Cultural Embedding and Presentation Methods in Chinese and American Movie Productions

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Abstract: With the development of the Internet, countries in the world have become more closely connected, and at the same time, the competition for cultural soft power among countries has also become more intense, especially in the field of cultural value. And with the development of movie industry, movie productions have become the main tools of exporting cultural values. Compared with America, China is in a weak position in international influence, especially in movie industry and movie productions. Under such a condition, it is difficult to show the world the Chinese cultural values and sound Chinese voices. This paper aims to compare the American and Chinese cultural values, analyze the development of their movie productions, and explore the paths and strategies for the creation and dissemination of Chinese movies.

1. Introduction

With the development of social science and technology, especially the rapid development of information technology in the past 20 years, the communication between countries in the world has become more and more frequent. Because the world's culture is diverse, in 2001, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization(UNESCO) adopted the World Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which stated that cultural diversity is the source of communication, innovation and creation, and is as essential for mankind as biodiversity to maintain biological balance. In this sense, cultural diversity is the common heritage of human beings, which should be recognized and affirmed from the interests of contemporary people and future generations. Based on this, all countries in the world must recognize the value of human civilization in their cultural forms and development modes, and establish the cultural diversity and harmony in the era of globalization.

Joseph Nye's theory of soft power has enriched the connotation of a country's comprehensive national power, suggesting that a country's power should include both soft power and hard power. According to Nye, the major elements of a country's soft power include culture (when it is attractive to others), political values (when it is consistent both at home and abroad), and foreign policies (when they are perceived as legitimate and possess moral authority)[1]. Wu Meng, a Chinese scholar, defines soft power as the mobilization ability and international attraction of a government at home and abroad, which comprises non-material elements such as political system, diplomatic relations, social stability, international reputation, national characteristics, and traditional culture[2]. It is the sum of international attraction, international mobilization, and government domestic mobilization. Unlike hard power, which is a one-way game, where a state can manipulate others with overwhelming military force or economic sanctions, soft power involves considerable reciprocity between actors, since both the agent and the target of soft power projection play a crucial role in its creation and ultimate success or failure[3]. Therefore, China must enhance its soft power to increase its comprehensive national power and achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In the present

world, to enhance a country's soft power, it is necessary to communicate with the world and promote Chinese culture. Culture is not an abstract concept, and in the development of contemporary China, it is reflected in the overall layout of the country's "Five-in-One" development plan, distinguished from economics, politics, society, and ecology. Culture primarily refers to cultural forms as ideas, which are non-material forms of human activity, including politics, law, morality, philosophy, art, and daily behavioral norms[4]. In this study, we focus on a core aspect of culture - values. As an essential component of culture, values have an immeasurable impact on individuals and even entire nations, and different countries' values may differ significantly or slightly.

Since entering the internet age, the emergence and development of electronic media have eliminated the time difference in accessing information almost globally. On the other hand, mass media has disseminated diversified information worldwide, which has increased mutual understanding and reduced the sense of unfamiliarity and distance between internal and external groups[5]. As a product of electronic media, movie and television productions play an important role in cultural exchange. In recent years, movie and television productions have become important tools for countries to promote their cultural values. However, many people still fail to recognize the importance of cultural and ideological content in the movie and television industry. Culture is the soul of a country or a nation, and it can even be said to be an important foundation for a country's existence and development. In today's world, we should attach great importance to the power of culture, and while respecting the culture of other countries, we should always maintain our own national characteristics, which has become a challenge for contemporary exchanges.

Therefore, in this paper, we take Chinese and American movies and television productions as the starting point to analyze the values and presentation methods embedded in their products, as well as the development of the movie and television industry in both countries, and make comparisons. Through this analysis, we aim to explore recommendations that are suitable for the future development of the Chinese movie and television industry.

2. American movie and American culture

American movies are an important carrier for exporting and disseminating American values, and their dissemination effects go far beyond the general interpretation of real politics and diplomatic promotion. American movies have a tremendous impact on those who frequently see American lifestyles, fashion, and tourism on the screen.[6] American culture is essentially an individualistic culture. Fukuyama believes that the mainstream culture of America is a chronicle of hero worship[7]. There is no doubt that individual heroism is the traditional character of the American nation and an important part of American culture. The earliest manifestation of individual heroism is in popular novels. Early American popular novels mainly consisted of cowboy novels, detective novels, and science fiction novels. The protagonists of these stories have a strong tendency toward individual heroism, and their images are often detached from legal and social constraints, achieving their goals through violence and having the spirit of exploring and adventuring, symbolizing the American concept of a nation that cherishes freedom and transcends constraints.

