

**The Clash and Fusion of Chinese and American Cultures in film The Great
Wall**

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Abstract

The initial section of this paper delves into the Chinese elemental components of the Great Wall of China in the film, discussing them by dividing them into seven sections through technology, totems, folklore, culture, clothing, funerals, and architecture, respectively. The next section illustrates three differences between Western magical films and their Chinese counterparts by analysing representative works of the Western magical genre. By comparing the three aspects of text, background and theme, the differences between Chinese and Western magic films are understood, especially the cultural differences. This helps to analyse the elemental differences in the film The Great Wall and how to better combine the Chinese and American elements in the film while preserving the differences. The third part lists the three aspects from which the Great Wall of Cinema has integrated Chinese and American cultures. For example, the visual effect approach, the synergistic approach and so on.

KeyWords

Great wall, Cultural , Cultures Fusion,Chinese,American

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Literature review

According to Georgette Wang and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh(2005), the localization and globalisation of the culture business have led to a continuing tendency in cultural production known as hybridization. To create a mostly culturally faceless whole, hybridization goes beyond the simple mixing, merging, and synthesising of various components. Cultures generally create new forms and forge new links with one another during the process of hybridization.

Can Wang and Yongyi Wen(2020) argued culture is the result of many different nations coming together over a long period of time; due to regional variances, each national culture has its own distinctive features. Due to the stark contrasts between cultures, miscommunication in the course of cross-cultural interaction frequently results, which may lead to unneeded problems. It follows that the value of intercultural communication is obvious.

Rui Chen and Ying Liu(2023) pointed when it comes to cross-cultural production, we should give up the fruitless search for cultural symbols, establish roots in the local culture, and then focus on more specialised issues.

Introduction

Hollywood films are a major way for many Americans and other Western cultures to learn about China, its people and customs(Stromgren.D,1990,Pages 61-78).

Zhang Yimou's film "The Great Wall" is a Chinese Hollywood blockbuster for the world, a local Chinese story for the world, and a mirror to project Chinese elements around the world. Zhang Yimou with the help of his extraordinary imagination and unpredictable lens to the ancient Chinese Song Dynasty as the background, about the Great Wall stationed in the shadow of the forbidden army of valour and fearlessness, and foreigners from Western countries trust each other to unite to defeat the beast Taotie to save the world story. Whether the story itself, the Great Wall, or the film symbolises the greed and tyranny of the beast Taotie, are derived from the Chinese local culture, Zhang Yimou cleverly will be big and small variety of Chinese elements in this grand war.

The clash of Chinese and American cultures in The Great Wall is expressed by the fact that Chinese culture is on the left and American culture is on the right(Xixiang Xu,2007). Hofstede's definition of culture separates Chinese and American cultures according to their ethnicity and differences, as well as their similarities and blending in a type of metaphysical cultural fit. However, there is also a growing tendency for the strong importation and rejection of traditional Chinese culture by the strong modern American culture, as well as a gradual and deep integration between traditional Chinese culture and the strong modern American culture. From the perspective of film and

television, the clash between Chinese and American cultures is particularly strong. From this perspective, "The Great Wall", a Sino-US co-production, is a landmark film that ushers in a new era of Chinese-led film and television production, marking the rise of the Chinese film and television industry in the world of film and television art with Chinese elements.

The success of China and the United States in this film cooperation, but also shows that as the United States and China as a true pioneer of large-scale cooperation, regardless of the final box office of the "Great Wall", it has been for the United States and China film and television culture between the real cultural collision, the real more in-depth large-scale integration of the new starting point, a new beginning, a new era.

Ancient Chinese civilisations mentioned in The Great Wall

1. Ancient Chinese Technology

The trigger for the whole story of The Great Wall is "gunpowder", one of the Four Great Inventions. The two main characters in the film came to steal it based on the legend, they had never seen the real black gunpowder before and did not know its power, so it can be said that they were just blindly pursuing the benefits that the black gunpowder might bring to them, until William determined to help the forbidden army to capture the Taotie and use it in their research, and at that moment, the whole world seemed to be trembling as the screen was filled with flames and the smoke screen rose up in all directions. The power of black gunpowder shocks William and Tovar, who are eager to get their hands on it. The explosions confirm the power of gunpowder, and its destructiveness gives them a visual and psychological impact they have never seen before.

