

The Integration and New Structure of Chinese Historical Ethnic Cultures in Animation

-- Taking Liao Dynasty Khitan Culture as an Example

Yangchenxu Ge

Liaoning Communication University, Shenyang, Liaoning 110000, China

Abstract. In recent years, the development speed of Chinese animation is remarkable. In the past ten years, relying on the cultural treasures formed by the precipitation of China's long history, domestic animation creators have created a number of excellent animation works based on Chinese legends, which have caused a stir in the domestic and international animation markets. However, China's animation works in the past decade still have problems such as insufficient story creativity and single art style. Based on the above problems, the article discusses the problems and challenges facing the current development of Chinese animation and the significance of animation development for the inheritance of Chinese history and national culture from the application and innovation of Chinese history and national culture in animation, to provide new ideas for the creation of Chinese animation.

Keywords: Chinese Historical Ethnicity; Ethnic Culture; Animation Art; New Chinese Art Style; Traditional Cultural Inheritance.

1. Overview of Chinese Historical Ethnic Culture and Chinese Animation Development

1.1. Connotation of Chinese Historical Ethnic Culture

Chinese traditional culture, or Chinese culture Huaxia culture, refers to the unique Chinese culture that has evolved and developed based on the culture of the Central Plains. There are many ethnic groups in Chinese history, which together constitute the characteristics of a unified multi-ethnic country. These ethnic minorities appearing in Chinese history also have differences in the distribution of ethnic groups, population size, ethnic culture, and so on, and the origins and evolution of ethnic groups are also characterized by their own characteristics. Although these historical ethnic groups have existed for different periods of time, their evolution has also witnessed the change of dynasties in Chinese history, so Chinese historical ethnic culture is also an indispensable part of Chinese traditional culture.

Currently recognized traditional Chinese culture mainly contains folklore, traditional Chinese musical instruments, literati calligraphy and painting, drama, tea ceremony, chess, ancient Chinese architectural style, Chinese national costumes and patterns, etc. The ethnic minorities that emerged in China's history also developed their own distinctive cultures, which have evolved over time based on the culture of the Central Plains, retaining their own ethnic characteristics. These various types of unique Chinese culture developed belong to the category of Chinese historical national culture.

1.2. Overview of Liao Dynasty Khitan Culture

The Liao Dynasty (907-1125) was a dynasty in Chinese history founded by the Khitan people, also known as the Great Khitan, or Dafan in folklore. It stood side by side with the Northern Song Dynasty and the Western Xia Dynasty. It was passed down to nine emperors and lasted for 219 years. The Khitan, an influential ethnic minority in Chinese history, has a long history of culture and has a distinctive style in China's history and culture. The unique charm of the Khitan culture is mainly reflected in the following aspects.

First of all, the Khitan people have a deep cultural heritage. As an ancient ethnic group, the Khitan have complex and diverse cultural traditions, including language, religion, customs and so on. The writing, music, dance and other forms of the Khitan people also reflect their unique cultural charm. Secondly, the Khitan have unique forms of expression in art. The paintings, sculptures, architecture and other works of art of the Khitan people show their unique understanding of nature and life. Especially, the murals, dragon head bronze photos and other works of the Khitan people reflect their high artistic level and aesthetic taste. In addition, the religion of the Khitan people also occupies an important position in the culture. The Khitan believe in polytheism and worship the gods of nature, believing that everything has a spirit and has a direct connection with human beings. The religious ceremonies and rituals of the Khitan also reflect their unique religious culture. Finally, the Khitan also have unique cultural characteristics in terms of social systems and rituals. The Khitan emphasize etiquette, respect for elders, family and community traditions, and a strict social hierarchy. The social organization and political structure of the Khitan also reflect their unique cultural concepts and values. The Khitan not only retained the nomadic grandeur, but also integrated Han culture under the advocacy of successive rulers, and showed the introverted beauty of Han aesthetics in painting and sculpture.

To summarize, the culture of the Khitan people is an extremely cultural system, which has a far-reaching influence on the development of Chinese history and culture. Through the in-depth understanding and inheritance of the Khitan culture, we can not only better understand China's multiculturalism, but also provide new inspirations and directions for the development of contemporary culture.

1.3. Current Development of Chinese Animation

In the past ten years, China's animation industry is in the stage of rapid development and has made great achievements under the strong support of government policies and the continuous exploration and efforts of excellent domestic animators. With the continuous expansion of the domestic animation market and the continuous improvement of technology, the influence and popularity of Chinese animation works at home and abroad are also gradually increasing. As a special art form, animation has also become one of the means to promote Chinese traditional culture due to its ornamental and exhibition nature. Chinese animation production companies such as Ray Media, Perfect World, and Warner Bros. China have continued to emerge, releasing a series of animation works with distinctive Chinese characteristics, such as *The Return of the Great Sage*, *White Snake*, and *The Descent of Nezha*. These works have achieved great success both at home and abroad, providing strong support for the spread of Chinese culture.

