

National Cultural Connotation in Japanese Anime

--Taking Detective Conan as an Example

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Abstract: Japanese animation enjoys a high international reputation, and the animation industry is one of the most influential industries in Japan. It not only entertains the public, but also spreads Japanese national cultural values. Among them, *Detective Conan* has been broadcasted continuously for more than 20 years and is one of the most influential phenomenal anime works in Japan. Culture is the root and soul of a country, which can unite social consensus and enhance the sense of national identity. One of the major reasons for the great success of *Detective Conan* is its close integration with Japanese national culture. This paper takes *Detective Conan* as an example, selects the case of combining the anime plot with Japanese national culture, and analyses the mapping of Japanese animation on Japanese national culture. It helps to improve the knowledge of Japanese culture, and also provides a direction for the development of China's animation industry.

Keywords: animation, Japan, national culture, *Detective Conan*

1. Introduction

Japanese animation has an important position in contemporary culture, and the anime industry has become one of the most influential industries in Japan. As a unique form of culture, Japanese animation has already possessed a wide range of global influence, and it has attracted hundreds of millions of viewers around the world with its meticulous drawing style and profound character portrayal [1]. This kind of cultural export can not only promote Japan's cultural exchange and understanding of the world culture, but also earn foreign exchange for Japan and enhance the national image. Besides, Japanese animation is also an important part of Japanese culture, through which some traditional cultures and values are passed on and preserved.

Among them, the TV animation *Detective Conan*, which is adapted from the manga of the same name by Gosho Aoyama, is a phenomenal animation work in Japan, which has been everlasting. It started broadcasting in 1996 and has been followed by a large number of loyal fans for more than 20 years, making it a truly national animation in Japan. The reason for the show's great success is that, in addition to the dramatic plot, exciting cases, and diverse characters, there is also an important reason for the anime's integration of its plot with the Japanese national culture. In the plot, there are elements of Japanese national culture such as architecture, myths and legends, which not only entertain the public, but also spread Japanese national values [2].

So, how does Japanese animation combine with its national culture? How does the development of Japanese animation inspire our country? How should China's animation industry follow Japan's example and combine traditional Chinese culture with popular entertainment? Culture is the root and soul of a country and a nation, which can unite social consensus, enhance the sense of national identity, and provide strong spiritual power for national revitalisation. In the process of reviewing the data, the author found that most of the literature only analysed the reasons for the success of Japanese animation and the cases of combining with national culture, but did not mention how to develop Chinese animation and spread Chinese culture. The author hopes to take *Detective Conan* as an example, select the cases of combining the plot and Japanese national culture in animation, analyse the use of national culture elements in animation, and provide new ideas for the development of China's animation industry and the dissemination of Chinese culture.

This paper is divided into the following three parts: the first part discusses the current situation of the development of Japanese animation and its influence; the second part analyses the typical cases of the combination of Japanese national culture and animation; and the third part provides feasible suggestions for the development of Chinese animation.

2. The Current Situation of the Development of Japanese Animation

2.1. Current Situation of Japanese Animation Development

As of 2023, the Japanese animation industry is still in the stage of booming development, and it has great influence both at home and abroad. Japanese animation has always been loved by global audiences, and now its position in the international market is even more solid. Japanese animation works are making inroads into overseas markets, including North America, Europe and Asia, attracting a large number of viewers and fans. This is due to the rise of streaming platforms, such as Netflix and Crunchyroll, which provide convenient ways to watch. The themes and styles of Japanese animation works are very diverse and cover a wide range of fields, including science fiction, fantasy, adventure, suspense and romance. This provides viewers with more choices and meets the needs of different groups of people. The Japanese animation industry has always been committed to technological innovation, constantly introducing new animation techniques and production tools. For example, in recent years, more and more works have adopted three-dimensional animation technology to make the images more vivid and realistic. Many Japanese animation works will further expand to other media fields, including games, novels, films, etc., after achieving success [3]. This cross-media development mode not only expands the influence of the works, but also provides more opportunities for the audience to interact with the works. The Japanese animation industry is facing fierce market competition and commercialisation pressure. Many animation production companies may produce commercially successful but lower-quality works in order to cater to commercial interests. At the same time, some original works are facing problems of copyright protection and piracy.

