

# *The Reacher on the Functions of Chinese Ink Elements in Movie Posters of The Golden Era*

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**Abstract:** Chinese components have distilled the ancient cultural soul of the Chinese nation, whose culture has a lengthy history. *The Golden Era's* movie poster makes extensive use of Chinese design themes. The movie poster skillfully mixes traditional Chinese aesthetic themes with poster design to create poster works with national cultural meanings. Movie posters often contain ink-based elements. One of Chinese culture's most significant artistic genres, ink painting has a lengthy history and numerous symbolic meanings. The ink component gives the poster design a distinctively oriental aesthetic and an artistic foundation rooted in the Confucian tradition. Through the analysis of *The Golden Era* as a case study, this study investigates the use of Chinese ink elements in movie posters. This article will talk about the special function of the Chinese ink elements depicted by the movie poster for *The Golden Era* from the viewpoint of the audience's movie poster. It also offers a fresh perspective on how to display the soft power of a country's culture by interpreting the energizing impact of movie posters using Chinese themes on the cultural identity and national pride of Chinese spectators. Designers that utilize ink components to create cross-cultural movie posters must also be aware of cross-cultural design methods and respect the diversity of cultures.

**Keywords:** movie posters, Chinese ink elements, *The Golden Era*, cross-cultural poster design, influence

## 1. Introduction

The culture of the Chinese nation has a long history, and traditional Chinese elements are frequently appearing in various fields in various forms with their unique charm. What is the "Chinese element"? In short, all elements that are recognized by most people, condense the traditional cultural spirit of the Chinese nation and reflect the image, symbols or customs of national dignity and national interests can be regarded as Chinese elements [1]. Taking the poster design of Chinese elements in the film industry as an example, the traditional culture and profound history contained in Chinese elements have injected new inspiration into the design. Only by applying China's unique historical civilization

in the design in an inherited and innovative way can the design of Chinese elements show the essence of ancient Oriental culture in the world [2]. As a cultural celebrity biographical film directed by Xu Anhua, the film *The Golden Era* is very popular and unique. The text of the film excavates and conveys the spiritual core of a group of patriotic literati represented by Xiao Hong in the troubled times of the Republic of China who bravely pursues freedom, truth and adventure. At the same time, it also reflects the artistic concept and artistic pursuit of director Xu Anhua's adherence to freedom, reality and adventure in film creation [3]. *The Golden Era* movie poster makes full use of Chinese elements. In the version in China, it uses water stain with Chinese ink (Figure 1). And in the version in Korea, it also uses Chinese ink and washes and the Xuan paper (Figure 2). The film conveys the connotation of the film with its unique visual style. It integrates the inner meaning and formal meaning of traditional Chinese aesthetics into the posters and creates it through symbolic language symbols, poetic space and context, and traditional Chinese literature. The situational construction and other aspects to express the theme and spirit of the film. Analyzing the poster design from the perspective of meaning creation emphasizes the intermediary significance of traditional cultural forms in movie posters, and infiltrates the ideological connotation of oriental aesthetics into the poster design, in order to improve the uniqueness, creativity and interest of poster design [4]. As a form of a poster, movie posters are a means of publicity attached to movies. From the perspective of design and art, movie posters have profound cultural connotations and rich forms of expression and have gradually become a kind of unique works of art. At the same time, they also have the function of cultural output like movies. The movie poster of *The Golden Era* perfectly combines traditional Chinese aesthetic ideas with poster design to create poster works with the connotation of national culture. When promoting the film market at home and abroad, the absorption and integration of Chinese elements are extremely important [5].

The use of ink and wash elements in posters of *The Golden Era* can give the works a strong Chinese cultural atmosphere, show the uniqueness and artistic value of the works, and attract those who are interested in Chinese culture, with strong cultural connotation value. For example, one of the main reasons for the widespread circulation of the poster of *The Golden Era* mentioned above is the embodiment of the propaganda means with Chinese ink elements as the main background, thus arousing the interest and resonance of the audience, making the Chinese audience feel the charm of traditional Chinese culture, and attracting the foreign audience to feel the appeal of Chinese culture, which can be seen in Figure 1. This has a positive effect on attracting the target audience, establishing brand image and promoting works. As an artistic element, Chinese ink painting belongs to the cultural heritage of the Chinese nation and has a certain value in the art market.

