

An Analysis of Chinese and American Heroism

--A Comparison Study Between "Kung Fu Panda" and "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils"

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Abstract

It is human nature to admire heroes. The Hollywood animated movie "Kung Fu Panda" and the Jin Yong martial arts drama "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils" vividly demonstrate the different views of heroism in China and the United States. These two concepts are deeply rooted in two different cultural soils. This paper will mainly analyze the cultural differences of heroism between China and the United States and the reasons for them in terms of character setting, cultural differences and so on.

Keywords

Martial arts; Heroism; Chinese and American cultural differences.

1. Introduction

"Kung Fu Panda" is a typical example of Hollywood using Chinese cultural elements to tell an American story. The story tells the martial arts legend of a panda's inspirational growth into a generation of masters. It also incorporates the traditional Chinese ideas of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. But the core concept of the film is still the spirit of American heroism. This is not the same as the local Chinese martial arts spirit (take Jin Yong's martial arts drama "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils" as an example). "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils" is a tragic martial arts drama in Jin Yong's martial arts, which embodies the traditional Chinese spirit of "chivalry" and collectivism in the sense of brotherhood and family and country love. This is pretty different from the individualism in "Kung Fu Panda", which explores the source of self. This comes from the different historical backgrounds, political systems, and cultural origins of China and the United States.

2. Hero Growth History

Both the Jin Yong martial arts drama "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils" and the Hollywood film "Kung Fu Panda" write the history of heroic growth. The heroes in "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils" are the embodiment of traditional Chinese chivalry, while the characters in "Kung Fu Panda" are typical Hollywood heroes. And the two different hero models also have much in common.

The heroes in both the film and the drama (except Qiao Feng, one of the main characters in "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils") start out with no power at all, but by chance, they are instructed by a master and grow into great heroes of their generation. For example, in "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils", Xuzhu and Duan Yu, both of whom did not know martial arts at first, were often bullied and beaten when they traveled through the jianghu (which literally translates as "rivers and lakes," but metaphorically refers to an alluvial underworld of hucksters and heroes beyond the reach of the imperial government.) However, an adventure made them master

martial arts and obtain the guidance of famous masters. Xuzhu learned martial arts and internal power from Wuyazi (the leader of the Carefree Sect), and Tianshan Tonglao (the ruler of Lingjiu Palace), and eventually became the leader of the Carefree Sect and the ruler of Lingjiu Palace. Duan Yu, on the other hand, acquired the ultimate solitary martial arts book in a cave, practiced the "Divine Power of the North" and "Wave-like Subtle Steps", and later learned the "Six Meridians Divine Sword", which allows the practitioner to project blade-like streams of energy from his fingers in Heavenly Dragon Monastery, and finally ascended to the throne as the Emperor of Dali Kingdom. This is similar to Po in "Kung Fu Panda". Po was originally a clumsy panda, and was not a material for martial arts for his bloated body. But he aspires to become a great warrior of the world. Also, because of one opportunity, he was pointed out by the Master Oogway as the Dragon Warrior, and then through the guidance of the Master Shifu, overcoming many difficulties, finally became a formidable martial artist, defeating enemies to grow into a generation of masters.

The characters in both dramas have the heroic spirit of self-giving and are willing to sacrifice themselves to protect others. In "Kung Fu Panda", Po is not afraid of hardships. Whether he is facing the highly skilled Tai Lung, the powerful Lord Shen, or the evil Kai, he is undaunted and willing to risk his life to guard the peace. And in "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils", Qiao Feng, Duan Yu and Xuzhu defy the odds in the face of thousands of troops in order to guard the hard-won peace between Liao and Song and to avoid the destruction of life and soul, all of which are the embodiment of the concept of heroism.

In the process of growing up, heroic characters have their own spiritual mentors. In the first "Kung Fu Panda", Po's mentors were Master Oogway and Master Shifu; in the second, his mentor was Soothsayer; in the third, he became his own spiritual mentor. And in "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils", Qiao Feng's mentor starts with Abbot Xuanci, then his lover Azhu, and finally himself; Xuzhu's spiritual mentors are Wuyazi, Tianshan Tonglao, and Abbot Xuanci; while Duan Yu's spiritual mentors are his parents and uncle. They both give spiritual guidance to the heroes when they are at the end of their ropes, answering their questions and helping them to defeat their enemies.