With the development of technology, America has incorporated this pursuit of heroism into its created movies and television shows, most notably in the Marvel movies. Marvel has created a world of heroes through a series of movies such as "Spider-Man" and "Iron Man". In American movies that celebrate individual heroism, the protagonist represents the force of justice, the pursuit of freedom and legitimate rights, reflecting the core values of Americans. For example, in the movie "Batman," the protagonist fights against evil forces by using his abilities to traverse the high-rise buildings in the city, maintaining the stability and justice of the city. American individual heroism to some extent advocates using violence to fight violence[8]. When legal means are unable to protect the freedom and justice in people's hearts, heroes stand up and choose to solve social problems through violent means. Although movies are a form of entertainment, their content and themes have strong ideological characteristics. The prevalence of individual heroism in American movies is, in fact, an extension of America's hero worship and individualism, reflecting the value pursuit of American society.

At the same time, America exports its movies to expand its global influence, and its casting and

movie themes are also oriented towards its cultural values. Generally speaking, movies that draw on exotic cultural themes with a deep history are more vivid, legendary, culturally and historically profound, and can effectively expand the audience[9]. Taking the impact of American movies on China as an example, America has adapted many traditional Chinese stories into movies in order to expand its movie industry's influence in China. One of the most famous examples is Disney's investment of $100 million and two years' time in 1998 to create the classic animated movie "Mulan" based on the story of Hua Mulan. Compared with the traditional story, Disney's version of the story undoubtedly reflects American thinking, as it changes Mulan's joining the army for filial piety to seeking her own value and pursuit of freedom, reflecting the difference between traditional Chinese values and American values. In recent years, America has remade "Mulan" as a live-action movie, casting famous Chinese actors to better promote it domestically. Through various means such as casting and themes, American movies are better spread worldwide.

Movies with American values have been widely circulated around the world, not only because of the movies themselves, but also because America has established a set of complete industry rules. With the advantage it has gained in the industry, America has established an international evaluation mechanism for the movie industry based on American standards. The most typical example is the Academy Awards, and various countries' movie industries can only adapt to the standards established by America in order to obtain better international response, and potentially accept the value pursuit embedded in American movies. At the same time, the maturity of the American movie industry association also means that it can provide a better social environment for the development of movies, strengthen the protection of movie copyrights, and have a sound evaluation standard. These are important reasons why American movies can continue to develop and spread worldwide.T

3. Chinese movie and Chinese culture

The traditional Chinese culture is essentially a collective culture. In the choice between individualism and collectivism, the value orientation of the Chinese spirit is always collective. Furthermore, Chinese heroism is often not centered around a single person, but represents a certain group. Compared to showcasing the strength of a specific hero, Chinese heroism often highlights the power of collectivism and unity. Chinese cultural values are influenced by traditional culture and significant socialist events, conveying a sense of universalism and patriotism.

In Chinese movie and television products, it is difficult to see rebellious protagonists like those in American movies. Instead, the emphasis is on promoting the spirit of patriotism and loyalty to the country. It is important to note that the scope of China's universalism is dynamic, where "the world" refers to the Chinese nation in times of crisis, and the entire human world in times of global crisis. For example, "The Wandering Earth," one of the highest-grossing and critically acclaimed Chinese movies in recent years, portrays the cultural values of universalism and loyalty to the country. Although the story is set against the backdrop of a global cataclysmic disaster, the movie does not deliberately emphasize the protagonist's Chinese background, nor does it tie Chinese traditional cultural symbols and roles. Instead, it places individuals with Chinese backgrounds in a collective scene of human beings saving the earth, thereby partially mitigating differences in regions, ethnic groups, and ethnicities, and establishing a discourse system of "a community with a shared future for mankind"[10]. The movie showcases the spirit of Chinese culture beyond external factors such as ethnic group and region, revealing patriotism and collectivism. "The Wandering Earth" currently has a rating of 7.8 on the popular North American movie website, the Internet Movie Database (IMDB), surpassing some Hollywood movies released during the same period.

