

An Analysis of Chinese Image in Japanese Anime

Suping Sun^{1,a}, Xiaoyu Ge^{2,b} and Shuang Tan^{1,c}

¹School of Foreign Languages, Harbin University of Science and Technology, Harbin 150040, China;

²Department of Foreign Languages, East University of Heilongjiang, Harbin 150066, China.

^asunsuping1003@163.com, ^bxyge@163.com, ^ctanshuang123@126.com

Abstract

Japanese anime has created many Chinese images. This article analyzes 109 Japanese anime since the Second World War and summarizes the characteristics, identity and role of Chinese characters in animation in various periods. In the 1970s, there is almost no Chinese character in Japanese anime. In the 1980s and 1990s, due to the increasing frequency of Sino-Japanese exchanges, Chinese characters appeared many times and were protagonists with more positive roles. In the 21st century, with Sino-Japanese friction increasing, there are more and more bad characters of Chinese characters. With the deeper exchanges between two countries, the characters and characteristics of Chinese become rich.

Keywords

Japanese anime, Chinese image, Sino-Japanese exchange.

1. Introduction

Japan is one of major countries that produces and consumes animated cartoons. Animation is a representative popular culture of Japan [1]. Japanese animation audience age is very wide, and among them the younger generation is the most. This characteristic of Japanese animation enables it to show the thoughts of young Japanese people. China and Japan are geographically neighboring countries of "one strip of water" and "the same kind of culture". Japanese animation has many characters that can portray the image of Chinese people. There are many Chinese images in Japanese animation, which can be regarded as the Chinese image that Japanese young people feel. So what is the image of the Chinese in animation? How did the image of the Chinese come into being in animation? These are the questions to be answered in this paper. Based on the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations and the Tiananmen incident, this paper divides the animation into four periods: before 1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999 and after 2000, and discusses the characteristics, identity and role of Chinese characters in Japanese animation.

2. Blank Period Before 1979

Japan had produced animated films before World War II, but the animation industry is developed after World War II. From 1955 to 1979, when the first animated film Depending on Others was released, only five animated films showed Chinese characters, namely White Snake Biography (1958), Journey to the West (1960), Wukong Adventure (1967), Journey to the West in Space (1978) and Lubang III (1978). The former four animated films are adapted Chinese classics The Biography of White Snake and Journey to the West. Legend of White Snake is the first color animation film produced by Dongying Animation Company in Japan. It is a monument work of Japanese animation industry. It cooperated with Hong Kong companies at that time and

the sales market was not only Japan but also Asia. This is why they choose Chinese folklore. Journey to the West is also produced by Dongying Animation Company. Wukong Adventure is based on the prototype of "My Monkey King". The plot of Flame Mountain in Wukong Adventure is similar to Princess Iron Fan. Princess Iron Fan is China's first Asian long animation film produced by the Wan brothers. Lupin III began to play in 1971. It was a well-known national animation in Japan at that time. It depicted the adventures of Lupin III, the grandson of the French knight-errant Lupin, and his partners, Jigen Daisuke, Ishikawa Goemon. In 1978, Hu Zhengu, a Chinese character, appeared in the 39th episode of Lupin III. Hu Zhengu is the owner of a Hong Kong smuggling organization. He is a fat middle-aged man. Hu Zhengu is a bad man who throws his subordinates into the crocodile pond as bait, and an impolite person who breaks eggs with his subordinate's forehead and eats them directly. Among them, it is impressive that ordinary people wear ordinary clothes, while the main characters wear Qing robes or cheongsams. It's full of Chinese elements, such as the dragon sculptures in Hu Zhengu's residence, Chinese Kungfu [2].