Although the two dramas come from different countries and regions, both "Kung Fu Panda" and "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils" write the heroic hymns of their own people. Human beings worship heroes by nature. It is beyond race and region. [1] Both Po, Qiao Feng, Duan Yu and other Jin Yong martial arts characters have the core spirit of heroism of sacrificing the ego to save the world.

3. The Cultural Differences Reflected Between China and The United States

There are significant cultural differences between China and the United States. Next, we will take "Kung Fu Panda" and "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils" as examples to analyze the culture of China and the United States in terms of dedication, collectivism and individualism, blood kinship, ideology and philosophy, and aesthetic style.

Mr. Jin Yong said, "The greatness of chivalry is for the country and for the people." (Guo Jing, The Return of Condor Heroes) The focus of Jin Yong's martial arts is on the word "Xia (chivalry)". That is, to support justice, sacrifice the ego, and dedicate oneself to the country and the people, which is closely related to the traditional Chinese Confucian culture. Traditional Chinese culture emphasizes family and national sentiments, that is, to sacrifice life for righteousness and to die rather than give in. This is reflected to the fullest in the characters portrayed by Jin Yong. For example, Qiao Feng grew up in the Song Dynasty, but he was actually a Khitan. His own mother was killed by wulin (martial artists' community), thus his family was broken, and he was even falsely accused of poisoning his mentor and became an outcast of the wulin. But in the end,

when war was about to break out between Song and Liao, he was willing to put aside his personal grudges for the sake of peace between the two countries. This embodies the spirit of collectivism in traditional Chinese culture. When personal grudges conflict with national interests, personal interests are sacrificed to preserve national interests. And Po in "Kung Fu Panda" is the typical American hero, fighting endlessly to guard the peace of the valley. The concept of family and country (the valley) is rarely mentioned in "Kung Fu Panda", while the concept of the individual is mentioned more often. There is no conflict between personal grudges and country interests in the film, but mainly emphasizes the need to believe in yourself and realize your potential when encountering difficulties. This is typical of American culture, which places more emphasis on individualism and heroism.

In "Kung Fu Panda", collective groups actually present, but they are just different from the sworn brothers in "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils". Po and the Furious Five form a team, and they overcome difficulties and accomplish their mission together. However, the film focuses on highlighting Po's heroic character, while the other characters only assist Po and help him fulfill his characterization. There is a clear distinction between primary and secondary importance. In "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils", on the other hand, Qiao Feng, Xuzhu and Duan Yu are a team. They worship as brothers, but each of the three has their own independent growth process, and only meet together at a later stage. There is no clear distinction between primary and secondary. And in the wulin conference, wulin wanted to eradicate Qiao Feng, Duan Yu and Xuzhu sacrificed their lives to save him, at the risk of losing their reputations, which embodies the brotherhood between the three. This is the embodiment of "moral righteousness" in traditional Chinese martial arts. That is, the brother's business is my business. What Chinese martial arts presents is "a favor is repaid, and revenge is avenged" and "smiling when wandering in the jianghu", while Po and the Furious Five in "Kung Fu Panda" are only friends and partners in the relationship, which is quite different from the brotherhood in "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils".

The core of the American spirit is individualism and the pursuit of self-worth. [2] While the traditional Chinese Confucian culture preaches the Middle Way and focuses on collective interests. In other words, we do not want to be a hero, but just want to live a peaceful life, and the collective interest comes before the individual interest. In the film, Po himself is aspiring to become a hero of the world. At the beginning of the film, Po dreams of becoming the Dragon Warrior, and in order to learn kung fu, he goes to the Jade Palace to learn the art from his master. In the end he saves others in order to realize his personal value (becoming the Dragon Warrior) and guards the collective interest (defending the peace of the valley). In "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils", on the other hand, Xuzhu and Duan Yu both acquired martial arts by chance, and at first they themselves did not expect to become masters of their generation. Xuzhu at first just hoped to be a small and ordinary monk in Shaolin School, Duan Yu also just didn't want to be disciplined by his parents before escaping from home, then traveling through the jianghu. Xuzhu and Duan Yu have gone through a lot of hardships in order to protect the peace between Liao and Song and to make more people live and work in peace and happiness. They achieved personal values by protecting the collective interests. This is quite different from the heroism embodied by Po. However, the essence is the same and they both succeeded in realizing their self-worth and guarding peace in the end.