In addition to the main element of gunpowder, the film also shows a variety of advanced technological equipment of the specific era. Inside the Great Wall, there are a large number of mechanical machines, lifting platforms, waterwheel drive equipment, throwing equipment and a variety of weapons.

2. The Five-Animal Show and Taotie

The most magnificent scene in the film is the three battles between the forbidden army and the beast. The shadowless forbidden army is the general name for the five armies of tiger, eagle, deer, bear and crane, which were a mysterious army stationed at the

Great Wall at that time, and their duty was to resist the attack of the beast Taotie for 60 years.

They were born with the duty to defend against the attack of the beast Taotie in a cycle of sixty years. The opposition between good and evil is also not a mere fabrication. Zhang Yimou's inspiration for setting up the Five Armies, a symbol of justice, originated from the exercise technique invented by Hua Tuo, a medical scientist at the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, which was used to strengthen the body - the Five Birds of Prey was originally divided into the Tiger Play, the Deer Play, the Bear Play, the Ape Play, and the Bird Play, and because of the need for the distribution of tactics in the film, he took the eagle, which has eyes like a torch, as a substitute for the bird, and the crane, which has a deft wit, as a substitute for the ape, which fit perfectly with their respective sudden and dramatic attacks. This is a perfect match for their distinctive features, and the animal totems of the five armies are closely related to their respective combat skills, which are coordinated with each other to form the soul of the forbidden army.

The Five Armies incarnated in the Five Birds of Prey and the Taotie constitute the two opposing sides of the film, a common relationship that exists in almost every film. However, in *The Great Wall*, there is also a deeper dichotomy between life and death, and between heroism, justice, and greed, and this profound dichotomy has been skillfully transformed by Zhang Yimou into an ancient Chinese invention and storytelling. In the storytelling, the protagonist of the story is given a long and distant historical background, which is a fine sculpture and use of thousands of years of Chinese culture, the root of which is related to two different areas of ancient Chinese medical inventions and ancient Chinese myths, and Zhang Yimou to a certain extent

will be the fusion of these two together, constituting an innovative cultural output, in addition to the commercial nature of the film itself, the selection of such a dissemination of the Chinese culture and promotion of the role of an important. The film's selection plays an important role in the dissemination and promotion of Chinese culture.



Fig.1. Five-Animal Show (2021,<https://www.doudehui.com/33158.html>)

3.Kongming lanterns and Qinqiang

After watching the film, one is struck by the scene of Shao Dianshuai's sacrifice, when the whole army mourns on the city wall. The whole army is solemn and in unison, and in the moonlit night sky, one after another of the Kongming lanterns rises up, and finally merges into a long river that winds its way into the firmament. Because it rises in the air, so the Kongming lanterns are also known as "sky lanterns", which is the crystallisation of the wisdom of the ancient Chinese working people, the Western Han Dynasty ancient book "Huainan Wanbi Art" has recorded, called it a military signal lamp invented by Xin Qinniangu, with bamboo grates tied into a square frame, glued with paper, the following open chassis to turpentine as fuel, hot air as the driving force to the sky! It was powered by hot air and raised into the sky to convey messages. What is unforgettable is not only the visual impact, but also the auditory sensation. During the memorial service at the city walls, a Qin opera was sung. On the magnificent and solemn city wall, the sky lanterns to convey messages.

On the magnificent and solemn city wall, with sky lanterns at the head, the melodious and high-pitched Qinqiang resounded through the sky, sounding into the ears. This Qinqiang sang the state of mind of all the generals and soldiers at this moment, and also sang their vow to exterminate the Taotie and never give up their beliefs.