These excellent animation works all share a common feature in terms of story material: the animation scripts are based on popular domestic legends, which is one of the reasons why these animation films can be quickly accepted by the audience and resonate with the characters and plots in the animation. However, the domestic animation market has also seen the emergence of the herd, and many subsequent animations have followed the example of these animations, drawing their stories from myths and legends of monsters, etc. From the viewpoint of the audience, these animations have been popular in China. From the viewer's perspective, the core of the story and the characters remain the same, but only the scenes in which the story takes place and the style of the artwork presented before the eyes have changed. This has led to a decline in the critical acclaim of many animations with similar themes in recent years. This shows that in order to create animation with Chinese characteristics and not to fall into the cliché, the material of animation stories can not only focus on the mythological stories passed down by word of mouth, but also explore the traditional Chinese culture from various angles, create more innovative animation scripts, integrate more art styles with Chinese characteristics, and improve the design of characters and scenes.

2. Chinese History and National Culture in the Field of Animation Creation Ideas

The rapid development of the current society makes people's aesthetic consciousness is also being updated, the importance of aesthetics animation also needs to keep pace with the times and constantly evolve the art style. Animation as a comprehensive visual and auditory art form, more easily accepted by the public, through the way of storytelling to guide the consciousness. In recent years, people have become tired of animation based on Chinese mythological stories, so it is necessary to solve the problem of the lack of novelty in Chinese animation storyline and the single art style. China's unique minority cultures can provide a new direction for Chinese animation creation. In addition to the present-day minorities, the minorities that appeared in China's history also have a vivid vitality.

2.1. Integrating Chinese Historical Ethnic Stories into Animation Script Creation

The creation of animation scripts is diversified and open-ended, which can be taken from social phenomena, life scenes according to the author's conception of the story for the original, but also according to the existing literature for adaptation. In addition to the mythological stories, Chinese animation as early as in the 1980s and 1990s, Shanghai Fine Arts Film Studio has produced a number of animation with minority characteristics, such as "Little Sisters of the Grassland Heroes" tells the story of two little girls of the Mongol nationality who braved the wind and snow to save the commune's flock of sheep; not only has it become the memories of generations, but it is also one of the few animation classics with minority theme in China. The circulation of these animations also proves that it is feasible to integrate minority cultures into the creation of animation scripts.

In China's long history, there have been a number of ethnic minorities with distinctive characteristics, and some of these minorities have established dynasties, such as the Liao Dynasty established by the Khitan, the Yuan Dynasty established by the Mongols, and the Qing Dynasty established by the Manchus. There are many classic stories of these historical minorities that have been passed down to this day, such as the legend of the Khitan tribe, in which the gods rode on white horses and gave birth to the eight Khitan tribes in the Futu River of Mabu Mountain in Pingquan County, the story of Liao Taizu, who succeeded to be the tribal khan through his own efforts, and then put down the rebellions and finally claimed to be the emperor of the country, as well as the rough and difficult life of the eldest son of Liao Taizu, Yelube, who was the first son of the Liao Taizu. The story of Liao Taizu Yelu Abaoji, who succeeded as the Khan of his tribe through his own efforts and then quelled the rebellion and finally became the emperor and founder of the country, and the story of Yelu Bei, the eldest son of Liao Taizu, who had a difficult life, are all very dramatic and can be used as the basis for the animation script. Taking Liao Taizu Yelu Abaoji as the protagonist of the story, relying on historical facts, integrating modern ideas, and interpreting his life in an animated way.

2.2. Designing Animation Characters based on Chinese Historical Ethnic Images

There is a common feature in the cultures of Chinese minorities, that is, all ethnic groups are very visually recognizable, which is generally reflected in the following two aspects, the first is the appearance of the person and the clothing to wear. For example, Miao women in China wear silver jewelry with exaggerated shapes and complex craftsmanship; these appearance characteristics can be given a figurative presentation when portraying animation characters.

Ethnic minorities in China's history also have their own distinctive appearance. The Liao Dynasty, for example, was a dynasty established by the Khitan people, who were nomadic, but the Liao Dynasty also had advanced agriculture and handicrafts. The Liao dynasty clothing was mainly long robes, with the belt of the robe tied around the chest and hanging down to the knees. The Khitan men would wear a jacket inside the robe, with the collar exposed, and pants, with the legs tucked inside the boots and belted at the waist. Women wear skirts, but mostly inside the robes, with long leather boots. In addition, the Khitan people had a unique hairstyle - scalped hair - and these external features made the image of the Khitan people in the Liao Dynasty unique. The character image of the Khitan people is also very suitable for animation character design.

