

# *The International Communication of Chinese Culture under the Background of Globalization—A Case Study of Love between Fairy and Devil*

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**Abstract:** Under the background of globalization, the internationalization of film and television works has become an important means of cross-cultural communication. Film and television works imperceptibly transmit national values by story plots and visual images. In this way, foreigners can understand the cultural characteristics of the country. This paper takes the dark horse TV drama *Love Between Fairy and and Devil* as an example to analyze its cultural connotation through the characters, scenes and plots in the drama. This paper will explore the successful experience of *Love Between Fairy and and Devil* in the international communication of Chinese culture under the background of globalization, and provide relevant suggestions for future film and television works to go overseas.

The trend of globalization is unstoppable, and the international dissemination of culture has become an important means for countries to improve their cultural soft power. By virtue of storyline and visual images, film and television works transmit national values in a subtle way and let foreigners understand the cultural characteristics of the country.

This article takes a popular television drama *Love Between Fairy and and Devil* as an example, and analyzes the cultural connotations contained in the drama through its characters, scenes and plot. This paper will explore the successful experience of *Love Between Fairy and and Devil* in international communication of Chinese culture in the context of globalization, and provide relevant suggestions for subsequent film and TV works going abroad.

## 1. Introduction

*Love Between Fairy and and Devil* is a fantasy love TV drama with an ethereal background. It tells the story of a sincere and kind-hearted fairy Xiao Lanhua and a cold-blooded and powerful king of the moon clan Dongfang Qingcang who accidentally meet, and fall in deep and unforgettable love. The innocence and kindness of Xiao Lanhua gradually influenced Dongfang Qingcang, making him become a person with warmth and emotion. They redeem and heal each other. At the end of the story, they are willing to give up their lives for each other to maintain the peace of the three worlds.

The plot of *Love Between Fairy and and Devil* is a conceptual innovation compared with the past costume idol dramas. In the drama, Xiao Lanhua and Dongfang Qingcang switch their bodies twice,

form a great contrast of the character and make the audiences laugh. The drama is full of exquisite details and the story mixed with sweet and sadness develops in a fast pace, which attracts audiences to keep watching.

In the list data of iQiyi in China, *Love Between Fairy and Devil* had a popularity of more than 10,000, surpassing the other several ancient teleplays on the track at the same time, with strong market competitiveness. It is the fourth teleplay of iQiyi that has a content popularity of more than 10,000, and has successfully wins the first place of several lists on iQiyi.

*Love Between Fairy and Devil* has achieved remarkable success in the world. Within four hours of its release, the drama topped the list of the overseas version on iQiyi, triggering a global craze for watching the show. Within an hour of its debut, a Korean TV station purchased the copyright of the TV drama. Since its global release on Netflix, *Love Between Fairy and Devil* received growing attention from overseas audiences and became the world's most viewed in 2022. The series has been distributed worldwide to countries including India, Cambodia, Malaysia, America, Europe, Oceania, the Middle East and other regions. A number of overseas video platforms were competing to report this hit series.

Loyal fans of the drama are described as suffering from “a terminal illness”, because they put their heart and soul into the story, wait for the episode updates eagerly and don't seem to be normal or rational. In the bullet screen of *Love Between Fairy and Devil* on iQiyi overseas, audiences from different countries are good at saying jokes.

For example, when Dongfang Qingcang eats with a bulging mouth in the show, his overseas fans instantly wrote on the bullet screen: “My God, his face right now with those big curious eyes like a chipmunk”. The fairies can go from one place to another directly through magic. Foreign netizens have not experienced this kind of setting, so when they see the characters disappear, they are curious and ask: “I always wonder how other people can find him after they disappear. Who's gonna turn on the navigation?”

From these examples, it can be seen that this TV drama has been widely admired by foreign audiences. *Love Between Fairy and Devil* is one of the most representative and successful cases of Chinese film and television in recent years.

“As a contents creator of this generation, it is our responsibilities to show the world the elements that contemporary Chinese young people like and help the spread of traditional culture,” said chief producer Wang Yixu.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Domestic research situation

At present, there have been many specialized academic papers on the cross-cultural communication of Chinese TV dramas, but many articles with high achievements were published ten years ago. With the rapid development of film and television culture and the profound changes in Sino-foreign relations, the research on the international communication of Chinese TV plays in the new era needs to continue to deepen.

He Xiaoyan's Research on *the Cross-cultural Communication of Chinese TV Plays in the Context of Globalization* elaborated the historical process of the cross-cultural communication of Chinese TV plays, and analyzed the themes of Chinese TV plays into ancient, modern, contemporary and Wuxia categories respectively. It is pointed out that Chinese teleplays must establish a complete chain from creative planning, content production, distribution and marketing to derivative development when entering overseas market [1].

