

Research on the Dissemination of Japanese Anime: A Case Study of “*Neon Genesis Evangelion*”

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Abstract:

Nowadays, with the rapid development of the Internet and the deep integration of various media, different cultures in different countries can also be spread across the mainland, among which the most representative is Japanese animation. Since the last century, Japanese anime has been popular worldwide due to its innovative plot, interesting content, and other factors, receiving widespread attention. However, today's Chinese anime is in the stage of revival, with a large number of works, but still lacking in quality. The paper analyzes the development history of Japanese anime and the Japanese anime which called “*Neon Genesis Evangelion*”. It concludes that the animation production mode, cultural integration, and official cooperation in the work have made great contributions to the development of Japanese anime dissemination. Based on this, this paper proposes the following suggestions: Chinese animation should change its production mode, integrate different national cultures, and seek cooperation between different industries and companies.

Keywords: Japanese anime; cultural integration; production mode; cross-industry cooperation

1. Introduction

Cultural diplomacy is a diplomatic strategic activity in which a country disseminates its own culture to the outside world, exports its national values, and realizes its national culture. In the 21st century, with the rapid development of the Internet, various communication platforms are gradually connected. Thanks to this, news, culture, etc., among countries can also circulate the world. On this basis, Japanese animation is spread worldwide through the Internet

and other media, and has a great influence. According to the “Japan Animation Industry Report 2024” released by the Association of Japanese Animations (AJA), in 2023, the size of the Japanese animation market, calculated by end-user consumption, increased by 14.30% year-on-year, reaching 3.3465 trillion yen, with significant contributions from online distribution and overseas markets. In addition, the overseas market for Japanese anime has grown significantly by 18.11% to 1722.2 billion yen, once again surpassing Japan's domestic market in terms of

scale and growth rate. Japanese culture relies on anime as a carrier, and through the demand for commercial globalization and cultural interpretation, it has achieved cultural output globally [1]. In China, Japanese animation has become an important factor influencing the cultural values of contemporary teenagers. Under its cultural output, a large number of teenagers in China have become fans of Japanese animation culture, such as “coser”, “anime”, and “otaku”.

In the history of Japanese anime, the work “*Neon Genesis Evangelion*” achieved excellent results. It premiered on TV Tokyo Network on October 4, 1995, and had a great impact on future Japanese anime creators. The Animation Production Committee it created to cover anime, games, manga, and anime derivative peripherals, and had a landmark innovation in the dissemination of Japanese anime. And its excellent animation plot sparked a craze in the Japanese anime industry after the completion of the animation [2]. The series of works in “*Neon Genesis Evangelion*” is also a representative of Japanese anime.

From this, it can be seen that animation is an excellent medium for spreading culture and can also become an important path for exporting China’s excellent traditional culture. There are many excellent anime works that integrate traditional Chinese cultural elements, such as the Japanese anime “*Ya Boy Kongming!*”, the Chinese culture-infused “*Naruto*”, the Hollywood animated film “*Mulan*”, and this year’s Chinese animated film “*Ne zha 2*”. This paper argues that the success of these works demonstrates that China’s excellent traditional culture simply lacks a suitable channel for dissemination. In recent years, most of the anime works in China, such as “*Dragon Raja*”, “*Scissor Seven*”, “*Fox Spirit Matchmaker*”, etc., have achieved certain success in terms of viewership and reputation, but the ethnic cultural and spiritual content in their works is very lacking [3]. Studying the creative history, dissemination, content, and other aspects of the series “*Neon Genesis Evangelion*” has important reference significance for how China’s animation industry can create high-quality animated works with depth and content in the future. In addition, through the study of the fusion of European, American, and Japanese cultures in his works, it also has important implications for how Chinese works can cleverly integrate excellent traditional Chinese culture in their stories, eliminate cultural barriers between different countries, and better output excellent cultural works.

