Application of Chinese National Culture Elements in Animation Design

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Abstract: From the initial startup till now, animation has developed with ups and downs for one hundred years, including brilliance, decline, development, and stall. 2D animation has brought laughter to people, and given people endless inspiration. Chinese animation is more integrated into national culture, making animation with more kindness and popular taste, as well as more suitable for audience’s needs. National culture is developed in people’s lives, so people are more acceptable to them. However, in Chinese animation design for, exploration and utilization of national culture is not deep, which makes China’s animation market in a state of depression and sluggish. So, to develop Chinese animation, it requires designers to start with national culture in China, constantly explore it, well use national culture elements, fully integrate national culture into animation, and do a good job in the inheritance and innovation of culture. This paper first describes the connotation of national culture and analyzes the concrete embodiment of the domestic original animation design, and then analyzes the reasons for the national culture regression of domestic animation design development, and finally explore how to prompt the regression of national culture in current domestic animation design, so as to realize the integration of animation design and national culture, as well as promote the development of animation design.

Animation, as a kind of public art form favored by people, has been integrated into modern life. With the development of the society, Chinese animation industry is also booming. China’s domestic animation industry started early, and in the 1920s, Wan brothers made a lot of popular animation works, which all embody the strong national culture characteristics. But it is worth noticing that the creation concept abroad is introduced and foreign
animation companies settle in China with the deepening of China's reform and opening up; although it has provided certain opportunities for China's domestic animation design to face the world, it also has brought weaker and weaker use of Chinese elements in animation design, and the domestic animation design has the problems such as lack of cultural connotation, which makes the current China’s domestic animation design development in trouble. If we want to better develop domestic animation, we also must properly introduce national culture, and make the modern expression way of national culture and animation technology displayed.

**Keywords:** animation design, nationality, culture element, application.

1. **Connotation of national culture and concrete reflection in original domestic animation design**

1.1 **Connotation of national culture**

Chinese national culture refers to the national culture formed in the development of Chinese nation that can reflect the national characteristics. It is the collection of all kinds of thoughts, ideas and so on inherited by Chinese generations and characterized by inheritance from generation to generation, a long history, profoundness, etc. Certain content of China’s national thought, such as “kindness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and trust”, thoughts of all classes of authors, literature and art, national drama, folk art and regional culture, etc., which all can be classified as the category of national culture. The basic spirit of Chinese national culture includes advocating of the theory that man is an integral part of nature, attention to the people-oriented, upholding of harmony and mean, the pursuit of being energetic, etc. Chinese national culture has its own characteristics, mainly advocating ethics, paying attention to humanistic education, and these have the intimate relationship with Confucian culture inherited for thousands of years.

1.2 **Concrete reflection of national culture in classic domestic animation design**

Chinese national culture has indispensable relationship with domestic animation design. Since the beginning, China’s animation design has consciously absorbed a variety of nutrition from national culture and adhered to national style.

At the time of shaping the animation image, classic domestic animation has learned a lot of nutrition from Chinese national culture, and a lot of animation works have learned from the essence of Chinese ink painting, frescoes, folk paper-cutting, and even Peking Opera. For example, in “Baby Tadpoles Look for Their Mother”, ink painting elements are used to shape the image of the
small tadpoles, drawing nutrition from Chinese painting, and breaking the single flat coating method of the national animation creation, with the integration of ink painting skills, so as to make the image of the small tadpoles appropriate, with the perfect fusion of line and ink. And “Three Monks” borrows the method white space from Chinese painting, with the use of a handy image to display the beauty of cleverness, to let people feel the far-reaching artistic conception, full of affection.

Secondly, many classic domestic animation designs absorb a lot of animation materials from Chinese national culture. For instance, “lotus lantern” comes from the folklore that Chenxiang cut the mountains to save mother, and “Havoc in Heaven” is adapted from the famous four great classics “Pilgrimage to the West” in China, which perfectly reproduces the scenes in the novel including waterfall cave, cloud palace of the golden arches, etc., and creates a dreamy fairy world for people.