Ruan Beiping's article *Cultural Discount and Coping Strategies for Exporting Domestic Film and Television Cultural Products* highlights the "cultural discount" in the full text and analyzes the

problems faced by the trade of cultural products, such as the huge difference between Chinese and foreign cultures, China's backward cultural trade concept, the limitation of international cultural standards, and the fact that the artistic expressions and styles of domestic dramas are incomprehensible to foreign audiences. In response to these problems, the thesis proposes certain strategic suggestions [2].

*Review of the Communication Strategy of Chinese Film Culture in the Context of Globalization* is written by Dai Yuanguang and Qiu Baolin. From the perspective of internationalization, this article points out that the one-way feature of cultural communication is becoming increasingly obvious, while the bidirectional appeal is ignored. The global pattern presents a "center-edge" situation: Developed area is the center of the spread of the source, not only occupies the main location of cultural transmission, also occupies the absolute advantage in information flow. Developed countries transfer a whole set of system of thought and values to poor countries and regions [3].

As a result, the subjectivity and uniqueness of national culture in backward areas are weakened. Chinese film is the carrier of Chinese cultural image and bears the historical responsibility of the nation state. By comparing the cultural differences and strategies between China and foreign countries, this paper reviews the mistakes in the communication strategies of Chinese film and television culture from the three aspects of communication content, communication mode and communication effect, and explores countermeasures.

## 2.2 Foreign research situation

Compared with the domestic research on specific TV dramas and cross-cultural communication, there are few relevant studies abroad. However, due to the earlier theoretical research on cross-cultural communication in foreign countries, some theories applicable to this paper will be sorted out in this part.

In 1976, Edward T. Hall, an American culture and anthropology expert and the founder of cross-cultural communication, put forward the concepts of "high context" and "low context" in his book *Beyond Culture*. According to the degree that information transmission depends on context, various cultures are divided into high context culture and low context culture [4].

In a high-context culture, most of the information exists in the material context or is internalized in the thinking and memory of communicators. The transmission and coding of information depend on the social and cultural environment and the specific situation of communicators. Explicit coding carries relatively less information, and people are more sensitive to various subtle prompts of the communicative environment. On the contrary, in low-context culture, people communicate with a large amount of information carried by explicit and straightforward coding.

Cultural research scholar Geert Hofstede put forward cultural dimensions theory and divided culture into four layers with "onion theory", namely "symbol", "heroes", "ritual" and "value". On the basis of this theory, Professor Chen Xiaoping from the University of Washington breaks down the concept of "culture" with "three levels": Surface culture -- external and intuitive things; Middle-level Culture -- Society standardization; Deep culture -- religious and philosophical thinking.

## 3. Case analysis

Under the background of globalization, the competition of the cultural industry is becoming more and more fierce. Foreign film and television works are flooding into the Chinese market, but Chinese film and television works are difficult to be popular in foreign market. In the following part, this paper will analyze the reasons for the success of *Love Between Fairy and Devil* in character

setting, plot setting, scene setting and other aspects.

### 3.1 The scene setting

The beauty of *Love Between Fairy and Devil* is based on the concrete presentation of Oriental fantasy aesthetics. From the scene setting, the story takes place in three regions, including Shui Yuntian where fairies live, Cang Yanhai where devils live and Yun Mengze where humans live.

In general, Shui Yuntian is the cloud shrouded celestial realm, which uses the element of water in traditional culture. It means the world's first drop of water turns into a sky of water and clouds. Cang Yanhai uses the elements of water, wood and the Silk Road. Through the gorgeous and dark color layout, it reveals its desire for dominate, which is completely different from Shui Yuntian. The Tang Dynasty was selected as a reference to set Yun Mengze. The life in Yun Mengze is hustle and bustle.

These scenes incorporate Chinese understanding of the five elements (gold, wood, water, fire and earth), as well as cultural confidence of the long history (the prosperous Tang Dynasty, the Silk Road and so on).

### 3.2 The cultural elements

From the perspective of cultural strategy, *Love Between Fairy and Devil* not only fully explores the local characteristics, but also makes use of the "cultural capital" understood by the whole world. It introduces the excellent Chinese traditional culture to the world while maintaining the local cultural characteristics of the story.

In the play, there are a lot of intangible cultural heritage elements, such as Su embroidery, lacquer art, doughnut fan, jade carving, sandalwood fan and velvet flower. All of the handcrafted texture reflect the artisan spirit in the production process. The crew invited Lu Jianying, a national intangible cultural heritage heir, to produce the Su embroidery elements in the costumes, and the orchid handkerchief carried by male No. 2. In the scene of Yun Mengze, the costumes refer to the Tang Dynasty form. The main clothing of men is round-necked robe and wide robes with cross-necked sleeves. Women mainly wear Ru skirts made of rich silk.