Fig.2.Kongming lantern(2019,<https://www.meipian.cn/2jms44jc>)

4. The Great Wall and Tang Poetry

As mentioned above, there is a solemn and dignified Qinqiang section in the film, which is based on the famous poem "Exit from the Plug" [2] by the Tang poet Wang Changling: "When the moon is bright in Qin time and the passes are in Han time, ten thousand leagues of the Long March have not yet been returned. But the flying generals of the Dragon City are here, and they will not teach the horses of Hu to cross the Yinshan Mountain. The ten seconds of singing on screen is aptly integrated into the plot of the time. The shadowless forbidden army stationed at the Great Wall was born with the duty to guard the Great Wall and protect the country, and the song "Out of the Seaside" encompasses in just 28 words the determination and perseverance of the forbidden army to guard the borders and protect the country all year round, which is what makes the Tang poem so attractive, expressing strong emotions with very few words.

5. Costume in the film

The costumes of different characters will give different meanings, the film costumes can make the film language colourful, Zhang Yimou's lens characters, costumes are one of the important to pay attention to. The armour of the five armies on one side is divided into five different colours: the Tiger Army is in gold, the Eagle Army is in red, the Crane Army is in blue, the Deer Army is in purple and the Bear Army is in black; on the other side, the Emperor and the ministers of Bianliang City are wearing brightly coloured silks, which contrasts the cold and heavy armour with the

comfortable and soft silks to express the characters, and it also shows the prosperity of the clothing development of the Song Dynasty at that time.

Although *The Great Wall* is a global commercial blockbuster, the costumes of the film highlight the ideological function of metaphor and symbol. Throughout the film, the costumes shuttle between realism and exaggeration, both traditional and rebellious, so as to highlight the characters' individual styles, whether it is the colour, texture or style, all closely linked to the role, which is aimed at getting close to the role or even becoming the original role itself. In *The Great Wall*, the cold-toned armour and the warm-toned satin correspond to each other on the military generals and civil servants, which is the attire and dress of ancient China since time immemorial, and also the balance between reality and entertainment in the film costumes.

6. Funeral Rituals in the Film

Funeral rituals are different in different countries in the world, among which the Chinese funeral culture is extremely elaborate and unique. In the film "*The Great Wall*", it is used to convey the respect and condolences of the forbidden army to the sacrificed Marshal Shao. As a guardian of the Great Wall of the shadowless forbidden army, the temple marshal after the sacrifice of all the ceremonies from the simple, the film shows very little, the hearth guarding, mourning mourning to send three, resignation, etc. did not appear on screen, but even if just a few seconds, under the careful but it is not difficult to find out the whole process, General Lin Mei for the dead cover the head, generals and soldiers wearing plain white mourning mourning as in the traditional rites of the pied pipa, cover the coffin funeral Qin gongs and drums

ringing noisy, the back of the The sky lanterns are equivalent to the traditional funeral lanterns, which are the perfect expression of the ancient Chinese funeral rituals.

7.Ancient Chinese Architecture in the Footage of The Great Wall

The story is set in Bianliang City of the Northern Song Dynasty, which is located in Kaifeng City of Henan Province, in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River. The city of Bianliang shown in the film has three walls, namely: the outer city, the inner city and the imperial city. The architecture follows the design style of the era in which the dynasty lived and exudes a strong traditional Chinese style. The overhead shot in the film is extremely short, even in the short time, you can still see the whole layout, the palace city surrounded by the front and rear halls, three dynasties and five gates, the central axis is symmetrical, the left ancestor and the right community, which is completely in line with the basic layout of the construction of ancient Chinese palaces.

The place where the protagonist finally defeats Taotie in the film is not the Great Wall, but the pagoda in the palace in Bianliang City. Buddhism, Taoism and other religions have a long history in China, and these religions have established their own buildings with their own characteristics while spreading. In the film, the central axis of the Imperial City built on both sides of the characteristics of the temple tower, from the four sides of the gradual change to six, eight or ten sides, solid structure, straight outline, beautiful lines, a certain height, because of this, the heroine Lin Mei can stand high to eliminate the beast king feeding below, and achieve the final victory.

The Great Wall, as a 104-minute film, covers the fields of ancient Chinese science and technology, medicine, military, daily social patterns, etiquette, literature, etc. This is the expression of Chinese culture in the form of cinematic art in the eyes of the world's

people, and the transmission of culture in the form of images and art represents the national culture and image of the country in the field of consciousness of the viewers, and the images blend life and art together in a way that constitutes a brand-new image of life and art. The image combines life and art in a narrative way, constituting a brand-new visual experience.