If these visual elements are removed and Tang Wei is left alone in the picture, it will be visually blank and metaphorically empty. According to the segmentation method of the "nine-palace grid", Tang Wei's position is exactly the position of the "golden section law" in Figure 2. The area where the golden section law is located is usually a very prominent position in observation, so the protagonist of the poster design can be observed in the first time, without being disturbed by other surrounding elements.



Figure 1: The movie poster of *The Golden Era* in China, Designer: Hai Huang.



Figure 2: The movie poster of *The Golden Era* in Korea, Designer: Hai Huang.

## 2. Literature Review

Chinese ink and wash have great artistic value and unique aesthetic characteristics. In the history of Chinese landscape painting, Wang Wei is the ancestor of ink and wash landscape painting. He pioneered the beautiful and unique “Zen state” expression in Chinese landscape painting, enabling ink and wash to build a spiritual context and forming a unique language of ink and wash. This also means that even if the ink and washes are simple, the reader can still interpret the author’s unsaid words in it. With the development of cultural globalization and the continuous innovation of communication technology, traditional Chinese cultural elements are constantly being accepted all over the world. Designers have also started to explore the unique charm of traditional Chinese cultural elements in modern advertising. In the movie industry, movie posters are an important way of its

promotion. With the booming of the movie industry, movie poster, as the first impression of the movie to the audience, breaks the language barrier and becomes an important medium of cultural ideology output [6]. A good movie poster, with beautiful pictures and clever composition, should also show the tone of the movie, even suggest the character traits and fate of the main character of the movie, and bring positive emotions such as the expectation of the movie content and admiration of the movie art to the consumers. The positive emotion appeal including satisfaction, happiness and love has a positive impact on consumer engagement, and it can enhance the effectiveness of an advertisement, consumers' information processing ability and their recall [7]. In this way, movie posters can better fulfill the fundamental task of promoting movies as advertisements. Here, the ink element, which possesses the beauty of mood, becomes a suitable aesthetic reference.

Movie posters are designed to establish the viewer's initial impression. Movie posters condense the theme of the movie and serve as an important graphic media carrier to attract audiences with visual elements including color, graphics, text and so on. The ingenious arrangement and use of visual elements create different visual effects for different movie posters. These visual symbolic elements look ordinary, but the combination of each or more elements effectively promotes the transmission of information, and different combinations bring different emotional experiences to the audience. The refinement and structure of the symbols determine the pattern and design quality of movie posters [6]. The refinement and structure of the symbols determine the pattern and design quality of movie posters. The fluidity and versatility of ink and wash elements do not create a sense of monotony in the design because of the single element but rather bring the viewer emotions such as grand vicissitude or spiritual freshness through the combination with other elements. In terms of aesthetic criteria, Chinese ink painting stresses the spirit of vividness, verve of brush and ink, bone with brush, color adhere to type, and position management [8-10]. All these represent highly abstract aesthetic semantics, and this will provide more room for the interpretation of ink elements in movie posters.

Ink and wash elements bring a unique Eastern expression and an artistic context centered on Confucian culture to advertising design. In traditional Chinese ink painting, "ink is color" means that the change of ink is the change of color levels, and "ink is divided into five colors" means that the colorfulness can be replaced by the multi-layered ink chromaticity. The texture of the object is expressed through changes in thickness, speed, staccato, turn, square and round. This also gives the ink and wash elements a high degree of generality that can make the viewer associate more with the content of the film. It is also this high degree of generality and abstraction that allows it to suggest the overall atmosphere of the film accordingly. A recent study indicated that advertisements that make their audiences feel amused and create a sense of excitement and while also containing general entertainment value such as feelings of warmth and excitement and strongly influence in the engagement of consumers. And this is what the Chinese ink and wash elements in the movie posters can do too.

