

Innovative Expression and Value Dissemination of Integrating Traditional Cultural Elements into Animation Design

Han Zhu

Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai 200240, China

Abstract: Animation has become an important carrier of traditional culture to realize contemporary expression. There are some problems in some animation creations, such as the disconnection between cultural symbols and narrative logic, and the single communication goal. Based on this, the translation process of traditional cultural elements into animation design is analyzed, and representative works such as *Monkey King: Hero is Back*, *Nezha* and *Yao-Chinese Folktales* are selected for comparison. The research holds that the effective integration of traditional culture is not to increase the number of cultural symbols, but through symbol reconstruction, narrative reorganization and media adaptation. This links cultural meaning with role action, emotional experience and visual style. The process of value communication from one-way display to cognition, emotion and participation. It can strengthen the identification of cultural core, control symbolic use, strengthen technology to serve aesthetic expression, and form continuous communication through multi-platform extension.

Keywords: Traditional Culture, Animation Design, Visual Translation, Narrative Innovation, Value Communication.

1. Introduction

The mode of transmission of traditional culture has gradually changed from static display to more intuitive and dynamic expression. Animation combines visual design, sound and narrative, which can transform traditional cultural resources into more understandable and acceptable content. The continuation of cultural heritage is not simply to keep the original form, but to constantly adapt to the new social environment in the process of inheritance [1]. For this reason, the key to the combination of traditional culture and animation lies in retaining the core value of culture and exploring the expression mode that conforms to the characteristics of modern media.

In recent years, China animation has gradually formed its own characteristics in the development of local themes and the application of traditional culture. The cultural value of China's animation is reflected in the story source, and also in the combination of visual style, cultural image and artistic expression [2-4]. In actual creation, there are still some shortcomings in the application of traditional cultural elements. Some works rely too much on surface symbols such as architecture, patterns and costumes [5]; Some traditional story adaptations only adjust the character setting and plot structure, and fail to deeply deal with the relationship between traditional culture and modern values [6]. Some works equate

the presentation of cultural symbols with the effect of cultural communication, ignoring the audience's understanding of cultural connotation. This article discusses how the cultural elements enter the animation characters, scenes and narrative system through screening, transformation and reconstruction, and further realize the dissemination of cultural values.

2. Traditional Cultural Elements into the Theoretical Framework of Animation Design

2.1. Hierarchical Structure of Traditional Cultural Elements

Traditional cultural elements are not simple design materials. It has different levels of cultural connotation. According to its presentation and function in animation, it can be divided into surface visual elements, middle narrative elements and deep value elements. The surface visual elements mainly include colors, patterns, costumes, buildings, etc. The middle narrative elements include myths, historical stories and folk customs. The deep value elements are embodied in aesthetic ideas, ethical concepts and cultural spirit. The three elements gradually extend from visual form to narrative structure and value connotation, which together constitute the transformation system of traditional culture in animation.

Table 1. Translation levels of traditional cultural elements in animation design

Element level	Typical content	Main design carriers	Translation focus
Surface visual elements	Patterns, colors, costumes, architecture, artifacts, calligraphy and painting	Character styling, scenes, props and interfaces	Extract formal features and avoid mechanical copying
Narrative elements	Myths, legends, folklore, historical allusions and character archetypes	Worldbuilding, character relationships and plot structure	Reorganize narratives while preserving cultural logic
Value elements	Ethics, views of nature, aesthetic conception and collective memory	Character motivation, conflict setting, themes and emotion	Convey through action and situations; reduce direct preaching

2.2. Translation Link from Cultural Resources to Animation Dissemination

The integration of cultural elements into animation needs to go through the process of cultural identification and innovative expression. Creators should first understand the

cultural connotation behind the elements, and then combine the animation theme, audience demand and artistic style to transform. In the process of watching and interacting, the audience will further understand and reconstruct the cultural meaning, and promote the extension of traditional culture from the expression of works to a wider spread scene.