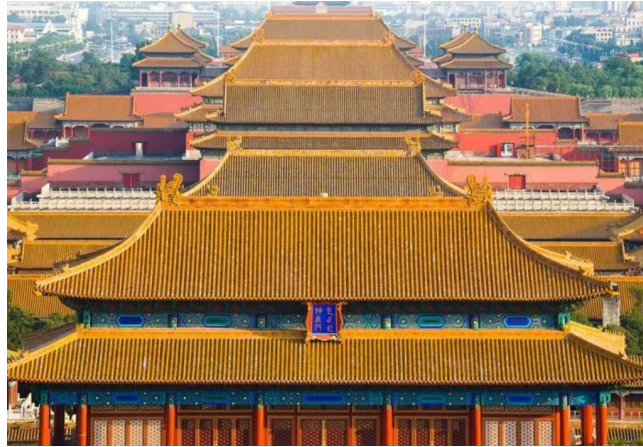


Fig.3. The Imperial Palace (2016,https://www.warting.com/pic/2016/0303/147626_6.html)

Cultural Differences between Chinese and American Magical Films

1. Textual Differences

The difference between Chinese and American magic films is firstly manifested in the textual basis of both of them. Throughout the history of Chinese magical films, the textual basis is relatively pure, mostly selected from myths and legends, novels about gods and ghosts, or folklore passed down from ancient times in China. For example, Journey to the West by Ming Dynasty writer Wu Cheng'en, from its debut on the big screen in the 1920s to Journey to the West - The Descending of the Demons at the beginning of 2013, has lasted for nearly a hundred years, and is still a popular subject for filmmakers and audiences to enjoy. Even the American version of "The King of Kung Fu" borrowed the classic image of the Monkey King. Liaozhai Zhiyi (聊斋志异), by Pu Songling of the Qing Dynasty, is much more popular with screenwriters and directors than long novels about gods and monsters like Journey to the West. The success of the Sinister Spirit series and the Painted Skin series brought Chinese magical films to a mini-crescendo of development. In addition, Chinese folklore is also a regular feature on the silver screen. For example, the Legend of the White Snake, one of the four major Chinese folk legends, has been brought to the big screen many times, and the films adapted from it, such as The Green Snake and The Legend of the White Snake, have also received great attention.

The textual basis of American magical films is much more complex than that of China. Hollywood magical films like to draw on mythological and religious themes. However, the short history of the United States makes it lack of local myths, so myths such as Greek mythology, Norse mythology, Egyptian mythology, Mayan mythology,

and religious stories such as Christianity and Judaism abound in American magical films. With the advancement of film technology, the fantasy novels that appeared in the 20th century also became the favourite of Hollywood screenwriters. As one of the masterpieces of Western magical cinema, *The Lord of the Rings* successfully brought the huge overhead world depicted in the original novel and the many creatures that travelled through it to the screen and presented it to the world audience.

2. Background Differences

The difference in the textual basis of Chinese and American magic films also causes the difference in their story background. Chinese myths, legends and weird novels are mostly set in realistic time and place, and often interspersed with real characters in history. Therefore, Chinese magical films adapted from novels of gods and monsters are also mostly based on the present world. For example, *Journey to the West* takes place in the Tang Dynasty, and the Tang Monk in the story is also a legendary character who has really appeared in Chinese history; although *Liaozhai Zhiyi* does not specify the dynasty in which the story takes place, it is extremely detailed in the introduction of the character's birthplace, for example, Ning Caixian in *Nie Xiaoqian* is a native of Zhejiang Province, and Wang Sheng in *Painted Skin* is a native of Shanxi Province, etc.; the chronological backgrounds of the four major folklore legends are even more clear, Meng Jiangnu happened in the Qin Dynasty, "Liang Zhu" appeared in the two Jin Dynasty, "Cowherd and Weaving Maiden" is the North and South Dynasties, "White Snake" originated in the Song Dynasty. The reason for this is that the main function of Chinese magic novels is to take the opportunity to

satirise the world, so it is essential to tell the time, place, and the causes and consequences of the story clearly.

