**A Study on the Traditional Color Metaphorical Function of**

**‘Chinese School ‘Animation**

Hao Shen, DongHun Lee

Dept of Visual Contents  
Graduate School of Dong-Seo University  
Busan, South Korea

7716603@naver.com

papamac@hanmil.net

**Abstract**

A shorter form of Chinese animation school ‘Chinese School’ refers to animation works which started in 1950s, went through a period of maturity in the 1960s, and made significant achievements in 1970s-80s with remarkable Chinese features. This concept explains the birth of the Chinese School as well as its development and heydays relatively accurately. ‘Chinese School’ animation has left huge achievements during the development of Chinese animation, and this study seeks to find the content and meaning of such achievements by examining them. This has an important meaning to the workers in the Chinese animation industry. This paper aims to review the impact of traditional colors on animation modeling in Chinese traditional colors.

Keywords: Chinese School Animation; Traditional Chinese Color; Metaphor

**1. Introduction**

The aesthetic method of metaphor through color and the traditional notion of color are deeply related with an ethnic group, nation, and region, and different life habits create differences in the sense and understanding of color. Thus, analyzing the meaning expression of colors such as cultural and generational differences and psychological implication can enhance the expression of animation and the understanding of an ethnic culture that has different environments. A visual element, color has very important roles in visual aesthetics, atmosphere of the background, environmental characteristics, object’s narration, main character’s personality expression, metaphorical setting, etc. Also, the color in a screen we see gives descriptions about a natural environment and object as well as give meanings through expression and metaphor by reflecting the animator’s animation intent on a character’s emotion. Thus, a color language allows an animator to show the visualization of a series of incidents in an animation to audience, acting as a unique medium of communication between the animator and audience.

This study examines the expression forms of Chinese traditional color in a Chinese School animation and lays the foundation of analysis on Chinese School animation by establishing, developing, and classifying the concept of Chinese traditional colors. Also, this paper analyzes the application and metaphor of Chinese traditional color and the traditional view of color in the animation works of Chinese School. By analyzing the influences from the philosophical view of color such as the 5 Elements theory of Chinese traditional color, Confucian view of color that started from ‘proprieties’ and ‘patience’, and the Daoist view of color through worshipping ‘black’, this study clarifies the characteristics of Chinese traditional colors. Through this, by revealing that Chinese traditional colors give the aesthetic effects of ‘Chinese Beauty’ and ‘artistic conception’ on animation, this paper seeks to draw strengths of Chinese ethnic style on Chinese traditional colors to advance the Chinese animation industry by using them.

**II. ‘Chinese School’ Animation**

A shorter form of Chinese animation school ‘Chinese School’ refers to animation works which started in 1950s, went through a period of maturity in the 1960s, and made significant achievements in 1970s-80s with remarkable Chinese features. The ‘Chinese School’ animation started when CEO Te Wei of Shanghai Art Movie Production in 1957 presented a slogan ‘Let’s find the path of ethnic style’.

China’s ethnic art, which includes painting, sculpture, architecture, doubles, plays, ‘folk art’, ‘paper cutting’, ‘shadow play’, and ‘Sehwa’ painting formed in the long history of China, provides immeasurable subject matters to the various types of animation genre. That is why ‘Chinese School’ animation holds strong ethnic characteristics for theme, forms, and depiction. First, ‘Chinese School’ animation is China’s ethicized animation. “Chinese School’ animation does not only reflect China’s living culture and psychology but also implements living method and reasonable method to succeed to traditional art and its mentality. Also, reflecting on the culture heritage of this kind of ethnic, in the process of combining modernism artistic characteristics of animation, ‘Chinese School’ animation started to form different artistic expression method and independent style. Through this kind of process, ‘Chinese School’ animation formed a characteristic and independent flow in the world’s animation field. Heritage of traditional art was consciously collected in the background of Chinese traditional culture. By observing and succeeding, Chinese animation formed a beautiful, systemic, and artistic style.

Secondly, animation of ‘Chinese School’ focuses on thoughtful meaning. So, educational meaning has become deep, simple, or clear for each work. Never was this expression given up. When looking at the source of this kind of animation phenomenon and tendency, ‘Shieunji’ – based on the cultural background of China as a whole’ can be said to be naturally succeeded of literary history. Therefore, ‘entertainment’ art characteristics of ‘Chinese School’ was composed. ‘Entertainment’ is a characteristic of ‘Chinese School’ to be aware. This does not mean ‘doctrine’ and ‘entertainment’ exist but has different aspect of different country’s animation and ‘Chinese School’ among forming relationship between ‘teaching’ and ‘music’.

