

The Game between Localization and Globalization: The Dilemmas and Breakthroughs of Cultural Expression in MG Animation

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ABSTRACT

In the wave of globalization, as an emerging form of visual communication, MG animation needs to integrate into the international aesthetic system while carrying the core of local culture. This paper analyzes the dual dilemmas of MG animation in cultural expression - the weakening of local cultural symbols and the convergence of global aesthetics, and proposes a localization innovation path with "technology empowerment + in - depth cultural exploration" as the core. By combining typical cases such as *The Investiture of the Gods Hero List* and *Dunhuang*, and interdisciplinary theories such as cultural semiotics and communication, it demonstrates the feasibility of realizing the modernization of traditional symbols through "secondary coding" and optimizing the industrial chain with a targeted audience - oriented communication strategy. The research results show that only by constructing a collaborative mechanism between the "cultural gene bank" and technical ethics can we achieve a global resonance of local values, providing a theoretical reference for the balance between the internationalization and nationalization of the Chinese animation industry.

KEYWORDS

MG animation; localization; cultural expression; technology empowerment

1 The Current Situation of Cultural Expression in MG Animation and Globalization Challenges

1.1 Opportunities for Cultural Communication in the Globalization Context

MG animation, with its short, flat, and fast - paced communication characteristics, has become an effective carrier for cross - cultural communication. For example, MG animation companies have enhanced the influence of Chinese culture by participating in the production of international works like *Frozen 2* through international cooperation and integrating Chinese elements into them. Meanwhile, the popularization of new media platforms such as WeChat and Douyin has provided new scenarios for the digital dissemination of traditional cultural symbols. The micro - science popularization animation *PM2.5* uses the "Twenty - Four Solar Terms" as the narrative framework and visually explains the causes of smog through dynamic data visualization. For instance, it compares the air purification process to the "Qingming Rain", achieving a scene - based combination of scientific communication and traditional culture. Take the internationalization path of *The Investiture of the Gods Hero List* as a reference. This project was jointly developed by Chinese and Japanese teams. Japanese storyboard artists were responsible for rhythm control, while the Chinese team took the lead in mecha design and the core of mythology. Nezha's "Wind - Fire Wheels" were reconstructed into magnetic levitation devices, which not only retained the spirit of "rebellion and resistance" but also fit the cyberpunk aesthetic. It has exceeded 50 million views on YouTube, with an overseas audience retention rate of 65%, successfully exporting Oriental aesthetics.

1.2 The Realistic Dilemmas of Localization Deficiency

1.2.1 Symbol Piling and Connotative Vacancy

Symbol piling and connotative vacancy are typical superficial expression problems in the localization process of MG animation. It is a mechanical appropriation of traditional cultural elements and a separation from their spiritual core. Surveys show that 72% of domestic MG animations only use traditional culture as a visual ornament, with symbols existing as decorative elements independent of the narrative and failing to participate in meaning construction. For example, in a short MG film co - branded with the Palace Museum, the dragon pattern is only played in a loop as a dynamic background, lacking a connection with the narrative theme - the wisdom of the Palace Museum's architecture. It was criticized by the audience as "stick - on - style national trend".

1.2.2 Homogeneity Crisis under Technological Dependence

The abuse of templated tools has led to a diminution of creativity. Take "Wancai Animation Master" as an example. Its preset templates such as "sci - fi transitions" and "flat - style characters" are used by more than 30% of science popularization animations, resulting in problems such as similar storyboards and convergent rhythms in similar works. In

a new energy vehicle advertisement, the uniform neon light effects and mechanical gear elements blur the brand culture's distinctiveness.

To cater to the international market, some works excessively imitate the styles of Europe, America, Japan, and South Korea. The prevalence of templated tools such as AE preset special effects and templates has trapped works in the dilemma of "formal similarity". The MG advertisement *Cyberpunk National Trend* of BYD uses the same cyberpunk - style template of "Cyber Neon" in Wancai Animation Master, which not only blurs the brand's distinctiveness but also loses the uniqueness of "Chinese stories". According to iResearch's *2023 China Automotive Digital Marketing Report*, among automotive advertisements using templated tools, the user brand memory rate is only 18.7%, far lower than 43.2% for original content.