Currently, China is actively exploring ways to "go global" with its movie and television productions[11]. The "14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of the Chinese movie Industry" explicitly states the need to enhance the international influence of Chinese movies, to tell good Chinese stories through movie, to expand international distribution netproducts, and to deepen international exchange and cooperation. In the course of China's movie and television industry development, the industry has already explored the path of going global[13]. In terms of actors, foreign actors are not uncommon in Chinese movie and television productions, which plays a positive role in

the external dissemination of Chinese movie and television productions. In the movie "The Wandering Earth", for instance, foreign actors are visible, which emphasizes the concept and emotion of universality, and also has a certain effect on the international dissemination of the movie. In recent years, Chinese movie and television productions have achieved some success in international dissemination, but there are still many problems. Currently, China has exported its movie and television productions to more than 60 countries and regions worldwide, but their popularity is not high, and the majority of exported movies have low box office revenue overseas. The main audiences are still in Southeast Asian countries. Due to cultural factors, Chinese martial arts dramas, fairy tales, and costume dramas are popular in Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Japan, and some have even been remade, but it is difficult to disseminate more Chinese cultural spirit-related movie and television productions and the target audience is limited. Due to cultural biases and other factors, many European and American countries still have the impression of Chinese movies and television productions that primarily focus on characters such as Bruce Lee.

The Chinese movie and television industry, after many years of development, has formed a complete industrial chain and internal rules, including awards and evaluation rules for all aspects of a movie, such as costumes, plot, and acting. This complete set of industry rules actually guides the development of the movie and television industry, which is conducive to the healthy competition and development of the industry. However, the influence of the Chinese movie and television industry in the world is insufficient, which is mainly reflected in the low international recognition of the rules made by the Chinese movie and television industry. China has yet to establish a widely recognized international movie award, and this disadvantage is unfavorable for the outward output and utilization of Chinese movies and TV products. It has even resulted in maliciously discrediting Chinese movie and TV products, such as "Ash is Purest White", as an attempt to cater to international awards. At the same time, the Chinese movie and television industry still has its own shortcomings, such as capital suppression of creativity, sky-high actor salaries, editing in other actors' performances, and a lack of inclusiveness in themes[12].

4. Comparison between American and Chinese cultures and movies

As a result of the differences in history, geography, and other aspects between China and America, there are significant differences in the national spirit and the movies that embody this spirit. American movies, due to their emphasis on individual heroism, have created a large number of heroic characters in their movies, especially in the Marvel series, which has developed classic images of superheroes who save the world. Through the use of these hero images, American movies export their individualism and heroism to the world. For example, Spiderman embodies the spirit of America's pursuit of freedom and rights. On the other hand, Chinese movies are influenced by mass heroism and socialist values, and they do not focus on a single hero figure. Instead, they emphasize universalism and patriotism, with a spirit that seeks power for the collective rather than the individual[13]. Individuals connect their own fate with that of the entire world, and the overall tone of the movie conveys the spiritual essence of the Chinese traditional culture: "It is the responsibility of every man to help the world thrive and avoid its destruction."

Another factor is the development of external publicity platforms. American movie and television products are promoted through world-renowned social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. To a certain extent, American movie and television products have been aimed at the world since their inception. China, on the other hand, still lacks a truly internationally recognized social media platform. Although TikTok's international version has attracted some international users in recent years, and it is now available in certain countries under the name "Douyin", the overall influence of this platform is still not comparable to that of other platforms[14]. Therefore, Chinese movie and television products are currently in a situation where their international promotional efforts are insufficient.

In terms of industry regulations, both China and America have formed complete industrial chains and industry rules domestically. However, in the international arena, America, relying on its advantages in the industry and the rules it has established, is undoubtedly more influential

internationally, and the industry rules it constructs are more internationally recognized. A very typical example recently is "A Spray of Plum Blossoms". In terms of its content, it occurred during a period when poverty alleviation had already achieved success, but under such circumstances, it promoted the tragedy of the lower strata of society, which undoubtedly runs counter to our mainstream ideology. However, this movie has won international awards, and the reasons behind it are worth considering. Chinese movie and television awards are not internationally recognized, and movie and television products that can truly express Chinese cultural values are difficult to obtain mainstream international awards[14]. This is another difficult problem for China's movie and television industry to improve its international influence.