Third, animation of ‘Chinese School’ gives laughter to people. This is not just simply laughter but the purpose is to acquire education from the laughter. Fourth, animation of ‘Chinese School’ pursues expression of mentality or dignity through image and seeks for artistic stage between similarity and difference. The width of the design of movement is not very big and rhythm and taste are focused to seek for beautification and refinement of movement in daily life. The characteristic called ‘background’ of Chinese School is very unique. Animation of ‘Chinese School’ shows painting methods of ‘using white as black’ and ‘actual situation’ of traditional painting. Also, ‘background’ here is not ‘not’ but ‘empty’ and ‘drawing is beautifully peculiar stage where drawing is not seen’. Fifth, ‘Chinese School’ animation is very creative for color use. Sixth, ‘Chinese School’ animation’s artistic expression method sets focus on intention. This is to share pulse with China’s traditional art. Intention and lyricism in China’s traditional art is not necessarily irrelative with the influence of Daoism. Daoism’s art mentality seeks for freedom and liberation to set a kingdom of free mentality.

**III. Uniqueness of the Colors of ‘Chinese School’ Animation**

For western animation, China’s traditional color is not a feature that depicts the optics and color but rather more close to cultural expression or thoughtful inheritance.

The formation and development of view of color are closely related to differences of area, culture, and religion. Understanding about color is different according to nations and ethnic. Above all, in China’s color culture development process, philosophical color of thoughtful area caused to influence to concept and forms of color.

The long history of China’s color gradually formed unique color system with various forms and ethnic features. Traditional view of color was influenced by China’s traditional philosophical thoughts such as Yin-yang & five elements of the Universe, Confucianism, and Daoism. Therefore, the ideology of animation of Chinese animation cannot be parted from traditional philosophy view of color.

The sense about using Chinese traditional colors is closely related to depth and psychological structure of Chinese people’s culture. Above all, Yin-yang& five elements of the universe sets the basis of Chinese color theory to provide a reason model to people. Chinese people interpret everything of the world based on Yin-yang & give elements of the universe.

China’s traditional view of color sets basis on the view of the world of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhist. To summarize the characteristics of traditional view of color based on each ideology and thought, for the view of color of Confucianism, Confucian – the creator of Confucianism – follows the properties on the awareness of color, where Confucianism’s view of color has the basic size of five elements and five colors. An example is comparing or explaining something by color. This is the most important characteristic of color. Also, the view of color of Daoism’s main characteristic of Daojia view of color is interpreting degree with color. Therefore,

Therefore, the view of color of Daojia is “No color that creates five colors.” And, it also has the meaning “Mysteriousness in mysteriousness, degree of all mysteriousness.” Lastly, the view of color of Buddhist compares or expresses wisdom through color. For example, yellow is the most precious color of Buddhist thought and it is the color of the heavens.

When analyzing the view of color of Chinese School Animation from 1948 to 1989, there are 21 black/white and color animations, and there are 15 animations that have 5 colors. Among these animations, there are 5 animations that combined Buddhist view of colors. There are 7 animations that are based on black and white. Among these, there is 1 animation that combined five colors. There are 16 animations based on Buddhist view of colors and 4 are combined with five colors.

Because color has cultural meaning, intention of color and aesthetic differences exist in ethnic color between different areas and countries. While the society is industrialized and becomes information-oriented, the distance between nations are becoming close and cultural differences are reducing, but there is still clear difference in color and this is especially shown in East-West Asia’s animation art

(1) U.S.

Disney animation has good cinematic effects and seeks for strong color visual, using various colors to make the same mood as reality.

(2) Disney

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Fig. 1 <The Monkey King>

French animation among European animation has differentiated attraction and different nations. French Animation <Beautiful City Trio> has the artistic characteristic and humor of French with ethnic colors of France. Especially, new visual color has been given to the viewers by using dark colors by copying work style of a European artist.

(3) China

Color in ‘Chinese School’ animation focuses on desertion, implication, and intrinsic beauty and dignity. ‘Chinese School’ focuses on the artistic stage and emotion. For artist emotion, force is preferred. While focusing on ‘holding back‘ and ‘hide’, ‘sharing’ and ‘change’ are also focused.

Chinese traditional painting focused on ‘superb spirit’ and ‘artistic sage’. ‘Chinese School’ animation color used excessive color compared to western paintings. For example, in the cause of Keum Byeok San Soo, Ink Mandarin Duck, emotions were delivered by color and artistic stage was made for subjective and aesthetic handling. ‘Chinese School’ animation’s color absorbed traditional painting art with long history of China. There was great influence in forming color and modeling style of animation in the age of civil wars, Han Dynasty, Tang dynasty, Keum Byeok San Soo, Song Dynasty, Ming Dynasty, and Qing Dynasty.

**Ⅳ. Unique Intrinsic Grace of**

**‘Chinese School’ Animation**

Metaphor of color is an important expression method from animation, and it can stand out the characteristic of certain characters. Also, it can influence the mood of the scene and also reach an artistic stage to promote emotional development about the overall narration. When looking at the aspect of visual language, artistic metaphor is an important function of color. ‘Metaphor’ creates cultural meaning that color has itself as the means of expressing mentality through detailed color. Artists give fresh shock on the imagination that has never been done by viewers by putting metaphor onto the new stage. Everything else except sound in animation is fake. In this case, color’s metaphorical functions stand out even more.