In addition, a lot of classic domestic animation designs are influenced by national culture, enriching the connotation of animation works. The creators of many classic domestic animations have a deeper understanding of broad and profound Chinese culture, so they not only learn from national painting art form when creating animation, but also understand the inner essence of national culture. For example, “Pride General” created in 1956 in China tells the story that the ever-victorious general failed because of complacency, which exactly reflects the spiritual connotation of “to win without pride, to lose with grace” in the national culture of China, and the plots such as “huge vessel”, “spring outing”, etc. are also characterized by Chinese national customs and habits. Peking Opera applied on the character modeling also embodies the charm of the quintessence of Chinese culture.

It can be said that China has created a large number of animation works with national characteristics with the guidance of “walking on the road of national style”, which not only are popular with domestic audiences, but also win the acceptance of audiences around the world.

2. Reasons for national culture regression in the development of domestic animation design

2.1 Lack of national culture leads domestic animation design development in difficulty

From the developing trend of the current domestic animation, the regression of national culture is imminent, and one of the most main reasons is that the lack of national culture has led the development of China’s domestic animation into trouble. If domestic animation breaks through the bottleneck, it is necessary to draw nutrition from national culture.
With the continuous development of market economy, animation has not only artistic quality but also commodity. Some animation enterprises have begun to cooperate with foreign animation enterprises in order to obtain greater economic benefits, and created a lot of works. However, it is a pity that the situation that many of these works copied from animation works of Japan and South Korea, Europe and the United States is severe, with the lack of its own characteristics. The lack of excellent domestic animation talents is a wake-up call to the domestic animation industry.

In addition, the domestic animation works have some errors on the nationalization expression, which is also a very important problem. Although there are some domestic animation works drawing nutrition from national culture at present, most of them invariably copy the contents of folklore and history story, with the lack of innovation, and do not accord with contemporary aesthetic, for example, some works like “the story of the Chinese nation virtue” seem dull, with the lack of new idea. Some works just pile up some cultural elements on the surface when drawing national culture, making people feel form is too much content, and rarely exploring national connotation, for example, “Chess Player” borrows “weiqi” that is a national culture element, but it seems pale on the content, failing to show the cultural implication of Yin and Yang in depth.

2.2 Significance of national culture to domestic animation design

National culture has a profound significance to domestic animation design, which is an important reason why the domestic animation calls for the regression of national culture. Animation has more effects of sensory stimulation compared with words, and compared with the film and television works, it is more able to show human fantasy world, and better promote human aesthetic senses, so it has great significance of development. Integration of national culture in the domestic animation can better solve the problem such as pseudo original animation, pseudo technology in China. If we can draw more nutrients from national culture, China’s animation will get rid of the imitation of animation works of Japan and South Korea, Europe and the United States animation in creation concept, narrative structure, language expression and so on, so as to truly make animation works with Chinese characteristics, and no longer blindly use so-called high-tech mode, no longer blindly believe the misguided concept that high-tech is equal to high income.
3. How to promote the regression of national culture in current domestic animation design

3.1 Selection of national culture resources

To better prompt the regression of national culture in the domestic animation design, the first thing is to reasonably develop and select the excellent national culture resources. The concept of national culture is very broad. Some animation creators just focus on folklore and history story, and the subject matter is relatively narrow. If the horizon is broadened, there are many subjects in national culture resources that can be developed and utilized.

Resource of folk culture is the important part. Folk custom refers to the content of a nation in basic necessities of life, literature and sports, art and religion and so on, and is a national heritage and cultural life. If nutrients can be absorbed, it will greatly enrich the development of domestic animation. In fact, there are many animation works showing the folk in China, for example, “Peacock Princess”, “Tales of Avanti” and so on show the ethnic customs and habits. If animation creators can draw nutrition from the pictures of the Spring Festival, Spring Festival couplet, the dragon boat and zongzi of Dragon Boat Festival, the moon cakes and lotus lanterns of Mid-Autumn festival, wedding customs and so on, it must make domestic animation content more diverse.