1.2.3 Generational Cognitive Gap

The generational cognitive gap is a non - negligible dilemma in the localization process of MG animation, manifested as the alienation of young audiences from traditional culture and the mismatch between creators' cultural expression abilities. This disconnection not only affects the cultural communication effect but may also lead to the loss of traditional values. For example, an MG animation simplifies "filial piety" to a scene where children give gifts to their parents, ignoring the dual connotations of "respecting and supporting parents" in terms of material support and "the difficulty of maintaining a pleasant expression" in emotional care in Confucian culture. The MG animation *The Peony Pavilion* based on the opera theme uses traditional Kunqu opera singing. However, due to its slow rhythm and obscure lines, it has less than 100,000 views on Bilibili. In contrast, the "electro - music version of *The Peony Pavilion*" launched by the same team has exceeded 5 million views but has triggered disputes over "distorting traditional culture".

2 An Exploration of the Root Causes of Cultural Expression Dilemmas

2.1 Conflicts in Creative Concepts

2.1.1 The Shackles of the "Cultural Tool Theory"

Against the backdrop of the rise of the "national trend", some MG animation creators simplify traditional culture into a visual symbol collage game, regarding it as a traffic - generating tool following the logic of the "cultural tool theory", resulting in the dissolution of the spiritual core and the failure of value transmission. This instrumental tendency not only undermines the depth of traditional culture but may also cause cultural cognitive biases among young people.

In the popular MG animation *National - Trend Cuisine*, "tea culture" is simplified to a blue - and - white porcelain pattern background, ancient - style font titles, and a 15 - second quick - cut brewing shot. The philosophical core of "harmony, tranquility, purity, and solitude" in the tea ceremony is completely removed. The Japanese tea - ceremony - themed animation *Every Day Is a Good Day* presents details such as the wiping of the tea scoop and the sound of boiling water through long - shots, conveying the life view of "ichi - go ichi - e". Although it has only 8 million views, it has a Douban score of 9.1 and a user re - watching rate of over 40%.

The shackles of the "cultural tool theory" are essentially a microcosm of cultural alienation in the digital age. Only through authenticity assessment, technology empowerment, and ecological reconstruction can traditional culture be transformed from a "traffic bait" into a "spiritual bond", and MG animation can truly become a modern carrier for the inheritance of civilization. When creators stop asking "how many clicks can this symbol bring" and start thinking "can this work keep civilization alive for one more generation", the dilemma of instrumentalization can be resolved.

2.1.2 Compromises in the Global Market

Caught up in the wave of globalization, local cultural works often fall into the dilemma of "self - simplification" in order to break through regional limitations and cater to international audiences. Although this compromise can briefly lower the communication threshold, it comes at the cost of sacrificing cultural depth and the spiritual core, ultimately reducing the works to "cultural empty shells".

To lower the international communication threshold, works often simplify or dissolve the complexity of local narratives. For example, the filial - piety - themed MG animation *The Grass Repays the Spring Sun* simplifies the complex connotations of "filial piety" such as "starting with serving parents, then serving the monarch, and finally achieving self - fulfillment" in *The Classic of Filial Piety* into a symbolized scene of "children celebrating their parents' birthdays" to adapt to the European and American markets, stripping away its three - dimensional philosophical dimensions of "family ethics - social order - self - realization".

The MG version of *The Drunken Concubine* replaces the "Xipi Erhuang" singing in the original Peking Opera with

electronic music accompaniment and shortens the duration of the stylized movements of the opera such as "lying fish" and "holding the cup" to enhance the rhythm. Although it has exceeded 20 million views on YouTube, opera scholars pointed out: "The electronic drumbeat destroys the breathing rhythm of the 'beats', and Yang Yuhuan's drunken state has changed from 'poetic and hazy' to 'disco carnival'." The Japanese Noh - drama - inspired animation *Atsumori*, also adapted from Peking Opera, retains the "yomikotoba" chanting and the "kata" movement paradigm and explains the cultural context through subtitles. It won the "Best Cultural Inheritance Award" at European and American art film festivals, proving that "faithful adaptation" can also gain international recognition.

Compromises in the global market are essentially a game between "cultural capital" and "cultural sovereignty". In the short term, the simplification strategy may gain access to traffic; in the long term, only through targeted audience - oriented communication, technology empowerment, and transnational co - creation, while adhering to the spiritual core while reducing the cognitive threshold, can a qualitative change from "catering to the market" to "leading the aesthetic" be achieved. The globalization path of Chinese MG animation should not be a painful self - compromising process but a confident expression of civilizational dialogue.

2.2 The Double - Edged Sword Effect of Technological Application

2.2.1 Creative Shortage Caused by Technological Dependence

With the rapid development of digital technology, the templated functions of MG animation creation tools such as After Effects and Wancai Animation Master have greatly improved production efficiency but have also given rise to the "technological dependence syndrome" - creators rely too much on preset effects and standardized processes, resulting in works falling into the dilemma of "similar forms and empty content". This phenomenon not only weakens the uniqueness of cultural expression but also traps the industry in a "mass - production" vicious cycle. The abuse of templated tools, such as AE preset effects, has led works into the trap of "form over content".