2. Cross-Cultural Export Process of the Japanese Anime Industry

Studying the history of Japanese anime can help better

understand the dissemination of Japanese anime and how it integrates Japanese culture into its works while achieving dissemination in different media worldwide. The development history of the Japanese anime industry can be roughly divided into the following six stages: the embryonic period (1917-1945), the exploratory period (1945-1962), the comprehensive revitalization stage (1963-1978), the golden age (1978-1989), the apocalyptic glory of the century’s end (1990-2000), and the new century (after 2001) [4]. In the embryonic period, Japan introduced a large number of European and American animations, mainly from the United States. Once this novel industry was introduced, it received a lot of attention from the Japanese people. As a result, a large number of animation creators emerged in Japan, led by the father of Japanese animation, Shimokawa Hekoten, Kitayama Seitarō, and Junichi Kouchi. During the exploratory period, Japan was in the post-war stage and influenced by the United States. The works contained elements of American culture, such as the protagonist of the gangster in “*Yoidore tenshi*” wearing an American suit, going to social dance halls, and deconstructing the “Western civilization superiority theory” [5]. This situation did not improve until the establishment of Toei Animation Co., Ltd. in 1956. In the comprehensive revitalization stage, marked by Osamu Tezuka, the Japanese anime industry gradually rose. Osamu Tezuka’s works abandoned commercialism and were the first to elevate animation to a humanistic level. He had a great influence on the later Japanese anime industry and became a spiritual inspiration in the hearts of countless anime creators. During the golden age and the apocalyptic glory of the century’s end, excellent and far-reaching works such as “*Ranma ½*”, “*Crayon Shin Chan*”, and “*Neon Genesis Evangelion*” were produced. These works reflect on the current social situation in Japan, incorporating the author’s unique insights and reflecting their spirit. The integration of cultures from other countries and the high-quality story content of the works themselves have enabled Japanese anime to go global. In the new century, the work “*The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*” created a “one hundred million person Suzumiya” and sparked a craze for adapting light novels into anime. Japan’s cultural output reached an unprecedented height. On this basis, the Japanese government has clarified the cultural diplomacy direction of using the anime industry as an export window.

3. Case Analysis

Hideaki Anno projected his mental states from various stages onto the characters in “*Neon Genesis Evangelion*”, creating a distinct protagonist with a distinct personality in the work [6]. At that time, the Japanese animation in-

dustry was very depressed due to the Tsutomu Miyazaki incident. After the completion of EVA, it triggered a boom in Japanese society, which reduced the criticism of Japanese society on the “otaku” culture at that time and broke the deadlock of the Japanese animation industry. From the field of animation, it created a resurgence of Japan’s anime culture, which had a great impact on subsequent animation works.

3.1 Animation Production Mode

“*Neon Genesis Evangelion*” adopts the production mode of the Animation Production Committee, which enables different companies to perform their respective duties in their respective fields of expertise. This model is of great help to the dissemination and peripheral income of works. According to this model, Japanese anime has formed a mature industry chain and made great contributions to the cross-cultural dissemination of Japanese anime. The earliest animation production committee to be adopted was the animation “*Musekinin Kanchou Tylor*”, and the “EVA Production Committee” sparked a movement that was highly sought after by the industry. The Animation Production Committee is generally composed of production companies, television stations, advertising companies, record companies, toy companies, etc. The advantages of its decentralized functions, wide dissemination channels, and strong monetization ability are the reasons why it is popular in Japan. According to this mode, works can not only enter the market quickly, but also commercialize the surrounding works simultaneously. Based on this, the Japanese animation industry market rapidly expanded after 1990 [7].

3.2 Cultural Integration

For audiences from different cultural contexts, including elements of the same culture in a work can better help them understand the charm of the work, as well as facilitate its cross-cultural dissemination and cultural output within their own country. In the plot setting of “*Neon Genesis Evangelion*”, it is not difficult to see the Western elements it contains, such as angel, Adam, and cross elements, as well as the Ode an die Freude in the “Human Instrumentality” scene, reflecting the integration of Western culture and local culture in the work [8]. These elements that are closer to the West help audiences from different cultural backgrounds better understand the story content they want to express. On this basis, the production company cleverly placed the story background in the Japanese cultural context of “Third New Tokyo”, and designed the protagonist as a high school student in Japan. As a result, the work can better showcase Japanese culture. The

scene of Ayanami’s smile in “*Neon Genesis Evangelion*” to some extent conveys Japan’s Mono no Aware Culture [9]. It is also very common in other anime works, such as “*Gintama*” where different factions represent different countries, and the image of Japan represented by the protagonist conveys the traditional Japanese culture of “Bushido” in the work.