From 1955 to 1979, Japan quickly became the second largest country in the economic world, while China was in the period of the Cultural Revolution, and there was a big gap between China and Japan economically. This is why few Chinese characters appeared in Japanese animation during this period. Japan's political circles have been divided on China's issue, and even the Communist Party of Japan has split into pro-China and anti-China parties. Before the resumption of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, although the Japanese were not totally indifferent to China, even the Japanese scholars who knew China best and the pro-China factions of the Japanese Communist Party did not know much about China. In short, due to the lack of the information from China and the lack of frequent economic and cultural exchanges, few Chinese characters appeared in Japanese animation before 1979.

3. The Prosperity Period of the 1980s (1980-1989)

From 1980 to 1989, there are 14 animations that appeared Chinese characters. Among them, there are 4 animations that based on theme of Journey to the West, and 1 animation that based on the adaptation of Three Kingdoms. The number of works that contain Chinese characters has increased dramatically, and adaptation of Chinese classics is one of the characteristics of works in this period.

In 1982, Chinese characters first appeared as protagonists. Lin Mingmei, the heroine of The Super Dimension Fortress Macross, is a Chinese-Japanese mixed-race. Her father is Chinese and her mother is Japanese. Her parents run Mingxie Tower, a Chinese restaurant in Yokohama China Street. The theme of this animated film is the battle between robots in the cosmic context. The two sides of the battle are the Gerardi people of the Earth's unified government. Lin Mingmei was involved in a battle with extraterrestrial people. And with the help of the hero, she lived in a space warship. Looking forward to the performing arts, she participated in the beauty contest in the ship. And then, she got into show business and her records are popular.. During the space war, her songs intoxicated extraterrestrial people and played an important role in ending the war. Lin Mingmei became a legend of human beings, a cosmic song girl and was named after later generations [2]. Her identity as a Chinese-Japanese mixed-race is of far-reaching significance. In this animation, Lin Mingmei, the crystallization of China and Japan, is portrayed as the highest messenger of peace, symbolizing the general trend of friendly exchanges between China and Japan at that time.

Superman Ramen, representing China, is the supporting role in Kinnikuman (1983). The narrative function in animation is from the perpetrator to the helper. Kinnikuman is a fighting animation. The protagonist Kinnikuman is a just superman. Ramen began as a cruel Superman who killed others, and later became a just Superman under the influence of the muscular man.

In 1988, the theme of the animation Legend of the Galactic Heroes that adapted from the famous aerial historical novel is also the cosmic war. The protagonist Yang Wenli is descendant of Chinese. Yang Wenli is a soldier who attaches great importance to freedom and democratic republicanism, and is also a pacifist. He is a hero trusted by his subordinates and respected by his enemies. There are similarities between Yang Wenli and Lin Mingmei. They are all people who grew up in war and peace-loving heroes. This has something to do with China's own history. It can be seen that the Japanese wish to keep peace with the Chinese people [2].

Another feature of the Chinese image in this period is kungfu. Bruce Lee fever in the 1970s and Jackie Chan fever in the 1980s introduced the charm of Chinese Kungfu movies to Japan. There were many individual fan clubs for Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan in Japan at that time. Affected by the animation industry, Kung Fu has become the representative feature of Chinese characters. Chinmi in Tekken Chinmi and Dohko in Saint Seiya are the representatives. Tekken Chinmi (1988) tells the story of Chinmi's journey of practice and his experience of justice. Chinmi was discovered by the teacher of Dalin Temple. While learning boxing, he solved all kinds of incidents. In the Japanese animation of the 1980s, almost all Chinese characters can do kungfu. Since the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations in 1978, Sino-Japanese economic and cultural exchanges have become increasingly frequent, and Sino-Japanese relations have entered the honeymoon period, which is naturally reflected in the animation. The Chinese characters have increased significantly, and the image of the Chinese people has become more important and positive. During this period, Chinese characters were both protagonists and positive roles, reflecting the general trend of Sino-Japanese friendship.