### 3. Methodology

The above studies and theories help to understand some background information in advance. However, there are still some gaps in this area of research. This study finds that although there is a lot of literature on advertising and some research literature on movie posters, few studies are focusing on specific elements in movie posters. In addition, the perception of the role of cultural symbols in movie posters is also vague, and this issue is rarely addressed at present. However, the cultural elements in movie posters, such as Chinese ink and wash elements, are an important part of the graphic design and advertising of movie posters, so this study argues that they need to be given more academic attention. The purpose of this study is to investigate the specific role of Chinese ink and wash elements in movie posters, represented by the promotional poster of the movie *The Golden Era*, from the viewer's perspective of the poster. This will provide a design idea for movie poster designers

to make the design more relevant to the content of the movie. This study will also provide a new perspective for the viewers of the posters from a cultural perspective. In addition, Chinese ink and wash elements, as a distinctive symbol of Chinese culture, can be used as a medium for national value export through the powerful cultural export vehicle of film to showcase Chinese culture to the world. Therefore, this study will also involve the interpretation of the evocative effect of movie posters using Chinese elements on the Chinese viewers' cultural identity and national pride, thus providing a new way to showcase the country's cultural soft power. In order to achieve the intended purpose of this study and to put the significance of this study into practice. This study will examine the application of Chinese ink elements in movie posters through case studies.

#### 4. Results

Film and television series with poster propaganda as the main means have become one of the trends of the development of today's film and television industry. The use of Chinese elements in *The Golden Era* can be summarized into three aspects: presentation techniques, visual skills and content correlation. Visually, the conflict is formed through the contrast between traditional Chinese elements and the elements in the film, and the spiritual core of the hero is placed on the material elements of the poster.

As an important part of film marketing, a movie poster is the first step to attracting the audience to the cinema. In the poster of the film *The Golden Era*, the designer cleverly incorporated traditional Chinese cultural elements to convey the theme and emotion of the film.

First of all, in the design of the poster, the "seal" element of traditional Chinese art printed the name of the film in the red square seal, making the poster appear particularly Chinese style. At the same time, the top of the seal is also used in the traditional Chinese calligraphy art of "running" font, showing the unique charm of traditional Chinese culture. Secondly, in the background of the poster, people can see a traditional Chinese landscape painting with a mountain and a stream of water, creating a peaceful and mysterious atmosphere. The painting, which serves as the background of the poster, expresses the protagonist's pursuit of life in the film, as well as his thoughts and reflections on different stages of life. At the same time, this landscape painting also symbolizes the artistic conception of "landscape" in traditional Chinese culture, emphasizing the harmonious symbiosis between man and nature.

Finally, in the center of the poster, people can see a group photo of the hero and heroine in the movie. The hero and heroine wear traditional Chinese costumes in the background of an ancient building, such as a courtyard or palace. These elements not only make the posters more characteristic of traditional Chinese culture but also echo the identities and emotions of the movie's hero and heroine, as well as the historical background in which they are located.

To sum up, movie posters are an indispensable part of film marketing, and the Chinese traditional cultural elements cleverly incorporated into the movie posters of *The Golden Era* not only highlight the unique charm of Chinese traditional culture but also convey the theme and emotion of the film, adding more cultural connotations to the publicity and promotion of the film.

#### 5. Discussion

Chinese people have always held deep emotions for their traditional culture. "Family", "Confucianism", collectivist ideology, and even ethnocentrism all create a sense of cultural pride in Chinese people when they see traditional Chinese culture. This will be even more apparent in Chinese overseas because the brain is inert and naturally dislikes change. The familiar cultural circle from their birthplace will make them feel more comfortable. Therefore, in the design of movie posters, in the Chinese market, the use of traditional Chinese ink and wash style will confer a higher acceptance

to the Chinese audience than the Western aesthetic elements and design concepts, such as the Eye of Horus, churches, Gothic architecture, and Baroque style. Combined with the Western ideology and culture represented behind the design work, such as individual heroism and elitism, it may have a negative impact on a portion of the audience. In contrast, the cultural atmosphere on the spiritual level built by the traditional ink and wash style will give them a more natural and comfortable feeling when viewing the posters. The ink and wash elements represent the introverted and subtle Chinese cultural traits, which will make the Chinese viewers resonate with the poster and identify with the content conveyed by the poster, thus raising their perception of the poster and making them curious about the content of the film. Through this, the basic task of movie promotion will be better accomplished.

