

The Practical Path of Domestic Animated Films Enabling the "Two Creations" of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture -- Ne Zha's Magic Children Haunting the Sea as an Example

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Abstract: Film, as the seventh art, is an influential cultural communication medium in contemporary times, and has a unique advantage in promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of Chinese outstanding traditional culture. The phenomenal film "*Ne Zha's Magic Child Haunts the Sea*" (hereinafter referred to as "*Ne Zha 2*") is a major breakthrough in the practice of domestic animated films in empowering the "two creations" of Chinese outstanding traditional culture. "*Ne Zha 2*" taps into traditional cultural connotations, nurturing the essence of cultural genes in the bloodline; reinterprets the way of keeping the right path, activating the power of modern coding in the times; and rejuvenates China's charisma in global communication, drawing a new chapter of culture going to the sea. Through the innovation of modern audio-visual language, the film gives a new digital life to the excellent traditional Chinese culture, providing an important path reference for spreading China's voice and telling China's story to the world.

Keywords: Domestic Animation, Two Creations of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture, "*Ne zha 2*"

1. Introduction

Over the years, the Chinese New Year slot has been the most crucial and competitive slot of the year, with multiple genres of films emerging, from the dark horse "*Changjin Lake's Watergate Bridge*" in 2022 to "*Man Jiang Hong*" in 2023 to "*Hot Hot Hot Hot*" in 2024, all of which were in the top 15 of China's box office charts. And on the third day of the 2025 Lunar New Year's Eve, "*Ne Zha 2*" bucked the box office trend, and has since led the Chinese New Year films all the way. The article takes "*Ne Zha 2*" as an example of how to empower the "two creations" of outstanding traditional Chinese culture, exploring a new path to promote the production and promotion of domestic animation films, and helping China's film industry to shine brighter on the world stage.

2. Continuing the excellent culture: inwardly sensing and digging deep into the values, nurturing the germ of life of cultural works

By deconstructing and reconstructing the cultural ideas of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, and using the modern audio-visual medium of film, "*Ne Zha 2*" artistically reproduces and creatively develops the typical connotations of traditional culture such as the concepts of destiny and benevolence, which not only preserves and inherits the roots of the culture, but also gives it vitality

for the times, and injects fresh blood into the excellent traditional Chinese culture. Human emotions are universal, and certain values are widely accepted and recognised across cultural, religious and ethnic boundaries. "*Ne Zha 2*" not only establishes emotional anchors for viewers of all ages - mother-son, brotherhood, family and country - but also nests the common values of humanity, such as freedom and destiny, within the narrative framework of Ne Zha's quest for his destiny, triggering deep thoughts and universal emotional resonance among viewers around the world. The film also nestles common human values such as freedom and destiny within the narrative framework of Ne Zha's quest for "My destiny is mine".

Firstly, it embodies the Confucian concept of "benevolence and propriety as the basis". Confucius advocates the positive affirmation of the historical role of human beings, believing that although heaven is the basis for human beings, individuals should strive to realise their self-worth in their self-growth, practise righteousness on earth, and take "heaven" as an inner spiritual pillar, and adjust themselves with practical actions, so as to live up to the value given by "heaven's destiny". The value of "Heaven's Mandate" [1]. "*Ne Zha 2*" gives Ne Zha the core spirit of "My destiny is mine, not Heaven's". From being given the fate of the "Magic Pill", to reinventing his mission through the practice of virtues and self-awakening, Ne Zha is able to change his destiny against all odds and turn the world around, which is the Confucian saying of "Knowing that it is not possible to do something, but doing it". This is also a reflection of the Confucian spirit of "knowing what is impossible and doing it". In addition, the film also presents the Confucian sentiment of benevolence and love. Confucianism advocates the use of blood ties to let love flow out [2], Lady Yin, in order to save her child, resolutely snatched the Soul Destroying Elixir handed to Ne Zha by the Immortal Weng and threw it into the magma. Inspired by his mother's sacrifice, Nezha fought his way out of the Heart Penetrating Curse, and used the Three Tastes of True Flame to make up for the flesh, and broke the tripod against all odds, profoundly interpreting the traditional Chinese culture. This is a profound interpretation of the traditional Chinese culture of "mother's kindness and son's filial piety".