In addition, the excellent national culture books also can provide a lot of subjects for the domestic animation. Although many domestic animations select stories from historical stories and folklore, the plot is too inflexible, just invariably showing the story and lacking artistic processing. In fact, there are still a lot of national cultural classics in China that can provide materials for animation, such as the stories described in Shan Hai Jing, Biography of Huo Xiaoyu and Biography of Li Wa in the legend of the Tang Dynasty, The Single-knife Meeting and River-viewing Lofty in yuan drama, etc. If they are adapted, they can also well enrich the subject matter of domestic animation. Adapters must pay attention to the creation of the original subject, so as to better avoid the lack of content in domestic animation, for example, “Confucius” absorbs nutrition from “The Analects of Confucius”, to be a good animation work.

3.2 Domestic animation design should greatly develop and utilize national culture resources

To make domestic animation design better develop, we should vigorously develop and use national culture resources. This kind of use does not mean bringism and complete copy, but to creatively use.

When domestic animation creators create the animation works with the themes of patriotism and loving the party, they easily face a problem, that is, lack of appealing, too much emphasis on preaching in animation works, but if
the integration of the content of national culture is reasonably carried out, it will be able to have more affinity, making audiences feel Chinese national virtue and Chinese national culture in the appreciation of animation works at the same time. For example, in “lotus lantern”, it takes national folk story that Chenxiang cut mountains to save mother as a breakthrough point, reflecting that Chenxiang experienced hardships and finally overcame Er-Lang God with the help of Monkey King to save the mother. This animation work not only does some innovation on the basis of legend, but also reflects a lot of virtues of Chinese nation, such as Chenxiang’s perseverance character, and filial piety and moral character of dying to save the mother, challenging spirit to fight with the power and so on. These are all Chinese virtues worth inheriting, and the cartoon organically fuses it with the plot. The pure preaching is more influential.

Domestic animation design not only requires animators to constantly make efforts and show national culture through the way of modernization, but also requires animators to show national art by using contemporary aesthetics. In addition to using the national art techniques such as ink in animation works, it also requires using the three-dimensional animation technology, to make domestic animation with more realistic art effect, and use the CG technology to create richer space expression for animation, giving the audiences a better visual perception. Only in this way can it look forward to the regression of the mass aesthetics, so as to let domestic animation get rapid development.

3.3 National culture should have new breakthrough

The national culture of China is our most valuable asset, and we should inherit and carry forward it. Nation is the world. Our quintessence is indubitable, but with the continuous development of era, national culture also needs development and innovation. Just to protect our own national culture will make us stop, with the losing of national culture. The organic combination of cartoons and national culture is a way out and hope for animation, but we can’t completely inherit the national culture, but to improve and combine with the Chinese national culture to carry on the innovation and breakthrough. Blind copying will make animation design in impasse, and it will delay to death. Therefore, to make greater achievements in animation design, we must make innovation on the national model; only innovation can make us win. Innovation is the soul of the animation design development, and the fundamental way for the development of animation design. Life without innovation will slowly die. All things are a paradox, from one to another. Only to innovate ceaselessly will have new development, and then China’s animation will take a standing in the world community, with the creation of the classics such as “Prince Nezha’s Triumph Against Dragon King”. In the process of innovation, we should preserve and carry forward the national
culture, abandon the dregs of national culture, absorb the world’s advanced culture. Only in this way can the innovation be the real innovation; only in this way can innovation be the real breakthrough.

**Conclusion**

All in all, from the birth of the first animated film in China till now, the domestic animation design has experienced a long stage of development, with great development, in which national culture plays a very important role. It not only provides rich sources for the creation of animation, but also makes animation with certain ideological connotation and reflection of the deep cultural connotation.

However, it is worth thinking that there is a lot of problems in China’s animation business with the continuous development of the industrialization of China's animation design, for example, insufficient subject matter, boring story content, excessive copy of animation works from Europe, the United States, Japan and South Korea, etc. These problems make China's animation industry stagnated. In order to better promote the development of animation design industry in China, national culture must be regressed, and domestic animation creators to absorb nutrition in the materials of national culture, expand the vision; they should not only recompose folk tales and historical stories, but also look the materials that can be adapted from folk culture and other classical Chinese texts to enrich subject matter. When creating animation works, they should not be superficial, but to explore the connotation of national culture, to let work embody the essence of national culture and have the effect of positive energy. While, the national art techniques should be combined with modern three-dimensional animation technology, CG technology, etc. so as to make a breakthrough in the technology of domestic animation, which can better promote the development of domestic animation.

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