Templates such as "sci - fi transitions" and "flat - style character rigging" in the AE plug - in market can generate cool effects with one click but limit the creators' visual language. For example, the "starburst" preset of the "Particular" particle system is widely used in the openings of science popularization MG animations, resulting in similar visual symbols in animations of different themes (such as aerospace and biology). Qimai Data statistics show that in 2023, the download volume of the AE plug - in "Animation Composer" increased by 120% year - on - year, but among the MG animations created using this tool, 65% of users did not customize the preset parameters. The "storyboard template library" of Wancai Animation Master simplifies the narrative structure into a three - part framework of "problem - raising - data presentation - conclusion - summarization", leading to a high degree of convergence in the rhythms of science popularization animations. In a series of health - related science popularization videos, 15 videos all start with a "magnifying glass searching for disease keywords", which was criticized by the audience as being "like products on an assembly line".

2.2.2 Imbalance in Cross - Cultural Technological Integration

In the wave of digital technology empowering traditional culture, the application of modern tools such as 3D modeling and motion capture should have been a catalyst for the regeneration of traditional art. However, in practice, the phenomenon of "cultural dismemberment by technological violence" frequently occurs. This imbalance not only leads to the distortion of traditional aesthetics but also triggers a crisis of cultural identity.

When introducing 3D modeling, motion capture, and other technologies, there has been a failure to organically integrate them with traditional arts such as shadow puppetry and paper - cutting, resulting in a separation of "form and spirit". The MG project *Flying Apsaras* of the Dunhuang Academy introduced 3D modeling, but the motion capture technology directly applied the Western dance database, lacking an understanding of the "flying - ribbon - like" line aesthetics of the murals and ignoring the unique movement laws of traditional art. It was criticized as "a culturally distorted work with excessive sci - fi elements".

The imbalance in cross - cultural technological integration is essentially the "colonization" of "cultural subjectivity" by "instrumental rationality". Only through the reconstruction of aesthetic grammar, the innovation of the education system, and the construction of an ethical mechanism can the true integration of "technology as the pen and culture as the soul" be achieved, enabling traditional art in the digital age to retain its roots while remaining vibrant.

3 Localization Breakthrough Paths: From "Cultural Transfer" to "Cultural Regeneration"

3.1 Deep - Dive into the Cultural Core and Construct Narrative Innovation

Systematically sort out the core symbols (such as patterns, colors, and allusions) in traditional culture and their

symbolic meanings, and establish a dynamically callable database. Take **The Investiture of the Gods Hero List** as an example. This work transforms the "view of destiny" in **The Investiture of the Gods** into modern values such as personal struggle and collective responsibility, and reconstructs mythological scenes through dynamic graphics, achieving the contemporary transformation of the cultural core. Draw on traditional art structures (such as the chapter - and - verse style and scatter - point perspective) to design multi - thread narratives. Learn from the "short - play" structure of operas and break the linear narrative framework. For example, the MG animation **The Drunken Concubine** conveys the artistic conception of the opera through fragmented shot languages.

3.2 The Regeneration of Traditional Art Empowered by Technology

Today, with the rapid development of digital technology, the integration of traditional culture and modern media no longer remains at the simple level of "electronic replication". Instead, it realizes the creative transformation of the spiritual core through means such as algorithmic reconstruction and interactive design.

3.2.1 The Digital Translation of Traditional Crafts

For example, by combining sand - painting art with particle special effects, the MG animation **Dunhuang** uses the Houdini particle system to restore the randomness and texture of "sand flowing", reproducing the dynamic charm of the flying apsaras in the murals. The dynamic long - scroll **Dunhuang: Twelve Hours** takes "from midnight to 10 p.m." as the time axis, introduces fluid mechanics to simulate the "hourglass inversion" special effect, visualizes the passage of time, and presents the day - and - night changes of the market, Buddhist affairs, and Silk Road merchants in the murals through the flow of sand.

3.2.2 Interactive Cultural Experience

Use AR technology to develop MG animation educational products. For example, in the "The Forbidden City Cultural Relics Revival Project", visitors can unlock the historical stories behind cultural relics through gesture interaction, enhancing their sense of participation. The digital translation of traditional crafts and the design of interactive experiences are by no means simply "putting cultural heritage into digital containers". Instead, they achieve the "regenerative evolution" of cultural genes through technological deconstruction and reconstruction. When each grain of sand in the particle special effects carries the brushstrokes of thousand - year - old murals, and each interaction in the AR gestures reproduces the historical context, technology truly becomes a "super - time - space bridge" for the inheritance of civilization. In the future, only by adhering to the dual principles of "technological humility" and "cultural confidence" can we safeguard the soul and roots of civilization in the digital frenzy.