Secondly, the film is in line with the Taoist idea of "returning to the basics". Taoism believes that everything in the world is made up of the two opposing and unifying forces of yin and yang. The film builds its thematic significance on Taoism's "philosophical idea of the interplay between yin and yang", and incorporates "one yin and one yang is called Dao" into the character design with subversive innovations, portraying Ao Bing reincarnated from the Spirit Pearl and Ne Zha reincarnated from the Magic Pill. Ao Bing, reincarnated from the Spirit Pearl, and Ne Zha, reincarnated from the Magic Pill. Ao Bing is a "water" character, a symbol of yin, with a calm and introverted personality, embodying the warmth of jade, while Ne Zha is a "fire" character, a symbol of yang, with an ardent and bold personality, full of the spirit of resistance, and the two go from being opposites to co-operating, embodying the relationship between the two, which is the complementary relationship of mutual births and opposites, and the yin and yang. In addition, the film also integrates Taoist philosophy into the animation production, which is given a new lease of life through modern technology. Beyond the Jade Palace of Immortality, the cranes flying in twos and threes on the roof are inspired by Song Huizong Zhao Ji's legendary masterpiece "Rui Crane Drawing", based on which 3D scanning technology was introduced to rebuild the traditional architecture and combined with the real-time rendering of the virtual engine, dynamically adjusting the lighting and texture effects, so that the cranes flying with spreading their wings and flying in an elegant gait, accompanied by auspicious clouds, which is the Chinese culture of Taoism, where the crane is the mount for the Immortal, and the cranes here imply that the path to Immortality is the path to Immortality. The crane here suggests the way to the fairyland.

Finally, the film is in line with the Buddhist culture of "Universal Sentience". In the film, Taibei uses lotus roots to recreate the flesh of Nezha and Ao Bing, a setting closely related to the Buddhist concept of "lotus life". The lotus flower's purity and unadulterated nature are in line with the teachings

of Buddhism, which is why the lotus flower has an exalted position in Buddhism and is a sacred Buddhist object. As the saying goes, "If you pray to the Buddha and go to the next life, you will see the Buddha in blossom" [3]. This design not only gives the film the Zen beauty of the hibiscus in the water, but also hints at Nezha's elevated level of cultivation after going through the cycle of life and death. At the same time, the philosophical value of Buddhist "compassion" also permeates the film. The growth of the protagonist is not only a personal struggle against the apocalypse, but also a responsibility to protect the people and safeguard the homeland, and this conviction and quality makes him achieve a true hero's metamorphosis as well.

3. Integration of classical elements: downward deep rooting to draw on the fertile soil of tradition and innovation of the spiritual core of the Chinese cultural lineage

In order for the excellent traditional culture to show great potential and vitality in the digital age, and for the heavy cultural values to live on in the long river of Chinese civilisation, it needs to be combined with modern popular symbols and elements to achieve its own creative transformation and innovative development. Chinese film is a work of art with national characteristics created by Chinese film artists in the face of Chinese history and reality, investing their own creativity and imagination, which embodies the unique ideology and value pursuit of the Chinese people, and contains some of the important spirit of Chinese culture that remains unchanged [4]. As a unique art form and mass media with visual and auditory senses, film can cross the barriers of language and culture with diversified ways of expression, opening up a broader space for the dissemination of excellent traditional culture. "*Ne Zha 2*" is mostly based on the Chinese classic "The Enchantment of the Gods", in which Ne Zha's story can be summarised as "Born with divine power, he killed himself in the sea, rebuilt his body, helped Zhou to conquer the evil-doers, and was crowned a god". "*Ne Zha 2*" is a modernised transposition of the classic elements of culture, adapting and innovating from the perspective of time and space, plot and characters, presenting audiences with a new and unique storytelling experience that combines tradition and modernity.

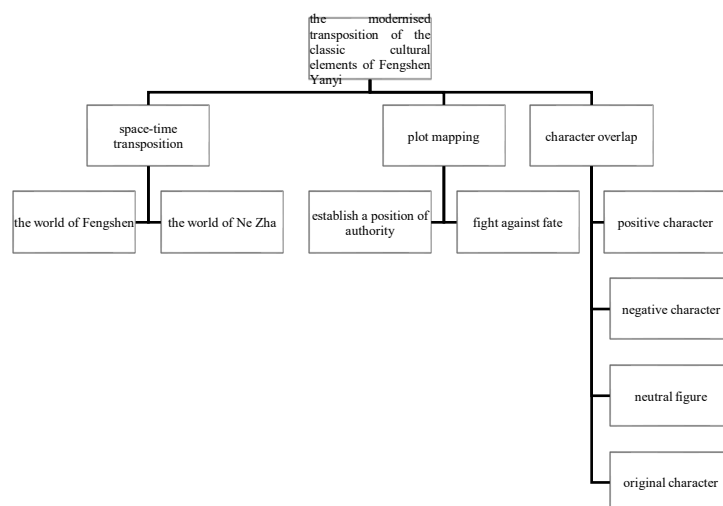


Figure 1: Schematic diagram of the modernised transposition of the classic cultural elements of Fengshen Yanyi (The Enchantment of the Gods)