All in all, the Japanese animation industry has achieved great success in technological innovation, international market expansion and cross-media development. However, the industry is also facing some challenges as competition intensifies and commercialisation pressures. However, it is foreseeable that Japanese animation will continue to maintain its unique charm and influence globally.

2.2. Influence of Japanese Animation

Japanese animation attracts a global audience, with a large number of fans and viewers in Asia, North America, Europe and elsewhere. Many people experience and learn about Japanese culture by watching Japanese animation works, and this influence transcends national boundaries and

cultural differences. The Japanese animation industry has been a huge commercial success. Many animation works have become phenomenal intellectual property (IP) worldwide, bringing in huge revenues and profits. Animation peripheral products such as toys, clothing, games and music have also become popular with a wide audience and have become an important market. Japanese animation has had a profound impact on the anime industry in other countries and regions. Animation producers and artists in many countries have been inspired by Japanese animation and have tried to use similar artistic styles and narratives. At the same time, Japanese animation technology and production experience have been borrowed and applied by other countries. As a cultural phenomenon, Japanese animation has had a positive impact on society and culture. It has brought joy, inspiration and revelation to people, while exploring some social issues and values. Many animation works have generated widespread discussion and influence in society and have had an impact on people's way of thinking and values. Japanese animation is known for its unique creativity and innovation. It has not only innovated in storyline and character design, but also made breakthroughs in art style and animation production techniques. This spirit of creativity and innovation has inspired other creators and artists and promoted the development of the entire animation industry [4].

3. Typical Cases of Combining Japanese National Culture with *Detective Conan*

3.1. Architecture

Architecture is a symbol of social civilisation in a historical period and a microcosm of social life at that time. Architecture is closely connected with human life, and its artistic expression has a profound correspondence with human culture. Outstanding architectural art works are the most distinctive, profound and long-lasting embodiment of culture, with high historical and cultural value. Therefore, while appreciating the appearance of the building, it is also important to pay attention to its cultural connotation and artistic heritage [5]. In *Detective Conan*, the depiction of architectural art is impressive. Taking *Crossroads of the Labyrinth* as an example, it takes the old Kyoto as the background and vividly shows the magnificent scenery of Kyoto temples, such as Kiyomizu Temple, Kurumaji Temple, and Bokuji Temple, etc. Among them, Kiyomizu Temple is the most famous temple in Kyoto, and it is the most important temple in the world. Among them, Kiyomizudera, the oldest temple in Kyoto, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1994, making it a must-see destination for tourists. Fukkoji Temple is not as famous as Kiyomizu Temple among the many temples in Kyoto, but as a key clue location in the plot of the film, it has attracted many Conan fans to visit it, completing an excellent cultural export [6].

The Legend of the Eerie Five Pagodas introduces the Five Pagodas of Horyuji Temple in Japan, one of the oldest surviving wooden structures of the Southern Dynasties in Japan. The story opens with an introduction to the historical and cultural background of the Five Pagodas, and combines a legend about the Pagodas with a deduction story to create a tense and eerie atmosphere. The Five-storied Pagoda is also the earliest evidence of Sino-Japanese cultural exchange in history. The layout, structure and form of the temple are influenced by the architecture of China's Southern Dynasties, such as the temple's Golden Hall and the Five-storied Pagoda, which are located on the east and west sides of the central axis respectively.

3.2. Myths and Legends

Myths and legends are the valuable spiritual wealth of a nation and a country, and have a very important position in the history of literature. Its subject matter and various mythological characters have had a multifaceted influence on the literary creation of successive generations and the formation of the epics of various nations. Not only that, the myth also has rich aesthetic and

historical value, and has a close relationship with the ancient life and history, it is a very important literature to study the marriage and family system, primitive religion, customs and habits of the early human society [5].

