

# Analysis of the Chinese-style elements in the Chinese animation “Five Elements of Misty Mountains”

Chenyi Wang

Shanghai World Foreign Language Academy, Shanghai, 200233, China  
taotao060402@126.com

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**Abstract:** "Five Elements of Misty Mountain" is a domestic anime to be released on the Internet in the summer of 2020, with the cooperation of the production team led by Lin Hun. The work is to explore the Chinese elements of "Five Elements of Misty Mountain" and their significance to the future development and innovation of Chinese animation. The work conducts a specific study on the Chinese elements of "Five Elements of Misty Mountain", analyzing and extracting the details of Chinese martial arts and fighting in the battle scenes, analyzing the ink and wash style of painting in the animation, and discovering Chinese elements in the character settings of the animation. Finally, the work argues that the animation film "Five Elements of Misty Mountains" shows that implementing the connotation of Chinese traditional culture, driving the development of Chinese excellent traditional culture, constantly updating the technology and style of Chinese animation, bringing contemporary expressions, leading the public to aggravate the deep understanding of Chinese traditional culture by enjoying Chinese animation, and thinking deeply about how to meet the spiritual needs and social demands of the current audience in order to achieve a breakthrough and make Chinese animation truly go to the field of the world.

**Keywords:** Chinese domestic animation; Traditional Chinese elements; Original animation.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper is an analysis of the Chinese elements in the Chinese animation "Five Elements in Misty Mountains". "Five Elements in Misty Mountains" has become a popular animation with high ratings and high reputation in the summer of 2020 due to its rich Chinese style elements, which also adds to the development path of Chinese animation. The article will analyze the Chinese-inspired elements of the character settings, the unique Chinese painting style, and the detailed design of traditional Chinese martial arts in the animation.

## 2. Literature Review

After reading a series of papers on the analysis of Chinese-style elements in the anime "Five Elements in Misty Mountains", the author extracted several points from the literature: firstly, the literature analyzes the meaning and origin of Chinese-style elements in anime to point out the importance and superiority of Chinese-style elements in Chinese domestic anime; secondly, the literature conducts research and analysis from the perspective of calling for the good of anime, analyzing the reasons for the industry and audience to call for the good of anime Chinese-style elements and the reasons for calling for the bad of anime Chinese-style elements; after that, the literature analyzes the reasons for and against the Chinese style elements in anime, and analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of using Chinese style elements in anime from two perspectives; finally, the literature also analyzes the historical and cultural connotations of Chinese style elements in anime by looking up their origins. The author takes the advantages and disadvantages of the literature and decides to analyze the three types of Chinese-style elements and carry out their influence and role on the development and progress of China's domestic animation industry by looking up their historical

provenance and historical connotation, and also extract the disadvantages of them to finally expand the conclusion.

## 3. Method

The author will analyze three perspectives: the Chinese style elements in the character settings, the distinctive Chinese painting style and the traditional Chinese martial art detailing design. The main object of analysis is the Chinese style elements of the anime "Five Elements of the Misty Mountains". The author will first consult the literature to find out the historical origins of the Chinese style elements in the anime and gain an in-depth understanding of their historical connotations, and then use this as a starting point to analyze the role of these Chinese style elements in the anime, and then radiate them to the role of Chinese anime as a whole. Finally, we will analyze the impact of these Chinese elements in anime on society as a whole by analyzing the impact of anime on society.

### 3.1. The Chinese Style Elements In The Character Settings

The Chinese stylistic elements of "Five Elements of the Misty Mountains" permeate the character settings. The unique designs of the divine beasts taken from classical Chinese books such as the "Shan Hai Jing" are incorporated into the modern aesthetic, making them more accessible to the audience. The three leaders of the villains, "Greed, Anger and Dementia", come from the Buddhist "three poisons". In Buddhism, greed is interpreted as the desire for a current favorable situation and the need to get it; anger is the hatred for a current unfavorable situation and an impulsive attitude. In the animation, the Beast of Greed and the Beast of Dementia remain trapped in the boundary of the Phantom Finger, and only the Beast of Anger escapes at all costs to find the Qilin Child, which is consistent with the original intention[1]. The production team's use of Chinese culture in