The traditional lacquer painting technique is used for the brocade box in the palace where Xiao Lanhua lives. The fan used during the wedding, and the velvet flowers dotted on the headdress of Xiao Lanhua and other characters in the play, all of which are integrated into traditional cultural heritage in details. On the whole, these intangible cultural properties elements not only echo the oriental aesthetics, but also show the cultural self-confidence through the elaborate inheritance of heritage skills in the drama.

Different from past films and TV shows, the introduction of traditional Chinese culture is mainly presented through details and background, rather than overemphasizing the long history and profound Chinese culture. Otherwise, foreign audiences will have a repellent attitude towards the unfamiliar. The method of presenting traditional elements in *Love Between Fairy and Devil* has attracted the attention of foreign audiences.

### 3.3 The special effect technology

In addition, the industrialized special effect production takes the visual aesthetics of the drama to another level. From the technical aspect, the scene atmosphere is rendered for different narrative situations, and with 4K plus Dolby sound, *Love Between Fairy and Devil* brings audiovisual enjoyment to the audience. For example, the jagged colors of the sunrise falling in the clouds are clearly visible, and the beauty of the body contours and glow of the cloud whales are as if they are

within reach.

Due to the late development of China's film and television special effects, the market faces several challenges in this field, such as less capital investment, talents scarcity, irregular industry and so on. Therefore, China's film and television special effects production on the long-term lag behind the West. Companies like Disney and Marvel have rich experience and excellent technology in this field.

*Love Between Fairy and Devil* focuses on good scripts and the investment of money and time in special effects production, which meets the high standard of foreign audiences for the sense of quality and technology and lays the foundation for the overseas promotion.

### 3.4 The character experience

The experiences of the characters drive the narrative and show their experiences in the narrative. The detailed introduction of the characters' lives in *Love Between Fairy and Devil* makes the plot coherent and easy for foreign viewers to understand the meaning.

Unlike previous dramas where the characters were one-dimensional, the characters in *Love Between Fairy and Devil* are multidimensional. The villains have their difficult positions and can be understandable by the audiences.

Dongfang Qingcang can be the first strongest person in the three worlds, his experience of learning Yehuo is the result of his father forcing him to pull out of love, which also creates his original cold and selfish character. There are reasons for his personality disadvantages. Another character Rong Hao has done all kinds of bad things, but he is willing to sacrifice his life and cultivation without hesitation for his love and best friend.

Xiao Lanhua is a simple and lovely girl. Sometimes, she is very timid, but is willing to sacrifice her own life to save the lives of others. In order to prevent the occurrence of war, she tries to persuade the head of the two clans. Chidi, the god of war, was once to save countless people's lives, but her resurrection consumed many innocent people. After knowing the method of her resurrection, she chose to commit suicide.

### 3.5 The theme

The values conveyed in the TV drama are universal: kindness, courage, love and peace. Producer Wang Yixu repeatedly emphasizes unified values, so the logic of the whole drama is formulated to reflect deep values. For example, Xiao Lanhua is not a babe in the wood, her kindness is promoted to the anti-war pattern. The play designed a lot of plots to prove her ideological value of love and peace, whether in the fairy clan or the devil clan, all her actions are in line with this logic.

The play also designed the sharp contradiction between the fairy clan and the devil clan, the outbreak of the war between the two clans is a clue of the play. Dongfang Qingcang always wants to avenge the defeat of 100,000 years ago, but the appearance of Xiao Lanhua fills the lack of family affection in his heart, gradually cures his paranoia and indifference, and influences him into a leader with great love.

Secondly, as a love drama, the implicit expression of emotions in *Love Between Fairy and Devil* is completely different from the passionate and unrestrained expression in the West, and has the Oriental introverted view of love.

*Love Between Fairy and Devil* is a three-dimensional representation of Oriental culture. Different from the "Western culture" and the "other view" from the western perspective, the "Oriental culture" in this TV drama has distinct Chinese elements, special Oriental symbols and unique values, which is the self-consciousness of the "classical culture" and the revival of the times.

### 3.6 Marketing strategy

After the popularity of *Love Between Fairy and Devil* in foreign countries, the main character Yu Shuxin and Wang Hedi increased the management and operation of their overseas accounts.