Unlike Chinese magic films, which are mostly built on the present world, Western magic films prefer overhead worlds. For one thing, most fantasy novels take place in the overhead world. The fantasy world is essentially a fantasy world based on magic or other supernatural forces, so it is a common technique for authors to make up a world as the story stage of fantasy novels. For example, *The Lord of the Rings* is set in Middle-earth, and *The Chronicles of Narnia* is set in the continent of Narnia. In addition to the empty story background, the author has to create their speciality, society, history, culture and evolutionary branches for the non-human intelligent creatures or races appearing in the fantasy novels, such as elves, dwarves and orcs, etc. At the same time, in order to avoid the trouble brought by insinuating the religion in reality, the author even needs a fabricated mythological and religious system. Secondly, American magical films based on myths and legends sometimes fail to explain the time and place clearly. The myths and legends involved in American magical films come from many countries and nations, and some of the myths have been oral literature for a long time, and even have gaps in the transmission process, making it difficult to connect them with the real history. Therefore, it is not surprising that the strange phenomenon of Greek and Norse gods speaking fluent English has appeared on the screen. This also shows that American magic films are at a loss when creating history.

3.Theme Differences

In addition to the differences in texts and backgrounds, the themes expressed in magical films from the East and the West are also different. The current Chinese magic film tends to be love theme. Among the many themes, the four ancient Chinese folk tales are love stories, so the films adapted from them are also unquestionably based on the theme of love. For example, the films "The Green Snake" and "The Legend of the White Snake" are based on "The Legend of the White Snake". There are also films that borrow the original story's shell, weakening the original irony, but in fact completely subverting the original plot and creating a completely new story content. For example, the film series "Painted Skin" extends the very simple triangular relationship between Wang Sheng, the female ghost, and Chen in the original, and highlights the intricate love-hate entanglements between people, between demons, and between human beings and demons through the re-creation of the characters; Stephen Chow's "Journey to the West" series weakened the story of the four masters and disciples who were fetching scriptures from the West in the original, and took the love between the Most High and the Purple Fairy as the theme, which is a typical love story in the cloak of It is a typical love story under the cloak of magic.

American magical films pay more attention to highlighting the personal value of the saviour and the heroism of a small group, mostly depicting the legendary growth story of certain heroes against the background of war, racial or religious disputes. In western magical films, what attracts the audience most is the heroic adventure: most of the film's protagonists start out as minor characters who do not stand out in their daily lives, possess supernatural abilities in the fantasy world, and then go through great dangers to achieve a decisive victory, and in the process complete their self-

finding and self-salvation, and ultimately return to the real world. Iron man in the Iron man series and Captain America in Captain America both represent the theme of heroic growthism.



Fig.4. Iron Man (Avengers: Endgame 2019, Avengers: Endgame)

Integration of Chinese and American Cultures

1. Technology and Visual Effects Presentation

The Great Wall is one of the rare Chinese-American cooperative films that is shot almost entirely from the point of view of foreign actors and actresses, and it is a magnificent epic fantasy. The visual language of The Great Wall is magnificent. In particular, the treatment of the battle scenes is a combination of Industrial Light & Magic and Weta, as well as other Chinese and American visual effects and post-production teams, which adds a lot to the visual effects of the film. The epic montages depicting the war scenes in the film bring the audience into the immersive fantasy action scenes. In terms of the details of the film, in The Great Wall, the vibration of the

fascia of the head of the king of the beasts when the beasts attacked the city and the synchronous vibration of the fascia of the organ cavity of the neck of the beasts resonate in detail, which is a combination of the American modern visual effect technology and the imagery of the traditional Chinese classic "The Classic of the Mountains and the Seas", which is exquisite and realistic, and is made by heaven, and it adds enough power to shake people's hearts to the film.