The colors in the scene of <The Monkey King> deliver the right color to the content and story. It delivers ‘fantastic mood and color of mythological play’. When Son Wukong says ‘Grand Sight of Heavens’, the scene changes to soft and mild color. The background mood expresses the theme of animation, describes the process, and changes according to the demand of highlighting the personality of the character. By setting Chinese drawing forms of blue-green color, a mysterious world that seems real and yet illusion is composed and the audience starts to fall into the animation scene. Through this, a theme is suggested and the meaning of the theme is intensified. In the work <Nine Color Deer>, the audience experiences fear and anxiety by understanding the psychology of people through color contrast of the nine-colored deer.

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Fig. 2 <Fish Child>

In the work <Fish Child>, the animator expressed iron will personality of a person. In the work <Natanyohae>, the character is focused to express the status of public office. Here, the color stands out and has weight. The body is light colored skin with red threat and financial influence. Two big and smart eyes are shining so that feeling and wisdom can stand out. In the work <The Monkey King>, simple colored line and strong decorative colors such as red, yellow, and green were used to show the passionate personality of the character. Also, color dignity of folk engraving and folk wood engraving can be seen.

On the other hand, the face color of the Great Jade Emperor is pink and white, and the attire mixed of red and yellow looks splendid and precious. Just by the colors, the audience is able to depict the King of China.

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Fig. 3 <Snow Child>

<Snow Child> naturally reflects the formation of theme of sharing and being brave for peace. It has the educational functions. Especially, the color of the character is supported by the snowman and scenery, composed of unique screen. The stage of the screen attracts the people with pure heart.

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Fig. 4 <Pony Crossing the River>

The work <Pony Crossing the River> appropriately uses Chinese traditional colors. The colors express the pony before crossing the river and after crossing the river. Like this, awareness and expression about color in animation is the foundation of animation. Color makes animation stage into an artistic stage and increase theme, thought, and aesthetic level. It turns the story into a meaningful poem. The method of explaining through color is a personal thinking method where visual language is expressed through color for a story. Color helps viewers to understand and simply expresses the meaning.

Aesthetic method of color metaphor teaches the meaning of an artwork by combining artistic stage of artist, color, object, and etc. Color has two kinds of influence to the psychology of people through visual engine. Color shows the awareness regulation on nature. Artists use the psychological phenomenon of color to show the ‘beauty’ in the heart of people through color.

For Chinese animation with ethnic cultural features, Chinese traditional culture’s aesthetic thoughts are combined to add artistic intention of animation. This succeeded aesthetic culture of ethnic tradition and corresponds to aesthetic needs to Chinese people. Last expression about aesthetic method of color metaphor is delivering mentality of the artist through color expression. People with aesthetic discernment experience artistic stage of art work by using unidimensional color and experiences the mentality and emotions from object.

The metaphorical emotions expression is not limited just to contrast between warm color and cold color but is shown in the ‘artistic stage’ as well. In the visual aspect, the most important thing is to express deep meaning in the color through expression. The emotions of artist and color metaphor are closely connected where simply an object’s color is not expressed but the symbolic meaning of color is borrowed to show the true mind of the artist. The color expression of Chinese traditional color makes color expression of Chinese drawing special through metaphorical expression. This is the art preference of Chinese drawing. The metaphorical expression of folk color of China’s ethnic expresses unique cultural consciousness and aesthetic consciousness of each ethnic. The intention of folk color of China’s various ethnic is mainly expressed in drawings, crafts, and entertainment. Animation works all have own stories. Color metaphor uses color to express the story. The type of ‘Story’ includes long story, short story, story that passed, current story, and many others. The director must be clear of what is being expressed and to be able to select various screen color expression method. The emotional expression about poetry and drawing of Chinese traditional painting allows the appreciation of artistic conception of Sinification in modeling and video in the ‘Chinese School’ animations. Also, delivering emotion through color shows the emotional colors in ‘Chinese School’ animations to reach the “Scene-blending’ stage. Also, the organic combination through color gives the unidimensional feeling of Sinification to people through color video, while having limitation in visual language of animation language.

**V. Conclusion**

The use of Chinese traditional colors in ‘Chinese School’ animation works showed the artistry of Chinese traditional culture very well. The clever integration of Chinese traditional colors and ‘Chinese School’ animation work can promote the new development of contemporary animation industry and can have a huge influence on the development of Chinese ethnic traditional art. Due to China’s long culture, traditional colors have been able to sprout and take deep root. Also, traditional colors give ethnic originality, so China’s view of color deeply reveals the feeling of heavy ethnic culture. People’s desires gradually grew with the development of human society, and the development of scientific technology has given new visual interests to animation. As a result, we have become much more interested in the expression of emotions by traditional colors in real life. Animation has an expression method that is different from other types of art, and colors in animation can give a very powerful visual impact and deep impression to viewers. Thus, it is necessary to closely examine the characteristics of overall animation along with its technical forms.

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