*Love Between Fairy and Devil* derived online and offline multiple authorization, leveraging the linkage IP benefits. The official account of the teleplay used Weibo to release photos and videos of behind-the-scenes, topic discussions, and actor interactions to create publicity. All these action create a community that gathers fans together, meet the audiences' need to obtain information, express their opinions and attract the attention of passers-by.

The world in the play is combined with the real world, and the main characters open their role accounts on Weibo, and continue to interact with the platform audience. This metaverse of the drama is constructed to give platform users a good experience of immersion [5].

Moreover, the popularity of *Love Between Fairy and Devil* has spread to multiple circles on social media through the dissemination of broken circles, which resonates with people from different circles, arouses multi-media discussion, and creates a strong atmosphere of watching the drama. For example, Dongfang Qingcang imitation makeup on Tiktok triggered plenty of makeup blogger to learn.

## 4. Case discussion

The above analysis mainly introduces the reasons for the success of *Love Between Fairy and Devil*. However there are still some shortcomings that need to be optimized.

The most obvious problem is the inaccuracy of the translation, both in terms of the title of the play and the actor's lines, which cannot reflect the original context and meaning in Chinese [6]. The inaccuracy of the translation will lead to the phenomenon of "cultural discount", which greatly diminishes the impact of intercultural transmission.

For example, the original title *Cang Lanjue* is the combination of the name Dongfang Qingcang and Xiao Lanhua. The title *Love Between Fairy and Devil* in English only focuses on love, reducing the two characters to their superficial identities--fairy and devil, while Dongfang Qingcang can't be defined simply as devil. However, the Chinese character "jue" express both the deep love between Cang and Lan, and the difficulties and conflicts they faces, which elevates the theme of the drama.

It can be seen from this point that future films and TV dramas should attach importance to translation. In the production process, the crew can choose translators from the destination countries to make the lines easier for local audiences to understand and better convey the internal meanings, so as to avoid the sense of distance between Eastern and Western cultures.

Another issue under discussion is the adaptation of the same name novel written by Jiulu Feixiang. The author of *Love Between Fairy and Devil* is very famous online, and some TV viewers are fans of the book and transferred to the TV series. Some readers think that the drama's plot development and characters are different from those described in the book, and that the director has changed too much and lost the original taste.

The presentation of TV series is very different from novels. The adaptation of TV series needs to be based on the genre of novels. If the novels are fantasy-themed and the TV series are performed by real actors, so the filming should be less exaggerated. Otherwise, without advanced production technology, the audiences may think the teleplay is crude.

Professor Chen Xiaoping from the University of Washington breaks down the concept of "culture" with "three levels": Surface culture -- external and intuitive things; Middle-level Culture -- Society standardization; Deep culture -- religious and philosophical thinking [7].

TV series belong to the surface culture, which is the most permeable and spreading power among the three layers of culture, so we cannot underestimate the value of its cultural communication.

*Love Between Fairy and Devil* is not just an ancient love drama, but a carrier of traditional Chinese culture, which embodies the values of great love for the world with the background of traditional Xianxia.

Over the years, China's cultural and ideological circles have always emphasized the particularity of Chinese culture. Chinese people believe that the more emphasis is placed on the differences in Chinese culture, the more positive influence they can achieve in the world. However, people are more likely to be attached to familiar things and be repulsive by strange things. That's why foreigners sometimes don't accept Chinese culture though we propagate our values so hard.

*Love Between Fairy and Devil* avoids these problems by presenting traditional Chinese culture in a way that foreign audiences are familiar with, incorporating elements of traditional culture into details and backgrounds rather than deviating from the plot. With the help of 4K special effects and other technologies, the TV drama has built a beautiful world, vivid characters and wonderful plots.

## 5. Conclusions

This article introduces the case *Love Between Fairy and Devil* and its success overseas in the first part, displays literature reviews at home and abroad, leading to some theories of high and low context, surface culture and so on. In the third part, the article analyzes *Love Between Fairy and Devil* from the scene setting, cultural elements, special effect technology, character experience and the theme.

With the strange imagination to build "oriental narrative space", elaborate to create "oriental audio-visual language", and the tone of the story to send "oriental values and feelings", these attempts make *Love Between Fairy and Devil* show "Oriental culture" in a three-dimensional way. This kind of cultural self-confidence and cultural consciousness of spreading Chinese civilization makes the work go abroad successfully and complete the effective reach of Chinese traditional culture overseas.

In the last part, case discussion compares the advantages and disadvantages of *Love between Fairy and Devil*, and make suggestions for the future development of film and television drama.

To sum up, the intercultural communication of Chinese culture, with TV plays as the carrier, needs wonderful content, advanced production technology, effective marketing strategy. With joint efforts of various departments to cooperate, the TV drama can stand out in the competition of the global entertainment industry.

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