4. In-depth Exchange Period in the 1990s (1990-1999)

In the 1990s, there were 12 animations with Chinese characters appearing on the stage. Compared with the last 10 years, the number has decreased slightly, but none of them has been changed from Chinese classics. In this period of animation, Chinese characters are the leading role of 5, and all characters are positive images. Zhang Wufei, the protagonist of GUNDAM W (1995), is a scholar and fighter. He has a firm character, advocates justice and never compromises with evil. His shortcoming is some paranoia. 3X3 eyes (1995) mainly revolves around the story of teenage girls from Tibet. The male protagonist in Cardcaptor Sakura (1998) is stubborn and gentle. He is the descendant of Taoism in Hong Kong. He is highly skilled in martial arts and proficient in magic [3]. Count D in Pet Shop of Horrors (1999) is also the leading actor. The most representative of them is Cooking Master Boy (1997). Cooking Master Boy mainly tells the growing process of chef's "Liu Maoxing" to refine cooking skills, and shows China's extensive and profound culinary culture. The time was the end of the Qing Dynasty. All the characters were Chinese. The background was set in Guangzhou. The protagonist Liu Maoxing (nicknamed A Mao) was born in Sichuan Province, and is the youngest genius who passed the test of stunt cook. The first half of the animation describes his growing up as a cook, and the second half describes the story of the confrontation between the "legendary kitchen utensils" and the dark cuisine circles. Chinese cuisine is the proud culture of Chinese people. In Japan, Chinese cuisine, together with Japanese cuisine and Western cuisine, is a common dish eaten by Japanese people. It is worth mentioning that Liu met Shiro, a Sino-Japanese mixed-race, when he passed through Guilin on his journey of practice. Shiro's mother is Japanese, and her Chinese restaurant was rescued by Liu Maoxing when it was about to go bankrupt under the pressure of corrupt officials. Since then, Shiro called Liu Maoxing Brother A Mao and took the initiative to become a disciple of A Mao and travel with A Mao [2].

Master Asia in Mobile Fighter G Gundam (1994) was the only villain in this period. The background of Mobile Fighter G Gundam is that mankind abandoned the earth and established colonial countries in space. In order to avoid large-scale wars in the universe, countries sent

representatives to drive their own Gundam to race. Winning countries can gain the dominance for up to four years. Master Asia is the last champion. He is the teacher of the Domon. Domon was rescued by Master Asia when he ran away from home and wandered about. Domon later learned from Master Asia. Master Asia is invincible, calm, and proficient in military tactics. He's the evil man who Domon wants to defeat. Despite being a villain, Master Asia is invincible and still tries every means to guide Domon. He loved nature very much, but saw it destroyed by human beings and then wanted to destroy human beings, which was stopped by Domon. Before his death, he placed his hopes for the future on Domon who finally learned all the truth. Like Cooking Master Boy, the Chinese are masters and the Japanese are disciples. The emotional resentment between teachers and apprentices is the most exciting and touching feature of the whole animated film.

In 1989, the Tiananmen Incident happened in China. Japan froze its aid projects to China. Later, the leaders of China and Japan exchanged visits and strengthened their cooperation and exchanges. During this period, friendship was the main theme of the two countries. Because of the increasingly frequent exchanges between China and Japan, the Japanese have further deepened their understanding of the Chinese people. Animation is no longer adapted to Chinese classics. The Chinese characters are closer to life. Chinese cuisine and other traditional Chinese cultures have also been reflected in anime. The friendship between the two countries has also been reflected in the repeated emergence of Sino-Japanese teachers and apprentices.