American culture emphasizes the search for one's own origins, while Chinese culture emphasizes blood kinship. In Kung Fu Panda II, during a fight, Po doubts his identity and wants to find his biological parents and explore his origins. This stems from the constant search for the self in American culture. In the movie, Po once said: "Who I am, where I come from." "Family affection is only one purpose in the process of exploration, and more importantly, the protagonist longs to know where he came from and where he is going. In "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils", there is also a plot of birth mystery. But the plot presents the culture of Chinese

blood kinship. After Qiao Feng knew that he was a Khitan man, he regretted that he had killed Khitan compatriots who had the same blood as himself for the sake of the Song people. Chinese people attach great importance to blood and kinship, pay attention to recognizing ancestors and returning to the ancestors, have a strong sense of family, use blood ties as a bond, form a family, and then form a country with the family as a unit. Since ancient times, there has been a strong sense of family and national responsibility. This is different from the search for the self in American culture.

Chinese Taoism emphasizes the concept of contradiction, while the United States understands this relatively superficially. [2] Taoism in traditional Chinese thought is an important part of traditional Chinese thought, which has had a profound impact on the development of Chinese society, and at the same time has unique philosophical connotations. It is difficult for Americans to grasp its mystery. Although the "Taiji-diagram" of Yin and Yang often appear in Kung Fu Panda, and it also incorporates the philosophical principle that the extremes of things must be reversed, it expresses the American spirit. For example, in Kung Fu Panda I, Po opens the scroll, but finds that it is empty, and understands that the key to victory is to believe in yourself. This is not the same as the Chinese Taoist idea that the extremes of things must be reversed, the most pleasant sound is soundless and the most beautiful shape is shapeless, using force to fight. They only make superficial use of this form, and do not grasp the deep philosophical connotations in it. After that, this form is combined with the American spirit and exported to the Chinese audience in reverse. And in "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils", Xuzhu obtained peerless divine skills because he inadvertently cracked Wu Yazi's Zhenlong chess game. The essence of Zhenlong chess game cracking is to self-damage in order to reverse the dead game. This profoundly reflects the principle that the extremes of things must be reversed and courage keeps you alive. The two film and TV series have completely different understandings of the principle.

Chinese aesthetics focuses on freehand, and the United States pays attention to realism. In "Kung Fu Panda", every move of martial arts action can be clearly seen. This profoundly embodies the figurative aesthetics of the West. In "The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils", some of the characters' moves are not clearly displayed in front of the audience. This has to do with the traditional Chinese aesthetic of white space. The camera shows the general outline of the action, leaving enough room for the audience's imagination. This method can not only highlight the martial arts of the characters, but also make the characters distance themselves from the audience and maintain a sense of mystery. The different aesthetic styles are based on two different cultural connotations. The American spirit advocates pragmatism, and is influenced by the European realistic art style, and the figurative aesthetics has been deeply rooted in the hearts of Americans. And American heroism also includes pragmatism. The two different aesthetic styles are deeply reflected in the two film and television works.

The differences between Chinese and American cultures are vividly reflected in the two videos. The view of heroism is also very different. The United States focuses on self-pursuit and personal value; China, on the other hand, attaches importance to collectivism and emphasizes the feelings of home and country. These two different views of heroism are integrated into the two films and are reflected in all aspects of the films.