3.3 Cross-Industrial Cooperation

Cross-Industrial Cooperation has effectively promoted the development of the animation industry, and the most representative of this is the Manga Pilgrimage. The original intention of Pilgrimage was to worship at religious holy sites, and now it has become a film and television travel activity derived from anime culture [10]. The Manga Pilgrimage has stimulated fans’ enthusiasm for the works, increased the income after the works were launched, and is conducive to the creation of subsequent works [11]. At the same time, it has stimulated the willingness of fans from different countries to travel and promoted the cross-cultural dissemination of the work to a certain extent. This tourism model, in which fans search for the filming location of their animated works and designate it as a “holy land”, is decisively different from other tourism models. Fans seek fun on their own during holy land tours and create new cultures with residents [12]. Art originates from life, and there are also scenes in EVA that reference real architecture. The “*Third New Tokyo City*” is set in Hakone, Kanagawa Prefecture. After the work became popular, it decided to travel to Hakone. The official also launched AR software that can only take photos in specific locations, official peripheral stores, etc., to meet the needs of tourists and drive local economic development.

4. Inspiration for the Development of Animation in China

4.1 Update Anime Production Mode

Based on the “Animation Production Committee”, China’s animation industry can develop new production models, such as initiating planning schemes by animation companies and then seeking investment and cooperation from large companies such as Tencent and NetEase that have involvement in various fields. In this way, animation promotion is guaranteed, the quality of animation works is improved, audience satisfaction with the works increases, and related benefits of peripheral products are also enhanced.

4.2 Integrating Different Cultures

It is quite difficult for audiences from different cultural contexts to fully understand the content of the work. Therefore, in the production of Chinese anime works, it can try to interpret and reconstruct elements of different countries' cultures, traditions, etc., integrate them into the works, create commonalities with overseas audiences, and promote the dissemination of the works overseas. Like the reconstruction of Western cyberpunk elements in *"The Ghost in the Shell"*, set in a Hong Kong-style city and integrated with Japan's unique culture and social background at the time, this work has become a timeless classic. There are also animations in China that have achieved cultural integration, such as the explosive popularity of *"Blades of the Guardians"* in Japan, which has a manga style similar to Japanese manga and is easily accepted by Japanese readers. The series of works *"To Be Hero"* reconstructs the "hero" element in the Western context and tells the unique understanding of the production team. However, most of the works still suffer from the problem of not telling well about Chinese culture and not doing well in cultural deconstruction.

4.3 Extend the Industrial Chain

After decades of development, Japanese anime has formed a mature industry chain, while Chinese anime, although starting from the same level as Japanese anime, has a period of gap and is still not complete compared to Japan. Chinese anime can try to collaborate with different industries in the animation industry to extend the entire industry chain. For example, the appearance of representative buildings in the work can arouse fans' interest in a "Manga Pilgrimage", and then collaborate with the local community to launch an official store. Or collaborate with the filming location to build models of anime locally. Collaborate with catering establishments to launch limited anime packages. Develop official pilgrimage apps to stimulate fan consumption, achieve cooperation between different fields, and extend related industry chains.

5. Conclusion

Anime culture has a strong influence on contemporary young people in China. The research topic of this paper is to take the Japanese anime *"Neon Genesis Evangelion"* as an example to study its anime history, content, production mode, etc., hoping to provide inspiration for the development of China's anime industry. This paper analyzes the research background, history of Japanese anime, and the *"Neon Genesis Evangelion"* series of works, and concludes that the animation production committee

driven by *"Neon Genesis Evangelion"* has promoted the development of Japanese anime. The cultural integration elements in the works are conducive to the dissemination of the works overseas, and the story location has become a holy land in the hearts of fans, stimulating local economic development. Finally, it is concluded that China's anime needs to update its anime production mode, integrate different cultures, and extend the industry chain. However, there are still shortcomings in the construction of mature cross-cultural integration models and improved production models in the paper, which should be taken as future research directions.

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