First and foremost, Time and space transposition. The background time and space set up in Feudal Deities Yanyi is a grand worldview system in which gods, fairies, demons and devils coexist and are full of fantastical colours, and it is mixed with a large number of historical elements of myths and legends, as well as characters and settings of other classical novels, which is very different from the real historical drama of the Shang-Zhou period, that is, it is the inheritance and adaptation of the "empty history", and it can be said that it is a new mythological system and narrative structure under a layer of historical skin. In other words, it is a continuation and adaptation of "empty history", or a re-establishment of the mythological system and narrative structure under a layer of historical skin. "*Ne Zha 2*" transforms the literary associations of the "world of the feudal gods" into the "world of Nezha", which is a beautifully visualised, audio-visual world, featuring scenes from Chentang Pass (where Nezha was born and grew up), the Golden Cave of Mount Qianyuan where the goddess Taiyi was born and raised, and the world at the bottom of the sea. By simplifying and reshaping the hundreds of places and scenes in the original novel and the time span of the last few decades, the three main scenes of the story and the key stages of Ne Zha's reincarnation have been abstracted, so that the worlds of the earth, the immortals and the dragons are tightly structured around the world of Nezha, which is in line with the protagonist's immersion in the world of Nezha for the modern audience, and allows the audience to clearly understand the protagonist's growth, choices and actions, which is more likely to evoke emotional resonance and character identification. The audience will be able to clearly understand the growth, choices and actions of the protagonist, making it easier to arouse emotional resonance and character identification, and to accept the values conveyed by the film through the protagonist, thus promoting the in-depth embedding and reproduction of the classical cultural elements, and realising the resonance of the values of excellent traditional culture.

In the second place, Plot Mapping. "*Ne Zha 2*" transforms the novel plot line of "The Enchantment of the Gods", which focuses on "King Wu's conquest of the Zhou Dynasty and the establishment of the gods", into an animated film story line that focuses on Ne Zha and Ao Bian's resistance to fate and the resolution of the apocalypse, and changes the story from a heroic tale with a strong didactic flavour, which advocates the elimination of evil and promotion of goodness and the sacrifice of one's own life for the sake of justice, to a motivational legend of self-salvation and the fight against fate. Legend, from the ancient obedience to the "fate of heaven" concept into today's audience familiar with the "fate and choice" theme. Nezha is reincarnated in this film as a demonic pill, while he was born as a spirit pearl in "The Feudal Mysteries". The Spirit Pearl is a living treasure that symbolises light in the heavenly realm, while the Demon Pill represents the darkness of chaos and destruction. While good and evil have always been at odds with each other, Ne Zha, unwilling to be bound by the established order of traditional society and the so-called predestined fate of heaven, defends his individual dignity and his own value with fearless courage and perseverance, breaking the prejudice of "good and evil are absolute", which is an epochal interpretation and reconstruction of the concepts of traditional culture. In the real world, "lying flat", "mourning", "exquisite", "Buddhist", "Stolen Senses" One label after another is welded onto the face of the young group like a mask, but underneath the mask is an inner struggle. "Like Nezha, the younger generation is walking their own path in a new way. The film's new interpretation of these ups and downs coincides with the spiritual dilemmas faced by young people in contemporary society, and promotes the reconstruction of traditional cultural narratives and the reshaping of contemporary values.

Thirdly, Characters overlap. "*Ne Zha 2*" portrays Ao Bing, the arrogant, bullying, and weakly existent villain in "The Feudal Masters", as a gentle, modest, kind, and upright protagonist who is reincarnated with a spirit pearl; Shen Gongbao, who deviates from the "right path" of the original myths and legends, is given a more complex and three-dimensional character with more twists and turns of fate, breaking the stereotype of the traditional negative character; Li Jing, who is righteous, protective of his son, and knows how to communicate equally, instead of the traditional high and