4. The Reason Why the Culture of American Heroism Is Different From China's Patriotism

The reason why American heroism and Chinese national feelings are different mainly lies in different historical backgrounds, political systems, and cultural origins. Let's go about it in turn. America's culture of heroism is inextricably linked to its specific historical conditions. The United States was originally founded by the Puritans. The Puritans were the first immigrants to

the American continent, persecuted by religion and forced to leave their homeland and come to the New World after many hardships. [4] In this process, the heroic character of pursuing freedom and fearing hardships and dangers became the source of the American national spirit. In the subsequent War of Independence and the development of the western region, they relied on their ingenuity to constantly forge ahead, overcome difficulties, resist oppression, and pursue freedom. [5] In this difficult process, individual wisdom played a pivotal role, making the spirit of individual heroism deeply imprinted in the hearts of Americans and gradually internalized into the national spirit of the United States.

Moreover, the Puritans came from Europe, which has a tradition of heroism since ancient times. One is chivalry, influenced by European religions and chivalry. The Bible Matthew 20th chapter says, "Just as the son of man came not to be served, but to serve; and to lay down one's life as a ransom for many" reflects the dedication of European chivalry. But the knights of Europe were mostly composed of nobles, whose main purpose was to maintain the ruling class. Second, because during the Renaissance, Europe made a voyage and began the geographical "great discovery", and navigators relied on their adventurous spirit to push the world to begin to unite as a whole. Dedication, adventurousness are all important connotations of American heroism.

The culture that the United States values the individual is related to the political system of its country. After the Revolutionary War, in 1787, the United States promulgated the Constitution, establishing the United States as a federal country and establishing a coalition government. But at the same time, each state has autonomy, has its own state government and laws, varies from state to state, and does not have to follow the federal government all the time. This also makes their national (collective) concept not very strong, but more focused on the individual interests of each state (individual). In the long run, it has promoted the formation of American individualistic culture.

Unlike the United States, China has had a holistic view since ancient times, focusing on collective interests. This is derived from the division system in the early years of the Western Zhou Dynasty. China has a vast land and a long history, and in order to better manage the vast territory, the rulers of the Western Zhou Dynasty divided the clan heroes into different regions to administer on their behalf, and had a certain degree of autonomy, but the local princes had to obey the orders of the Prince of Zhou. From this, the saying in the Book of Poetry Xiaoya Beishan Zhi Shi Beishan appeared that "under the sky, it is royal land. Until the boarder of the land, everyone is the subject of the royal court". Later, the Qin Dynasty established a centralized system of feudal absolutism, with emperors directly appointing officials to local areas. That is, the local is subordinate to the center. Under such a system, central government decrees can be efficiently transmitted to the local level. Local interests will be subordinated to national interests.

Compared with the United States, China has a cultural tradition of chivalrous spirit. China's chivalrous spirit is deeply rooted in the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation. It contains the feelings of home and country, and the morality of the rivers and lakes. [6] Mencius Gaozi Shang: "Life is what I want, and righteousness is also what I want. If one can't get both, he should give his life to take righteousness." And the main meaning of "righteousness" is the feelings of family and country, emphasizing collectivism and brotherly kindness; Pay attention to vulnerable groups, such as the martial arts spirit, which emphasizes "robbing the rich to help the poor, and stealing also has righteousness." "It's about helping others with your own abilities. At the same time, because the chivalrous spirit first came from the "scholar" class, and had a rebellious spirit. [6] Unlike the European knights, the Chinese "scholar" class, which emerged during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, consisted of a part of the declining nobility and a part of the rising commoners. During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, social changes, government decrees were not clear, and laws were not clear. Civilians cannot rely on the government, so they can only hope that the knights will help them and

improve their lives. Knights, who do not have enough political rights to help civilians, can only save civilians by confronting the government, thus forming a spirit of rebellion.

Different historical backgrounds, cultural origins, and political systems have formed two completely different national spirits between China and the United States.

5. Conclusion

The heroic culture of China and the United States stems from two different civilizations. Although there are many differences, they all have a spirit of dedication and promote self-denial. This spirit transcends race and region. American Hollywood films use cultural elements of other nationalities to write the American spirit. This is thanks to the superior film creation ability of the United States and advanced technology, which is worth learning from China. This provides a successful example for Chinese culture and art to go global.

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