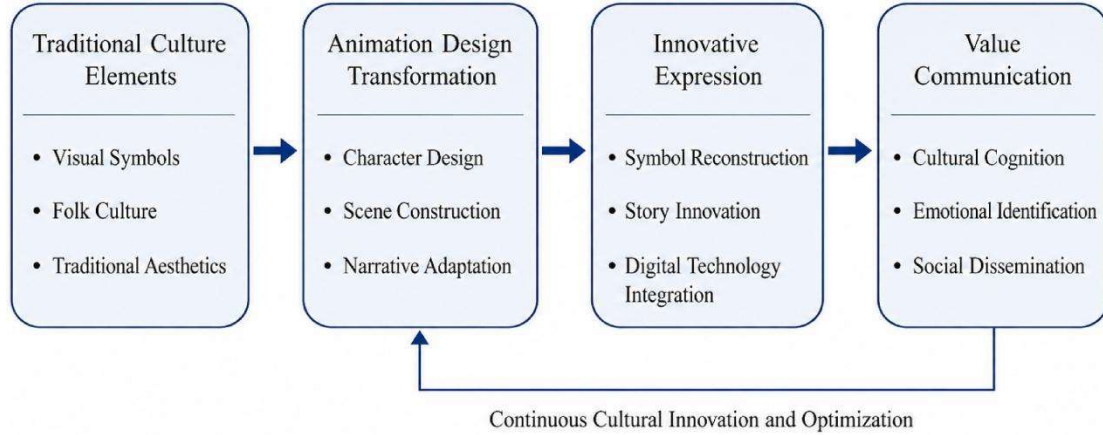


Figure 1. The path of traditional culture integrating into animation

Cultural authenticity, contemporary aesthetics and communication adaptation form a common constraint on the whole link. Authenticity requires that design cannot separate elements from the original cultural context. Contemporary aesthetics requires works to have modern visual rhythm and character expression. Communication adaptation requires information density, narrative threshold and symbol recognition to match the target audience.

3. Innovative Expression Path of Traditional Cultural Elements

3.1. Reconstruction and Style Unification of Visual Symbols

Visual symbols are the most intuitive entrance for traditional culture to enter animation. Firstly, the structural features in the traditional form are identified, and then reorganized according to the animation style. For example, ink and wash can be transformed into the outline of the combination of reality and reality, blank composition and dynamic rhythm; Paper-cutting can be integrated into role modeling and space design; The color logic of green landscape can be used to express the color of animation scenes. The visual language thus formed retains the cultural source, but is not limited by the physical form of traditional media.

Visual innovation should also emphasize systematicness. If the characters adopt traditional patterns, the scene, light and shadow and lens completely follow another set of artistic logic, and cultural symbols are easy to become isolated decorations. For this reason, it is best to expand traditional cultural elements from single symbols to overall style rules. Digital technology can improve the matching and reorganization ability of cultural elements, but technology itself cannot replace design judgment [7]. The function of technology is to expand the expression space.

3.2. Modern Reorganization of Traditional Narrative

The core difficulty in the adaptation of traditional themes is that we can neither stop at story retelling nor completely cut off the original cultural logic in order to cater to contemporary values. Animation narration can realize modern reorganization by changing the observation perspective and resetting the relationship between characters. The growth of mythical heroes can be transformed into modern issues such as identity and kinship. The narrative of strange stories can also show the survival dilemma, value choice and social relations through the perspective of small people. This kind of adaptation preserves the cultural genes of traditional stories and enables the audience to establish connections in contemporary life experiences.

The action logic of characters should bear cultural significance. Only when role selection, conflict result and emotional experience jointly point to some kind of value judgment can cultural concepts be transformed from background information to narrative core.

3.3. Collaboration of Multi-modal Expression

The cultural expression of animation has obvious multi-modal characteristics. Besides vision and narration, music, dialect, onomatopoeia, action design and rhythm can all participate in the construction of traditional culture. Traditional musical instruments can be rearranged according to the mood and rhythm of the characters. Traditional Chinese opera figure, martial arts movements and folk dances can also be exaggerated through animation to form new sports language. Under the technical conditions of three-dimensional production, programmed rendering and real-time engine, traditional brush strokes, fabric textures and complex architectural spaces can obtain higher dynamic expression. Technological innovation needs to be combined with specific cultural exchange scenarios in order to truly improve communication adaptability [8]. For this reason, multimodal collaboration should focus on cultural significance and

aesthetic effect.

4. Transmission Mechanism of Traditional Cultural Values

4.1. Visual Recognition Forms Cultural Cognition

The first layer of cultural communication is to see and recognize. Character modeling and scene images with stable characteristics can establish the visual connection between works and culture. When these elements appear repeatedly in a unified style, they will form a strong visual memory and reduce the difficulty for the audience to understand the cultural background. It is more important for cognitive communication to connect symbols with plot functions, so that the audience can understand the story and its cultural meaning at the same time. For example, a traditional architectural space can reflect hierarchy, family relationship or ritual order; Some traditional artifacts can also participate in the relationship between characters and plot advancement.