single "strict father", is a neutral character with elements of contemporary colour. In addition to the stereotypical image of the traditional antagonist, the characters of the era are also neutral: Li Jing, who is righteous, eager to protect his son and knows how to communicate on an equal footing, instead of the traditional single "strict father", and Yin Shinniang, who is strong in martial arts and has the appearance of an independent woman in the new era, instead of the image of a good wife and mother who is a mother who teaches her children; in addition to the above characters who are directly from the "Enchantment of the Gods", the characters of Shen Gongbao are given a more complex and three-dimensional character with more twists and turns. In addition to the characters borrowed and adapted directly from "The Enchantment of the Gods", "*Ne Zha 2*" also constructs a number of original characters to add to the new plot experience, such as the naive and silly Beast of the Boundary. The film takes family, friendship and mentorship as its emotional entry points, presenting multi-layered and multi-dimensional character bonds that can trigger the audience's emotional resonance and psychological projection, and realise deep-seated emotional release and sublimation. Using characters as a medium and culture as a nucleus, "*Ne Zha 2*" combines the characteristics of the times with the narrative theme to build a modern artistic image with deep historical meaning, making these flesh-and-blood and diversified characters the new carriers of new cultural values and the spirit of the times.

4. Covering the global vision: growing towards the sun to unlock culture going overseas, striding China's story of civilisation expedition

As of 9:00pm on 19 February, "*Ne Zha: The Magic Kid Who Troubles the Sea*" has successfully entered the top 8 of the global box office charts, and reached the top of the global box office charts for animated films. Before that, "*Ne Zha 2*" had already replaced *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* on 7 February to set the world's highest box office record in a single market. There is no doubt that "*Ne Zha 2*" has become a hit in the world's film industry. Through its unique narrative language and exquisite graphic expression, it has not only become an important vehicle for interpreting and transmitting cultural connotations, but has also become a new window for overseas communities to learn about Chinese civilisation. In the current international communication landscape, the distribution of discourse power is marked by Western-centrism, and is mainly concentrated in the hands of Western media conglomerates. However, "*Ne Zha 2*", with its outstanding artistic performance and market influence, has demonstrated the rise of the Chinese film industry in the competition for international discourse, and has laid an important foundation for building a multicultural ecosystem that is on a par with Hollywood animated films. In the context of globalisation, "*Ne Zha 2*" has successfully broken through the theoretical shackles of "cultural discount", creating a new paradigm of deep integration between Eastern aesthetics and global narratives, and contributing unique Chinese wisdom and aesthetic value to the beautiful and vibrant flowers in the garden of human civilisation.

The Chinese language is a precious symbol that comes from the depths of the long history of Chinese culture. In the midst of globalisation, how to solve the "translation dilemma" of cultural symbols by using diversified languages, manifesting cultural confidence, spreading the voice of China, telling a good story about China, and portraying the image of China has become a new issue of the times for domestic animation films. "*Ne Zha 2*" adopts bilingual subtitles to meet the needs of some Chinese and foreign language viewers, taking into account cultural authenticity and comprehensibility. Its translation strategy covers direct translation, phonetic translation and Italian translation, presenting audiences at home and abroad with language and artistic expressions that contain classical beauty and uniqueness. The classic limerick "I am the Third Prince of Nezha, I can subdue demons and write poems", which was a hit on the Internet, has been translated into English verse in iambic pentameter. There are various metrical variations in the lines of English poems, and iambic pentameter has been widely used in the writing of English poems because it is the most

suitable for the characteristics of the English language, and it has become the most basic form of English poems [5]. For example, "I am Nezha, the Third Prince bold! I slay the demons, I write in rhyme untold." ("*Ne Zha 2*", 2025) I am in this line is considered to be a tone step, Nezha is also a (tone step), and the Third, Prince, and Bold are each another sound step. In iambic pentameter, each iambic step consists of two syllables, the first one is pronounced softly and the second one is stressed [6], e.g. "I am". Through the use of meter and rhyme, it combines the rhythmic sense of Chinese poetry with the local traditions of English poetry, focusing on the sense of rhythm, innovative direct translation, and combining the momentum, literary and rhythmic beauty of the lines. "*Ne Zha 2*" also uses phonetic translations, with the name of the prop translated as "Feng Huo Lun" and the name of the character translated as "Shiji Niangniang", supplemented by contextual explanations and reconstructions, so that Western audiences can understand and accept the dialogue in a natural way. The translation of the character's name Shiji Niangniang is supplemented with contextual explanation and reconstruction, so that the western audience can understand and accept it naturally while the uniqueness of the national language is greatly preserved. In addition, in order to more realistically portray the characters and understand their motivations, the film also carries out some of the Italian translations: for example, when Nezha misunderstands that Ao Guang has led the dragons to destroy the Chentang Pass and kill his parents, he goes to take revenge in a rage, and cries out, "It doesn't matter whether I live or die, all that I want is for you to die", which is translated as "Whether I live or die means nothing. All that matters... is your defeat! All that matters ... is your defeat!" ("*Ne Zha 2*", 2025). The interpretation of "death" as "defeat" here is a more euphemistic way of expressing the meaning of the word, as Ne Zha does not really want Ao Guang to die, he also cares about his son Ao Bing. He also cares about his love for his son, Ao Beng, so his anger at this point is just a desire to fight, which better portrays the depth of Nezha's emotions in his conflicts, and this ambivalence also makes the character more realistic.