The choice of ink elements in the movie poster design is not only determined by the cultural circle to which the poster audience belongs, but as a piece of design work, it is also necessary to consider its aesthetic value. In poster design, a single ink element usually does not cover the whole screen, which is related to the technique of blank, to make the picture more harmonious, and the composition more balanced, and also to highlight the content of the poster. Because the black of ink can form the strongest contrast with white, this is the advantage of choosing to use ink in a blank design. The use of blank allows viewers to quickly catch the focus of the poster and focus on the central idea that the poster wants to convey. When using the white space technique, the ink element usually plays a supporting role, for example, a huge drop of ink that smears across the paper, directing the viewer's attention to the main character of the movie in the center of the ink spot, rather than the trivial details around the main character.

The fluidity presented by the ink element also plays an important role in the poster. Flow is a kind of movement of liquid and a way for color to spread. Therefore, ink elements can conveniently simulate an abstract water environment in the design. The water marks left by the flow of ink can guide the viewer's eyes and make it fall where the designer wants him to look. The fluidity of the ink element not only has a visual guiding effect but also gives the poster's image a more visually dynamic feel through the gradation of color, which greatly improves its aesthetic value.

In addition, people generally default ink elements to black, which is considered a dull and serious tone. In the West, people often wear black clothes when attending funerals; in China, people believe that black crows are ominous, which let the black color become a misfortune and inauspicious symbolic meaning at the cultural level. The use of black ink elements in the design can use the cultural connotation of the color to create a serious and dreary overall visual atmosphere, but also through the black, suggesting the ultimate fate of the film's protagonist, in the movie poster and the film itself directly in the content to form a closer link. The audience can make some appropriate guesses about the content of the movie through the use of ink elements, and these guesses will trigger the audience's curiosity about the content of the movie, thus increasing the audience's desire to consume the movie itself.

The use of ink and wash elements in movie posters is a design strategy more often chosen by China, Japan and Korea in the East Asian cultural circle. Currently, there are fewer cases of Western designers using ink elements to design movie posters, which means that ink elements have not gained a larger audience in the Western market. Movies will be released worldwide and will participate in various international film festivals, so the act of designing movie posters with traditional Chinese ink and wash elements is itself an important tool when China makes cultural exports. However, when using ink and wash elements for cross-cultural movie poster design, designers also need to pay attention to the means when designing cross-culturally and respect the differences between different cultures. If designers use another cultural element according to their cultural ways, they may make a very bad design. Therefore, there is also an urgent need to discuss the issue of how ink elements can be better used for cross-cultural design.

## 6. Conclusion

This study found that although there is more research literature on advertising and some movie posters, there is less research literature on specific elements in movie posters. Moreover, people's understanding of the role of cultural symbols in movie posters is also blurred, and this problem is still less solved. Chinese elements in movie posters, such as ink and washing elements, are an important part of the graphic design and advertising of movie posters, so this study believes that they need more academic attention. This study explores the poster design of the film *The Golden Era* to study the specific role of the Chinese ink elements represented by the publicity poster in the film poster. This will provide a design concept for film poster designers to make the design more relevant to the content of the film. In addition, this study provides a new perspective for people who watch posters from a cultural perspective. As a unique symbol of Chinese culture, the Chinese ink element can be used as a film culture export medium of national value, and show the charm of Chinese culture to the world through a powerful film culture export medium. In addition, this study will also interpret the effect of movie posters using Chinese elements on the cultural identity and national pride of Chinese audiences, providing a new way to show the soft power of national culture. The above methods can help the study of the application of Chinese ink elements in movie posters.

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