the setting does not stop there, for example, at the end of the animated film, the three demonic beasts sent are called Jiao-tail, Jiao-ying and Shanzhu. Among them, Jiao-tail in ancient China generally refers to one of the four famous zither Jiao-tail zither. In the Book of Later Han - Cai Yong's Biography, it is mentioned that someone used wutong wood to burn a fire for cooking. When Cai Yong heard the sound of burning wood, he judged it to be a good material for making a zither and asked him for the piece of wood, but he was still too late and one end of the wood was burned off and later made into a zither, which was called "Jiao-tailed zither". Like this lyre, the fae with the name Jiao-tail had burn marks on its body. The second foreign beast sent out, with an irregularly proportioned head shaped like a bow, was named Horned Shadow, from "Jinshu - Le Guang Zhuan", meaning shadow of horn and feathers, bow cup, and snake shadow. Due to the main storyline, the names of the eight brothers who manage the village have a unique origin - "King Mu Eight Horses". The different personalities of the different characters are also set according to the character of the horses. The character of the red stallion is a tribute to the ancient and modern image of the red-faced Guan Gong in his green brocade robe from "Romance of the Three Kingdoms". The main characters are also named after the five elements, and their surnames are all compound surnames, such as Wenren for the Firewalker, Shen Tu for the Waterwalker, Gong Yi for the Earthwalker, Yung Cheng for the Woodwalker, and Xuan Yuan for the Goldwalker. Each messenger has his own unique abilities and weapons in battle. The previous fire messenger, Wenren, used the weapon "Fire Raccoon Cloth" in the battle with Kirin." The term "Fire Raccoon Cloth" comes from the "Southern Wilderness Sutra" and is mentioned in "Lie Zi - Tang Wen": "The cloth of the fire raccoon, when it is raccooned, must be thrown into the fire." [2] These are all distinctive Chinese elements present in the anime, mainly embedded in the characterization.

### 3.2. The Distinctive Chinese Style of Painting

"Five Elements of the Misty Mountains" features a rich ink painting style throughout, combining narrative and ink techniques. Instead of using the industrial thick and thin lines used in the animation industry to outline the characters, the creators used digital painting devices to mimic the thick and thin strokes of Chinese painting [3]. For example, in the first episode, the opening characters are outlined with thick and thin ink lines instead of traditional outlines, which makes them more harmonious in the ink-style scenes, and the combination of the two flows very well. The scene design of "Five Elements of the Misty Mountains" is rich in ink and wash elements, and the scene design uses a realistic approach to render a metaphysical and ancient background that is consistent with the style of the entire story. In terms of painting, each blank frame and pause in the animation can be used directly as a stand-alone ink painting. The creators combined Chinese painting techniques, such as large splashes of ink and color, to outline the deep forests and large mountains. The animation also combines the Western aesthetics of light and shadow with the "white as black" aesthetic of ink painting. The use of white space in the scenes is also appropriate. Although the white space is empty, it creates the hazy atmosphere of the fog in the mountains. In the scenes where the main character fights the villain, the author deliberately uses very little black and white ink to emphasize the intensity of the battle, while adding chalk

drawing techniques to convey a sense of speed. The entire work of "Five Elements of the Misty Mountains" is relatively striking, with strong color contrasts. On the one hand, the ink surface is on the rich side, and on the other hand, the characters are distinct and vivid, and the two are paired together on the screen with a visual impact. The gray scenes render a slightly mysterious atmosphere of the story, and then the bright colors are used to highlight the characters, making the whole picture instantly contrast, thus attracting the visual attention of the audience. The colors of the scenes and characters in "Five Elements of the Misty Mountains" have a certain inheritance and use of traditional Chinese colors. In the traditional Chinese color concept of the five-color system, the five colors of green, white, red, black and yellow are given a cultural connotation, which is essentially a reflection on color and art and thought. As can be seen, the overall visual color of "Five Elements of Misty Mountain" conforms to the traditional Chinese five-color system, especially the effective combination of color and ink, and the picture has strong traditional Chinese colors that match the setting of the scene. In addition, the animation uses post-synthesis techniques to create effects such as ink halo transitions and water topography in the title. The characters of "Five Elements of the Misty Mountains" are drawn with thick lines around the edges of the characters, the colors of the characters are more vibrant than the scenes, the flat style of the characters is obvious, and the scenes and characters in the same frame are clearly distinguished. The use of medium and thick lines has a strong visual tension, especially in the scenes, and the use of ink makes the figures and scenes clearly visible on the screen. The exaggerated thick-line brushstrokes and flattened colors in the figure paintings of "Five Elements of Misty Mountains" have a more contemporary feel. Overall, the visual layers of "Five Elements of Misty Mountains" are rich and unique, a bold and innovative attempt to not follow the trend.

