layout of the buildings in the painting to reveal a sense of beauty that is both balanced and stable. At the same time inherited the typical decorative colors of Chinese palaces, with noble yellow and fiery red as the main colors, coupled with the visual light design, the picture reveals a sense of vitality with clouds and mist, hidden and hidden. As shown in Figure (5.2). When you enter the painting, you can get away from the hustle and bustle of the world and spend your days in peace, which coincides with Tao Yuanming's idea of a paradise beyond the world. In this movie, many other Chinese visual cultures are reproduced and innovated, such as the bronze figures with gold masks from the Sanxingdui. The shape of the Junction Beast is based on the gold-masked bronze figures of the Sanxingdui and incorporates modern elements (Figure 5.3). The main motifs of the Jiejie beast are the cloud and thunder motif and the kui dragon motif. The head, hips, and protruding parts of the forehead and chin are all decorated with cloud and thunder motifs, while the back is dominated by kui dragon motifs. Although the decoration of the Junction Beast is mainly traditional, in order to conform to the aesthetic design of modern people, it is simple and hard, clear and three-dimensional in shape, with bright colors, which not only makes its image more vivid, but also penetrates into the hearts of people in terms of the traditional art style represented by the image.



Figure 5.2 Ne Zha - The Descent of the Demon Child



Figure 5.3 Ne Zha - The Descent of the Magic Child

2. Application of Traditional Chinese Visual Elements in International Animation

(1) Application of Traditional Chinese Visual Elements in American Animation Works

Hollywood animated films are good at drawing sustenance from other countries' cultures, finding visual elements they can refer to, and winning audiences' favor through deconstruction and construction. "Mulan" was the first time that traditional Chinese visual elements were used in animation, and it was well received. The subsequent success of the Kung Fu Panda series demonstrated the charm and tension of Chinese visual culture.

The movie "Mulan" opens with an ink animation, which simply sketches the outlines of mountains, rivers, grasses and trees, and constructs the basic characteristics of the natural environment, and the shocking image of the Great Wall seems to put people in distant China, immersing them in the ancient and mysterious oriental meanings. Compared to the former's simple ink painting style, Kung Fu Panda's backgrounds are chosen from strong ink paintings, and its tone is not purely realism, but focuses on the combination of movement and static, and writing God with form. In addition to drawing inspiration from ink and wash paintings, the movie's scenes are also inspired by the intention of traditional Chinese paintings, and the concept of "leaving white space" in Chinese paintings, which emphasizes the empty and ethereal mood of the movie.

In terms of character modeling, the look of Mulan is the stereotypical image of Asian women in American film and television: yellow skin, black hair, willow leaf eyebrows, and phoenix eyes. In terms of clothing, it is the common dress of women in Wei Jin and North and South Dynasties with sticky shirt on top and skirt underneath, and the headdress is basically consistent with women's love of flower and grass ornaments at that time. The image of the antagonist Shan Yu is borrowed from the Chinese theater's face painting, with triangular eye sockets depicting a treacherous and cunning character to show Shan Yu's ruthlessness. The appearance of the Mushu Dragon is another highlight of the movie. In the use of traditional Chinese visual elements, the dragon is typically a symbol of good fortune, and is regarded as the embodiment of spiritual power and authority in folklore. The Americans have therefore adopted this idea, abstracting it into a quirky and clever pet figure, a character responsible for creating humor and laughs. The military flag also employs the soaring dragon to appear as an icon.

In characterization, American animation takes into account first and foremost the Chinese humanistic spirit and the audience's aesthetic tendencies in order to enhance the Chinese audience's cultural identification with the film. The image of Po in Kung Fu Panda not only retains the character traits of the panda's mischievousness and cuteness, but also gives it additional American comedy characteristics. In terms of other image portrayals, the tortoise, as an ancient Chinese totem symbol, is highly respected for its symbol of longevity. The turtle in the film is a leader with superb wisdom, and this arrangement is close to the Chinese people's respect for their own culture.

VI. CONCLUSION

Chinese traditional visual elements are practical elements reflecting natural concepts, religious hierarchies, humanistic spirit and social culture. In foreign cultural communication, Chinese traditional visual elements, as cultural symbols, have a strong sense of cultural identity for the audience. It can weaken the aesthetic distance between Chinese traditional culture and the world audience, and achieve the purpose of mutual communication and mutual promotion. This paper studies the use of Chinese traditional visual elements in animation at home and abroad through domestic and international comparisons, and analyzes the lack of Chinese traditional cultural visual elements. Introducing the theory of animation semiotics, the paper concludes that in the process of animation creation, whether it is the design of animation scenes or the performance of animation characters, the core of animation creation lies in the expression of spiritual values. As cultural symbols, traditional Chinese visual elements can only be integrated with the spirit of culture, the spirit of the times and the spirit of the nation to complete the construction of cultural symbols of traditional Chinese visual elements, so as to realize the cross-cultural communication of traditional Chinese visual elements, and to convey the national culture and the image of the country.

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