Detective Conan has featured numerous cases revolving around characters from mythology, such as the most famous monsters of Japanese mythology, the Yachi Orochi and the Mist Tengu. In the episode *The Sword of the Yamanano Orochi*, the protagonist Conan associates the Yamanano Orochi legend with the clues of the case, comparing the deceased Crocodile Abyss to the Yamanano Orochi, and the protagonist of the case, Eriko Ekaku, to Ki Inadaira Hime, which leads to the mythological tale of the heroic beheading of the Yamanano Orochi by Susanoo in order to save his beloved woman Ki Inadaira Hime, and it is an excellent case of skillfully combining an animated plot with a mythological legend [1]. In the *fog tengu legend of murder*, the story opens for the audience to introduce the fog tengu myths and legends, so as to lead to the modus operandi, the murderer Hidenori with the help of the fog tengu legend of murder method to kill the abbot of the temple, the animation cleverly will be the myths and legends with the reasoning of the story for the weaving and fusion, presenting a fascinating plot. *Detective Conan* will Japan's representative myths and legends elements into the story line, both to promote the development of the plot and complete the cultural output, for the development of domestic animation method to provide some thought [5].

3.3. Poetry Culture

Poetry is another important culture in Japan, they express the author's thoughts and feelings in simple, beautiful and profound language, and have become an important part of Japanese culture. In the long history of each country, poems have always played an important role, they are not only representatives of literature and art, but more importantly, reflect the artistic value and cultural connotation of poems. One of them is the competitive song card, also known as competitive koryudo, which is a competitive event using the Kokura Hyakunin one song and played according to the rules set by the All Japan Koryudo Association. It is a song card competition that originated from Japanese court games. In the *Detective Conan* theatre version of *Tang red love song*, the song card in the whole film plays an important role. Ooka Hongye and Toyama Kazuha is very good at competitive song card, and started the song card duel, the characters in the play not only for everyone to introduce the rules of the song card and the duel. The protagonist of Conan also grasped from which to unravel the mystery of the case! The characters not only introduce the rules of the cards and how they are played, but also give Conan the information he needs to unravel the case. Through the spreading of the cards, the film is elevated. The film cleverly intersperses the plot with poetry, complementing each other, and in the process of telling the deduction story, it also carries out a wave of cultural output.

Chinese poetry culture has a profound cultural heritage and artistic value, China has been a country of poetry since ancient times. The language of classical Chinese poetry is vivid and condensed, just a dozen words but contains the poet's rich thoughts and emotions, with the charm of "endless words and endless meanings", which is the reason why it has been passed down for thousands of years and never fails. However, many people's understanding of poetry is superficial, or limited to "reciting the whole poem". In Japanese culture, the rules of the song card are more obscure and difficult to understand, but *Detective Conan* has integrated its culture into the reasoning story, so that the audience can better understand the general content of the song card, and achieve cultural output, which is worth learning from domestic animation [5].

4. Thoughts and Suggestions on China's Animation Development

4.1 Current Situation of China's Animation Development

Chinese animation has made remarkable development in the past few years and become an important member of the global animation industry. Firstly, China's animation industry covers a wide range of content types, including traditional martial arts, fantasy, romance, funny, etc., as well as topics related to real life, such as workplace, youth and society. Secondly, Chinese animation films have gained more and more attention in domestic and international markets. Some excellent Chinese animation films have achieved great success at the box office and have been recognised by international awards. This has made China's animation film industry emerge globally. In addition, with the popularity of the Internet, many online animation platforms have emerged. These platforms provide broader distribution channels for animation works and more opportunities for animation creators to showcase their works. Finally, the Chinese government has given certain policy support to the development of the animation industry, including financial support and copyright protection, which has promoted the healthy development of the animation industry.

However, Chinese animation still needs to be aware of some challenges. Despite the increase in China's animation production, the quality of works still varies. The difference between excellent works and popular works still exists, which requires further strengthening of the level of creation and talent training. The Chinese animation market is highly competitive, with both domestic and foreign animation works competing for audience attention. How to break through in the fierce market environment remains a challenge. To succeed in the international market, Chinese animation needs to overcome cultural differences and localisation. To attract international audiences, the themes and storylines of the works need to give more consideration to the preferences and perceptions of international audiences [7].