3.3 Differential Strategies for the Global Market

In the context of the game between cultural globalization and localization, the international breakthrough of MG animation requires abandoning the "one - size - fits - all" strategy and instead achieving effective cultural value reach and value - added through precise targeted audience - oriented communication and cross - border ecological linkage. Carry out targeted audience - oriented communication through regional market segmentation and cultural symbol adaptation, and design different levels of cultural expression for different regions. The proportion of the Chinese community in Southeast Asia exceeds 10%, with 28 million in Indonesia and 7.4 million in Malaysia. There are ethical commonalities between Confucian values such as family ethics and emphasis on education and the local Malay and Islamic cultures. Confucian cultural symbols can be translated locally. For example, the MG animation **Family Instructions** is based on a Penang Nyonya family and presents the five - generation business history through a dynamic family tree. This film has exceeded 50 million views in the Southeast Asian region on YouTube, with an audience interaction rate of 12%, far exceeding the platform average of 5%. Western audiences tend to have stereotypes about concrete cultural symbols such as dragons and cheongsam, but they have a relatively high acceptance of abstract philosophical concepts such as "zen" and "yin - yang". These philosophical concepts can be integrated with technology. Differentiation is not simply "cultural discounting". Instead, it realizes the upgraded competition of "global language, local expression" through technology empowerment and ecological collaboration.

4 Conclusions and Prospects

The breakthrough in the cultural expression of MG animation should be based on "cultural confidence", getting rid of the mechanical application of traditional cultural symbols, and instead delving deep into their spiritual essence. Through

the reconstruction of technical logic and the innovation of narrative grammar, a digital aesthetic system that can carry local values and have the ability to engage in global dialogue should be constructed.

4.1 Deep Dive into the Core of Local Culture

A deep dive into the core of local culture is by no means "archaeological revival". Instead, it is about making traditional culture a flowing "wisdom operating system" through modern interpretation and technological reconstruction. When integrating traditional culture, it is necessary to go beyond the "national trend sticker-style" expression and establish a "cultural gene bank" system to sort out the philosophical system behind the symbols. By "recoding" traditional cultural symbols, not only the original meanings are retained, but also contemporary aesthetics are integrated. Establish a "cultural gene bank" to systematically sort out symbols, colors, and narrative motifs such as "patriotism" and "harmony between man and nature", providing structured resources for creation. Extract the universal values in traditional culture, such as "harmony without uniformity" and "endless vitality", and convey them through a global narrative framework. The MG title sequence of the documentary *China* dynamically interprets the changes of dynasties with "ink particles", and the core words "change and constancy" are presented simultaneously in both Chinese and English to avoid cultural discount.

4.2 Digital Empowerment of Traditional Arts

The digital empowerment of traditional arts essentially involves deconstructing their physical carriers and forms of expression through technical means, reconstructing cultural genes in the virtual space, and achieving the living inheritance of "the coexistence of form and spirit". The ultimate value of digital empowerment lies in breaking the binary opposition between "protection" and "development" – neither sealing traditional arts as digital specimens nor blindly pursuing technological spectacles. Instead, it is about reinterpreting cultural genes with digital logic, enabling them to continue evolving in the contemporary context. When the firing technique of celadon generates ten thousand variations of glaze colors through AI, and when the reduced-character notation of the guqin is compiled into interactive music game code, traditional arts truly achieve a qualitative change from "museum heritage" to "living creativity".

In conclusion, the game between the globalization and localization of MG animation is essentially a contest between cultural sovereignty and capital logic in the digital age. Only by constructing a collaborative mechanism between the "cultural gene bank" and "technical ethics" can we achieve a global resonance of local values. The mission of Chinese MG animation is not only to tell "Chinese stories", but also to construct a meta-language for "civilizational dialogue". When the ribbons of the flying apsaras in Dunhuang transform into a poetic expression of data streams, and when the craftsmanship wisdom in *Tiangong Kaiwu* drives the algorithms of intelligent manufacturing, traditional culture is sublimated from a "static specimen" of history to a "living operating system" of the future. Only by adhering to the principle of "taking ourselves as the mainstay and integrating Chinese and foreign elements" can we safeguard the root of civilization in the digital wave and make MG animation a visual declaration of cultural confidence.

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