### 3.3. The Traditional Chinese Martial Art Detailing Design

The rich martial arts style of "Five Elements of the Misty Mountains" is reflected in various details, such as the burning of the village chief on the bridge after he received his brother's letter, and the design of turning the vase to open the secret passage, which instantly brings the audience into the world of martial arts. In the middle of the divine shield is the eight trigrams of yin and yang, and the golden circle outside is the ten heavenly stems as well as the twelve earthly branches, which are intertwined with the eight trigrams. During the sealing process, the eight trigrams of the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches are interlaced and rotated. These details also demonstrate part of the Taoist culture of the Chinese martial arts community. And the pillars outside the divine shield have Buddhist-like inscriptions. [2] There is also the name on the teahouse sign and the Chinese herbal medicine Hyakusogan cabinet that appear in the animation, both designed with handwritten strokes. Another wonderful echoing detail is that the battle between the protagonist and the magical beast Peacock has a subplot in the opening animation that roughly outlines the main details of the battle and reveals the main battle storyline of the first three episodes. In addition, the most indispensable aspect of martial arts is the fight scenes, and it is the exciting fight scenes that impress the audience in "Five Acts of Misty Mountain". "Five Elements in Misty Mountains" is all about chivalry, and the intense fight scenes

add to this unique martial arts appeal. In the first episode's 23 minutes and 13 seconds, Uncle Six and Uncle Five engage in a cold-weapon battle with a demonic beast. Most of the battle scenes use a combination of reality and fiction to show the ferocity of the battle. Uncle Six's eight-slash sword is wielded with fluidity and power, while Uncle Five's gentian silver spear shows his skill in picking and drawing. The ink and wash style are put to great use in the next battle between the protagonist and the villain. [3] At 26 minutes and 22.3 seconds in length, the director uses a black and white color scheme, flying white strokes and lots of blurred shots to show the harshness of the action, using a gritty ink and wash style to show the protagonist fighting a magical beast. [3] In addition to the smooth fighting scenes, the multi-angle shots are also a feature of the film. In the second episode of the fight between Ah Hang and the angry peacock, the two-and-a-half-minute split-screen design switches back and forth between medium pan and overhead shots, with high-speed shots following the pan as the body moves, switching back and forth between medium and close-up shots, along with gorgeous hand-drawn effects and explosive strikes.[3] The two-and-a-half-minute split-screen design dazzles the eye with some 81 shots of dynamic, fluid, gorgeous combat.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, "Five Elements of Misty Mountain" is based on classical Chinese legends, framed by ink painting and intrinsically supported by the essence of Chinese style. It expresses the style and cultural tension of Chinese elements from multiple angles, such as characters, scenes and actions, and reflects the cutting-edge thinking of Chinese animation industry development. With its high-quality content and excellent production, The Five Elements of Misty Mountain proves to us that only by drawing on the spiritual connotation of traditional culture can we truly create a domestic animation that is ahead of its time. In the future, we expect the Chinese animation business to go to the next level and truly realize the development of Chinese traditional cultural content through animation, a popular form, in order to better guide the public to have a deeper understanding of Chinese traditional culture. This also reflects the continuous updating of Chinese animation techniques and styles, such as the use of the currently more popular rough line tracing, dynamic cartoons,

ink and wash elements, as well as the comprehensive combination of 2D and 3D production, which is itself very contemporary and its emergence is unexpected and justified. It is also an inspiration to us - the technology and style of the work needs to be constantly updated, boldly innovative in its presentation, and up-to-date in its dissemination methods, making full use of different online platforms for dissemination.

#### 5. Recommendations

However, despite its popularity with many viewers, there are still some controversial points, and it also suffers from a lack of innovation in Japanese-style lines and plots. Simply piling up elements of classical Chinese culture or using myths and legends to make up the plot no longer meets the taste of today's audience. With the development of the times, people's aesthetic consciousness and life concept have changed tremendously, and the thematic connotation expressed by traditional mythology can no longer meet the spiritual needs of the audience. To make Chinese animation go out of the country and have a lasting vitality, we cannot stay in blindly adapting myths. Animation creators should consider more deeply the spiritual needs of contemporary audiences and market needs, break through the original framework when portraying characters or expressing thematic connotations, and reflect the reality of social life through animation to inspire people.

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