3. The Heritage and Innovation of Chinese History and National Culture in Animation Creation

3.1. Create a New Chinese Art Style in Animation

Animation as a visual and auditory art form, through the lens to the audience subtle transmission of cultural connotations. In recent years, the fusion of traditional artistic expression of art style once again set off a boom, such as the story of "Goose Goose Goose" in the series of short films of "China Wonderland", which uses a touch of ink flowing in the hearts of the Chinese people and draws on the painting method of Chinese landscape paintings through the ages to create animation scenes, successfully creating an in-depth Chinese style of the quintessential weird and wonders of the people.

Taking the historical story of Liao Taizu as an example, we can also try to integrate with traditional art to design animated character scenes. In terms of character design, we can take the Liao Dynasty Khitan national costume and the appearance of Khitan people as the basis of design, make new structure with the help of traditional art forms such as ink and wash, paper-cutting, shadow, and realize it with the help of the emerging digital technology to create a contemporary new Chinese aesthetics that belongs uniquely to Chinese animation.

3.2. Classic Story Inheritance to Establish Emotional Connection

Ethnic culture is an inexhaustible source of art for Chinese animation creation. The unique narrative text of Liao Dynasty Khitan ethnic stories can show the audience the living condition of ethnic minorities through animation, as well as the spiritual beliefs, psychological feelings, and ecological and humanistic characteristics of ethnic minorities in the folklore traditions. It enhances the emotional identity and cultural exchanges among various ethnic groups, and also effectively inherits the ecological values in the excellent traditional culture of ethnic groups. Looking back to the past, Chinese animation has created a large number of audience's beautiful childhood memories with national ecological narratives, and realized the penetration of ecological culture, ecological ethics and ecological thoughts into people's minds. The integration of Chinese history and national culture into animation creation can not only deepen the audience's sense of identification with Chinese traditional culture while inheriting Chinese traditional culture, but also enhance the national emotional connection to a certain extent by triggering the audience's empathy through the story statement.

4. Conclusion

The creation of animation based on the stories of Chinese historical minorities can not only pass on the excellent Chinese culture, but also inspire the audience to understand the history through the national spirit conveyed in the stories. Through the creation of historical ethnic theme animation stories conveying the sense of community, breaking the barriers of time and space, promoting cultural exchanges, enhancing multi-level cultural identity, and then casting the sense of community of the Chinese nation. Reconstructing Chinese historical and national characteristics and traditional art can broaden the aesthetics of animation audiences and establish a new Chinese style that meets the aesthetic needs of contemporary audiences. The unique ethnic flavor of the Khitan tribe in the Liao Dynasty and the ethnic stories of various themes can provide a new direction to solve the dilemma faced by contemporary Chinese animation.

Acknowledgments

This thesis is the main phase results of the 2023 Shenyang City Social Science Research Project: "Liaoqidan culture in the animation art of innovative expression research--Take Yelube animation short film creation as an example", Project No." SYSK2023-01-054". Subject type: General category.

References

- [1] Yang Yin. The Application and Inheritance of Non-legacy Culture in Animation IP Design [J]. Journal of Culture, 2024, (03): 112-115.
- [2] Zhou Mei, Tan Xin. The empowerment of ethnic minority animation symbols in the context of new media [J/OL]. Journal of Ethnicity, 1-13[2024-04-19]. <http://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/51.1731.C.20240314.1643.002.html>.
- [3] Chen Xuguang, Sun Xirui. Media, Culture, Technological Aesthetics and Imaginative Consumption - On the Industry and Aesthetics of Chinese Animated Films in Recent Years [J]. Future Communication, 2024, 31 (01): 85-92+125-126. DOI: 10.13628/j.cnki.zjcmxb.2024.01.013.
- [4] Chen Chuanzhi, Mi Gaofeng. Aesthetic Expression of Ecological Consciousness in Minority Subject Animation [J]. China Television, 2024, (02): 53-58.
- [5] Liu Mutong. Study on the Development of Contemporary National Comics Based on Traditional Chinese Culture [J]. Toy World, 2024, (01): 142-144.
- [6] Jingge Xu. On the National Cultural Imagination of the Animated Short Film Collection "China Wonderland" [J]. Xinjiang Art (in Chinese), 2024, (01): 85-90.
- [7] Liu Chuan, Pang Zhiwei. Research on the application of Chinese traditional cultural elements in the teaching of animation character design [J]. Artistic View, 2023, (27): 112-114.
- [8] Shi Anguo, Yin Jun. The application of traditional Chinese cultural elements in animation character design--Taking "White Snake: Origins" as an example [J]. Art Ocean, 2020, (11): 99-101.