2.Direction and Collaboration

First of all, the "Great Wall" itself is a model work of deep integration of Chinese and American culture, between Chinese and American film and television culture, constructed a communication between the Great Wall of Chinese and American film and television art. Traditional film and television exchanges between China and the United States are usually limited to cooperation in terms of capital, technology, production, and support for non-major actors and actresses. However, in this film, there are as many as three main roles played by foreign actors, which is rare in Sino-American co-productions. At the same time, the visual effects and post-production of the entire film are almost the result of Sino-US intellectual cooperation. Secondly, unlike most of the previous Sino-US co-productions, which were directed by the American side, this film was directed by the Chinese side, and the Chinese side was involved in a great deal of the setting of the plot and other aspects. Finally, there is a lot of interaction and solidarity between the main actors and actresses from both the US and China in this film. At the end of the film, the audience sees that, with the powerful Taotie almost completely out of control, the Chinese and American heroes and heroines complete the almost impossible task of guarding with trust and commitment to each other.

3. Intersecting Wanderings and Bridging Commonalities

It is obvious that the collision between cultures, as well as the conflict triggered by cultural collision, cannot be completely avoided; in cultural collision and conflict, it is obvious that there can be no winner in the true sense. Only when both sides take the initiative to integrate cultures can a win-win or even multi-win situation be achieved. In recent years, the Chinese and American film and television cultural communities have not only strongly agreed on this point, but have also been working hard to strengthen the close cooperation between the two sides. In the cultural collision between China and the United States, we see that the origin of the collision between Chinese and American culture, in fact, is a kind of cultural intersection of uncontrolled straying, whether it is culture or thinking, or the root of the collision of the generation, development, presentation, and so on, and ultimately by the commonality to be bridged. Moreover, with the continuous development of the symbiosis, co-temporality and co-evolution of the post-modern film and television culture, the intersection of the Chinese and American film and television culture is out of control, and is in the process of integration of commonality, and is constantly tending to be bridged. At the same time, in fact, from the observation of China's film and television art development in recent years, China's openness, inclusiveness, foresight, etc., is in the process of seamlessly bridging the gap with the U.S. culture to obtain a more in-depth fusion of film and television culture.

4. New Development of China-US Film and Television Cultural Co-operation

In recent years, with the arrival of the peak of China-US film and television cooperation, it has been heralded that China-US film and television culture is opening

up a great new generation of symbiosis and common prosperity by collision and integration, and by integration and common development. In fact, the future development of China and the United States film and television culture can be completely independent of politics, regardless of the two superpowers of China and the United States of the international relations of the future, China and the United States film and television cultural exchanges are bound to become the main theme of the development of film and television art in the next century. China has both the billions of mature viewers that Hollywood desperately needs, as well as the immense cultural heritage of 5,000 years of history that Hollywood desperately needs. Under these two urgent needs, the Great Wall, the in-depth co-operation of the film came into being, in fact, is more like a historical development of necessity. The Great Wall, the largest US-China co-production in history, is no longer relevant, even if the final box office result is ill-fated. It is because China and the United States have already taken a welcome step forward in the process of deep integration, deep cooperation and deep development of film and television culture. Looking ahead, we can see that regardless of the political and economic game between the two superpowers, the film and television cultural co-operation between China and the United States is getting closer and closer, more and more frequent, and more and more harmonious.

Conclusion

The Great Wall, the largest Sino-US co-production, is a magnificent and majestic epic masterpiece. If we look at it from a more profound imagery, the Great Wall is in fact a strong call to unite the consensus of mankind with its magnificent epic strokes, in which the Chinese and American film and television cultures have been more tightly knit together than ever before. It is true that American film and television culture, as a leading exotic culture in the world, is in a strong position in cultural dissemination and output. In recent years, the tilt of American film and television culture towards Chinese film and television culture has become more and more obvious. This fusion of Chinese and American film and television culture has become a wise and win-win move for China and the United States in response to international cultural cooperation, which is beneficial to the shaping and strengthening of a more flexible and mature Chinese film and television culture system, and The Great Wall has in fact taken a big step forward. The Great Wall has in fact taken a welcome step forward. The success of the cooperation between China and the United States in this film also shows that as a forerunner of real large-scale cooperation between China and the United States, no matter what the final box office of The Great Wall is, it has already been a new starting point, a new beginning, a new era for the film and television culture of China and the United States to really put aside the collision of cultures and to really carry out a more in-depth large-scale integration.

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