4.2 Thoughts and Suggestions on the Development of Chinese Animation

In the present media era, animation works are not only commercial products for entertainment and recreation, but also carry the mission of cultural dissemination behind them. Japanese animation shows the traditional culture and contemporary life of Japan very well, and pays attention to the expression of cultural connotation in the creation, and their animation works incorporate a large number of cultural elements, which helps to pass on and carry forward the culture of the country [8]. For example, through the plot of *Detective Conan*, it also indirectly introduces Japanese historical places, food culture and traditional festivals. This provides a good inspiration to our animation industry, that is, we should pay attention to the embodiment of cultural connotations in the creation of animation, in order to improve the attractiveness and dissemination of works.

The global success of Japanese animation cannot be separated from the fact that production companies attach great importance to the quality of animation. They not only focus on the storyline, but also pay more attention to the quality and details of the animation, and are committed to creating quality works with ornamental, expressive and cultural connotations. This provides a good inspiration to our animation creation, that is, we should invest more energy and effort in production to create high-quality, high-level quality animation.

Japanese animation production companies know very well who their target audience is, they pay attention to the needs of viewers of different ages, different genders, different cultural backgrounds, so they have created a lot of different types and styles of works, and at the same time, they have also created a very different personality, a very charming variety of characters [9]. This provides a good inspiration for our animation creation, that is, we have to target the production of animation

works suitable for different ages, different genders and different cultural backgrounds, in order to better meet the needs of the audience.

Chinese animation has achieved some development in the past few years, but there are still some challenges and room for improvement.

An important problem in China's animation industry is the lack of originality. Although there are some excellent original works, the relative number is not enough, and many of them are still borrowed and imitated in terms of narrative, character portrayal and artistic style. Therefore, it is very important to further encourage and support the creation of original works and cultivate more creative and unique style of animation works.

The development of China's animation industry also needs to strengthen the construction of the industrial chain. In addition to animation production, there is a need to improve the links in cartoon creation, derivative product development and animation games. At the same time, it is also necessary to strengthen the cooperation with other related industries, such as the cooperation with game, film and television industries, in order to increase the market value and influence of animation works [10].

The competitiveness of China's animation industry in the international market is relatively weak. Therefore, promoting the internationalisation of Chinese animation is an important direction. This can be achieved by strengthening exchanges and cooperation with the international animation industry, participating in international animation exhibitions and festivals, and introducing excellent international animation works. Talents are the core of the development of the animation industry. Therefore, there is a need to increase support for talent training, including the provision of professional education and training, the establishment of scholarships and creative funds, etc., in order to attract and cultivate more excellent creative talents in animation and cartooning, and to promote the long-term development of China's animation and cartoon industry.

5. Conclusions

As a big internationalised country, the level of culture and art in China occupies an important position in the international arena. However, with the development of cultural diversification as well as the mainstream of cultural intermingling, more and more countries and national cultures in the world have also begun to infiltrate, exchange and integrate with China, thus facilitating the communication between Chinese culture and art and the culture and art of other countries. As a unique form of culture, Japanese animation has a recognised wide influence in the world, which not only promotes the exchange and dissemination of Japanese culture, but also provides ideas for the development path of Chinese animation.

Detective Conan involves very rich content and themes, including deduction, love, suspense, adventure and so on various types, this diversity attracts the audience of all ages and groups, and lays the foundation for its wide dissemination. At the same time, the animation pays great attention to details in terms of production quality, whether it is the picture, sound effects or voice acting, all of which are very well done. This exquisite production quality allows viewers to be fully immersed in the world of deduction and enhances the viewing experience. Finally, it is very unique in terms of creativity and style, integrating Japanese cultural elements, historical background, technological development, etc., to create a unique style of animation works, which have a high evaluation and influence in the world.

If China can reasonably learn from the development path of Japanese animation, take the essence and remove the dregs, then the development of Chinese animation is undoubtedly a qualitative leap. And the integration of traditional Chinese culture in such a popular way of entertainment as animation will undoubtedly play a huge role in promoting the spread of Chinese culture.

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