At the same time, in addition to the cross-cultural adaptation of translation strategies, the mythological characters represented by Sun Wukong and Nezha in *Journey to the West* have the divine and magical colours of classical Chinese culture in themselves, which have been recognised by many overseas audiences through the preliminary adaptation and dissemination, and are easy to show the oriental aesthetics of culture, for example, the game *Black Myth - Wukong* has successfully achieved the global dissemination of cultural values through the in-depth excavation of the excellent traditional culture and innovative expression. globalisation of cultural values, significantly enhancing the attractiveness and identity of Chinese culture among international audiences. From the translation of some of its chapters by the American missionary Wu Banqiao in 1895 to the release of the short version of *Journey to the West* translated by Lan Shiling in 2021, the history of English translation of this novel has been more than one hundred and twenty years long [7]. Especially in East Asia, "*Journey to the West* culture" has become an important part of local culture. Since the first theatrical animation of the Chinese novel *Journey to the West* in 1926, Japan has adapted *Journey to the West* into a rich variety of popular cultural commodities such as films, TV dramas, comics, animation, games, and so on [8]. In Europe and the United States, "*Journey to the West*" has also won a wide range of readers and viewers, which is partly due to the fact that the European and American cultural circles have a high degree of innate acceptance of foreign cultures. On the other hand, it is because "*Journey to the West*" affirms the spirit of personal struggle and the relentless pursuit of ultimate values, which can easily resonate in the Western world and reflect a strong practical significance [9]. As an important character in *Journey to the West*, Ne Zha has a certain degree of familiarity and acceptance among overseas audiences. "*Ne Zha 2*" can capitalise on the success of its predecessor, which has provided it with deep cultural deposits and a broad audience base, to further explore the special cultural connotations of Ne Zha's IP, highlighting the common theme of human beings, which is the "quest for freedom and change of destiny against the will of heaven", thus realising the export

of excellent traditional Chinese culture. This is a new attempt to export the excellent traditional Chinese culture. More importantly than short-term market popularity and box office results, the Chinese film industry has gradually explored a unique methodology for exporting culture in the context of globalisation. The core of this methodology lies in the modernisation reconstruction and visual translation of traditional culture, giving it a new contemporary connotation and commonality in cross-cultural communication. This kind of practical exploration not only provides a replicable reference path for the international export of Chinese cultural products with a spiritual core, but also contributes a unique oriental wisdom to the development of global cultural diversity.

5. Conclusion

In October 2024, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasised at the 17th collective study of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee that "the Chinese cultural lineage should be continued in creative transformation and innovative development." [10]. Standing on a new historical starting point, "*Ne Zha 2*" digs deep into and explains the spiritual value of the excellent traditional Chinese culture and constantly gives it new connotations for the times, so that the treasures of Chinese civilisation can show their permanent charm and modern elegance. The film's remarkable achievements at home and abroad have shown the world the beauty of oriental culture and Chinese classics, highlighted China's strong market appeal and potential, and witnessed the artistic merit and innovation of domestic animation films. China's animation industry should be firm in cultural self-confidence, innovate in inheritance, develop in innovation, explore animation expressions with Chinese characteristics, tell Chinese stories in the language of the world, and promote Chinese animation to the world. The animation producers in the new era are a powerful driving force to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of excellent traditional culture, a powerful team for cultural construction, and an important force to insist on cultural self-confidence, promote cultural prosperity, and build a strong cultural country. They need to explore traditional cultural resources, base on the actual situation in China, and refine the identifying concepts with Chinese characteristics, embodying the spirit of China, and embedding the wisdom of China, so as to make a greater contribution to the enhancement of the country's soft and soft power of culture. We need to tap into traditional cultural resources and refine concepts with Chinese characteristics, embodying Chinese spirit and containing Chinese wisdom, so as to make greater contributions to enhancing the national cultural soft power.

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