5. Decline of the 21st Century (2000-2016)

From 2000 to 2016, there were 78 Japanese animations in which Chinese people appeared. It can be said that Chinese characters appeared frequently in Japanese animation. In the early days, Chinese characters were both strong enemies and helpful partners of Japanese heroes, but negative roles began to emerge. At the same time, Chinese characters have gradually changed from the main role to the secondary role. Due to the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations, the proportion of cartoons in which Chinese roles have become the leading roles has declined dramatically in the 21st century. Chinese role is usually only one of the leading roles, rarely the first leading role. For example, Daolian in Shaman King (2001) is the descendant of China's 3,000-year-old assassination family [4]. He was cold and heartless. He first antagonized Ye, the male protagonist, and then created friendship later after fighting many times. He was inspired to become friends with the enemy and became one of the male protagonists. Li Jianliang in Digimon Tamers (2001) is a Chinese-Japanese hybrid with a Hong Kong-born father and a Japanese mother. When Li Jianliang and Matsuda took risks together, they often quarreled at the beginning because of different values.

After China's anti-Japanese March broke out in 2005, there are not only Japanese who hope to improve their relations with China, but also Japanese who imagine the Chinese badly. In the new century, the proportion of Chinese characters appearing in negative roles has increased dramatically. In the early stage, the Chinese Mafia played a bad role, and the combination of Kungfu as the behind-the-scenes characters was the most common pattern. For example, Liu of Black Butler (2008) belongs to the Shanghai Mafia. In the later period, the negative role changed from individual and mafia to state and organization. Among them, the most famous is the Jormungand (2012), in which the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) is portrayed as a horrible murderer [5]. Because its content insults the Chinese People's Liberation Army, which has become a topic of discussion on the Internet, it is now banned by the Chinese government. The number of Chinese students coming to Japan is increasing year by year. According to statistics in 2017, more than 100,000 Chinese students are in Japan [2]. The image of Chinese students studying abroad has also appeared many times in cartoons. The most representative character is the Black in DARKER THAN BLACK - Black Contractor (2009). This animated film

tells of a sudden appearance of Hell Gate in Tokyo, and the emergence of superpowers known as contractors around the world. Black is a male protagonist and an unidentified contractor. His external identity is Li Shunsheng, a foreign student from China. He is very courteous in life, and he also obeys the apartment rules very well. Although he is a little cowardly, he lives a smooth life. He is good at Chinese cuisine and also likes observing celestial bodies. There is no contact or conflict with the residents of the apartment.

After 2000, the friendly atmosphere between China and Japan has gone from prosperity to decline. Due to the deterioration of the relationship between the two countries, the number of animated works that set Chinese characters as heroic protagonists has been greatly reduced in the 21st century. At the same time, the number of supporting roles is increasing, the number of bad roles is increasing, and not only individuals, but also Chinese organizations are bad forces. Moreover, the proportion of cartoons that regard Chinese characters as harmful has been greatly increased, which indicates the implication that Japan imagines China as a threat and competitor. On the other hand, due to the increase of folk exchanges, the image of Chinese people has become a modern person, and good cooking has replaced Kungfu as one of the characteristics of Chinese people. Other features include long braided hair style, pill head, etc. Long braided hair style is the hair of the Qing Dynasty. The origin of pill head is the fighting game "Street War", which was released in 1987. After that, it was widely accepted in Japanese animated films.

6. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the above works, it is found that Japanese animation symbolizes the image of Chinese people and presents it in a commercial and entertaining way. It has an aesthetic function, while its connotation is very complex. It is related to the complex attitude of Japanese society in understanding China, the development of the two countries and the interaction between the two countries. Generally speaking, before the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, there was a gap between Chinese characters and Japanese animation because of little knowledge of China. In the 1980s and 1990s, the relationship between the two countries was friendly, and Chinese characters in animation appeared relatively more friendly images. In the 21st century, as a result of a series of political events, the relationship between the two countries has become cold, and the number of bad Chinese characters has been increasing. In addition, due to the deepening of exchanges between the two countries, the personality and characteristics of Chinese characters have become more and more abundant and closer to reality, which is also a feature of change. With the improvement of Sino-Japanese relations and the further deepening of exchanges between China and Japan, I believe that the Chinese characters in Japanese animation will be more positive and friendly in the future.

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