5. Suggestions and conclusion

In general, a country's movie productions often reflect the cultural values of that country. As an important component of a country's soft power, promoting the cultural value is of great significance for a country's development. To truly build China into a socialist power, it is crucial to develop the Chinese movie and television industry and increase the international influence of Chinese movie and television productions. Currently, America, relying on its advantage in the industry and its movies and television productions, promotes individualism and heroism to the world. Compared with America, China is still lacking in cultural dissemination. To better express China's voice, China must attach importance to the creation and dissemination of Chinese movie and television productions. However, currently, the dissemination of Chinese movies and television productions faces challenges such as insufficient excellent products, cultural discount of movie products, limited dissemination channels, and insufficient international influence in the industry.

To truly promote Chinese movie and television productions and make the Chinese voice heard, the first step is to solve the problem of creating qualified products. Currently, the Chinese movie industry is plagued by a focus on viewership and capital, resulting in a noticeable decline in the quality of products. It is particularly important to rectify the industry and create outstanding products that reflect Chinese cultural values. To achieve this, the government needs to improve policies in taxation, finance, and exportation for the movie and television industry, increase support for its development, and promptly rectify any related issues while constructing more complete industry regulations. Furthermore, as the Chinese movie industry continues to develop, legal issues concerning copyrights, authorship, adaptation, production, and others have become increasingly prominent. The state and businesses must work together to promptly regulate and improve the legal framework for the movie and television industry. Additionally, it is necessary to strengthen efforts to combat the behavior of some creators who choose to defame the country and desecrate national spirits for the sake of fame and profit, and to continuously cultivate a more healthy and harmonious environment for the movie industry.

In the process of disseminating Chinese movies abroad, it is important to minimize cultural discrepancies and one of the key factors affecting the exportation of Chinese movies is the low accuracy of translation. China and Western countries differ greatly in language, culture, customs and habits. Therefore, it is inevitable to undergo translation when domestic movies are exported abroad. Therefore, how to present Chinese issues in a way that the international community can understand becomes the primary issue to be addressed in the dissemination of Chinese movies overseas. To better address this issue, it is necessary to seek cultural common ground between China and the West, and on the basis of reflecting Chinese cultural values, take the cultural common ground between the two countries as a breakthrough point to gradually increase foreign audiences' recognition of Chinese culture and expand the overseas market. Therefore, the exportation of Chinese movies should be targeted, that is, selectively exported to specific countries and regions. At the same time, it is necessary to control the translation and distribution of the exported movies, make systematic plans for the release of movies in different countries, gather foreign and Chinese translation experts and allocate them reasonably, and establish and widely promote quality standards and norms for the translation and adaptation of movies for overseas distribution.

In the face of the environment where America has already mastered international standards and

international social media platforms, how to make China's voice heard is not only a challenge China faces in the movie industry, but also a challenge China faces in many international affairs. Chinese voices have always been absent in expressing world affairs. Even if there are voices, they are often drowned out by Western dominant media. To solve this problem, a specific and in-depth exploration is required. However, at a superficial level, China needs its own international communication platform. In the past two years, Tencent, iQiyi, Douyin and other online platforms have actively developed and launched overseas versions, which is a positive attempt. During the "13th Five-Year Plan" period, in order to promote the development goal of movie and television products going abroad through online platforms, the State Administration of Radio and Television implemented broadcasting projects such as "Listen to China", "Silk Road" and "Asian Listening" for the diplomacy of the national movie and television industry. In the future development of the movie and television industry, China needs to continue to build our own international platforms and increase cooperation with existing international platforms to create platforms and channels that can effectively amplify the voice of China.

At the same time, efforts should be made to accelerate the promotion of the international influence of Chinese movie and television associations, strengthen international cooperation in the production chain of the movie and television industry, and help promote the improvement of China's international expression level in movie and television productions, and its entry into the mainstream of international society. It is also important to strengthen deep cooperation with marketing and promotion agencies, enhance localization promotion and deep cultivation of the domestic market, and effectively improve the breadth and depth of marketing and promotion of Chinese movie and television programs in key countries and regions. Meanwhile, strengthening international joint investment in the upstream of the movie and television industry chain is an important means to explore the international market, obtain discourse power in the movie and television industry, and expand international influence. Relevant industries and departments in China should participate in investing in globally distributed movie and television programs, small-scale movie and television production teams with strong production capabilities and regional or local influence, and actively attract international capital to invest in Chinese movie and television products, broaden China's movie and television financing channels, and enhance the international influence of China's movie and television industry.

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