4.2. Emotional Experience Promotes Cultural Identity.

Compared with knowledge explanation, animation is better at establishing emotional entrance through characters and stories. The audience may first feel sympathy, tension or joy because of the role situation, and then connect the emotional experience with the cultural value carried by the work. If traditional issues are treated as the choice of specific characters, it will be easier to break through the threshold of

cultural knowledge. Emotion does not mean weakening cultural complexity. Some contents in traditional culture that have tension with contemporary values can also be presented through conflicts.

4.3. Platform Dissemination Promotes Participation and Re Diffusion

Digital platform has changed the life cycle of animation works. Media content will flow between multiple platforms, and the audience will also shift from simple consumers to participants [9]. For traditional cultural animation, this means that value communication is generated continuously in the audience's discussion and re-creation. Animation design can appropriately reserve identifiable and extensible visual and narrative nodes, so that it can enter a wider social communication.

5. Comparison of typical cases and design enlightenment

In order to further observe the translation methods of different traditional cultural elements, Monkey King: Hero is Back, Nezha and Yao-Chinese Folktales are selected as comparative cases. The three represent the modern remolding of classic mythological figures, the reorganization of traditional mythological structures and the exploration of diversified national aesthetics. Case comparison mainly examines the relationship between cultural resources, innovation methods, communication portals and possible risks.

Table 2. Comparison of traditional culture translation in representative animated works

Case	Core cultural resources	Main innovation approach	Value communication entry	Design implications
Monkey King: Hero Is Back	Monkey King myth archetype, Chinese landscapes and monster imagery	Reconstructs the hero and connects the classic character with a modern growth narrative	Character appeal and heroic emotion	Classic IP innovation should integrate character context with the visual system
Ne Zha	Ne Zha mythology, family ethics and the motif of fate	Reorganizes character relationships and conflicts while emphasizing individual choice	Parent-child emotion and identity	Traditional stories can engage contemporary issues while keeping their cultural origins recognizable
Yao-Chinese Folktales	Zhiguai tales, folklore, paper-cutting, ink wash and folk visual forms	Uses episodic storytelling alongside multiple art styles	Everyday emotions, aesthetic experience and social discussion	Traditional culture need not be reduced to one "Chinese style"; diversity itself carries cultural value

The value of Monkey King: Hero Is Back is that the Monkey King is not directly used as a ready-made cultural symbol. This work makes the classic hero get a new growth line through the plot of limited characters' ability and re-establishment of responsibilities. Its cultural recognition degree comes from the overall context composed of character prototype, oriental space and mythical world. Ne Zha transforms the motif of "fate" into a realistic conflict between individual identity and family relationship. Traditional myths have become the structural basis for discussing "evaluation of others and self-selection". Both of them show that the modern adaptation of classic IP needs to put cultural archetypes into new plot causality.

Yao-Chinese Folktales shows that many traditional art forms are accommodated through a unitary structure. Ink and wash, paper-cutting, two-dimensional hand-drawing and characters with folk modeling characteristics can form differentiated expressions in different works. The cultural

expression of contemporary animation is changing from directly imitating traditional art forms to more complex visual translation. This change is conducive to expanding the boundaries of cultural expression, but it also requires creators to have stronger cultural judgment.

The choice of cultural elements should serve the theme of the work without pursuing coverage. Modern adaptation should retain the key relationships and contradictions in the traditional prototype, so that the audience can still identify its cultural source. Visual style needs to be controlled by a set of stable rules, from a single pattern or prop to the overall aesthetic system. Communication design should consider the audience's understanding from the stage of work creation, so that cultural concepts can continue to grow in cross-media extension.

6. Conclusion

The integration of traditional cultural elements into animation design is essentially the recoding of cultural meaning in new media. This article establishes an analytical framework, and illustrates through the comparison of typical cases that an effective expression of traditional culture needs to establish a balance between cultural authenticity, contemporary aesthetics and media communication. The innovation of visual level should shift from the use of single symbols to the construction of overall style; The innovation of narrative level should activate the traditional motif through the relationship between characters and conflict structure; The application of technology should strengthen the dynamic expression of traditional aesthetics.

At the level of value communication, the effect of traditional cultural animation is formed by cognition, emotion and participation. The audience first identifies the culture through visual features, and then establishes emotional connection between characters and stories. Traditional culture communication in animation design should pay attention to whether these elements enter the story logic, can be understood by the audience and form a sustainable meaning extension. Future creation can further strengthen the connection between traditional culture research and animation design process.

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