

# From imported goods to local treasures: the localization process and inspiration of Chinese film and television art in the 20th century

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## Abstract

This paper examines the localization process of Chinese film and television art in the 20th century, tracing its transformation from a Western import to a culturally rooted artistic form. Through historical analysis and case studies of iconic works such as *To Live*, *The Grand Mansion Gate*, and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, it explores how cultural traditions, social changes, and technological innovations shaped indigenous creative practices. The study reveals that localization not only preserved national identity but also fostered aesthetic innovation and global influence, providing insights into the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity in media globalization.

## 1. Introduction

Chinese film art, as an indispensable and important dimension of the national literary and artistic cause, presents a dual characteristic of both the dissemination power of Chinese civilization and ideological discourse. The 20th century was an important period for the budding and flourishing development of Chinese film and television art. During this period, Western film and television art flooded into China like a tide, bringing new audio-visual languages, narrative methods, and production techniques. From early silent films to sound films, from black and white images to color images, Chinese film and television art has been deeply influenced by the West in terms of technology and art. For example, Hollywood movies have attracted a large number of Chinese audiences with their mature commercial operation models, exciting plots, and advanced special effects technology, which has had a huge impact on the Chinese film and television

market. Western film theories and creative concepts have also deeply influenced Chinese film and television creators, promoting Chinese film and television art to continuously absorb and learn from Western experiences and explore its own development path.

However, under the strong impact of Western film and television art, the localization development of Chinese film and television art has become particularly important. Localization is the key to maintaining the unique cultural identity and artistic charm of Chinese film and television art in the wave of globalization. China has a long history and rich national resources, which are the profound soil for the development of Chinese film and television art. Only by deeply exploring the connotation of local culture and integrating local cultural elements into film and television creation can we create film and television works with Chinese characteristics, Chinese style, and Chinese style to meet the cultural needs and aesthetic expectations of Chinese audiences. For example, some film and television works based on Chinese traditional culture, such as "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" and "Hero", have received widespread praise internationally, not only showcasing the charm of Chinese culture, but also enhancing the international influence of Chinese film and television art.

Studying the localization development of Chinese film and television art in the 20th century has important theoretical and practical significance. At the theoretical level, it helps to enrich and improve the theoretical system of Chinese film and television art. Currently, the theoretical research of Chinese film and television art relies to some extent on Western theories, and the research on the development laws and characteristics of local film and television art is not deep enough. Through the study of the localization development of Chinese film and television art in the 20th century, the unique experience and theoretical achievements of Chinese film and television art in the localization process can be summarized, providing important support for the construction of a film and television art theoretical system with Chinese characteristics. At the practical level, it has a guiding role in current Chinese film and television creation. Currently, the Chinese film and television market is booming, but it also faces some problems, such as the lack of cultural connotation in some film and television works and blind imitation of the West. By studying the localization development experience in history, it can provide useful reference for contemporary film and television creators, guide them to create more works with cultural value and artistic quality, and promote the healthy development of China's film and television industry. Studying the localization development of Chinese film and television art in the 20th century also helps to enhance national cultural confidence, promote the international dissemination of Chinese culture, and enhance the soft power of Chinese culture.

## **2. Methodology and Procedures**

This research adopts an interdisciplinary methodology combining literature review, case study analysis, and historical research to systematically examine the localization process of Chinese film and television art during the 20th century. The integrated approach ensures comprehensive coverage, scientific validity, and academic rigor in investigating this complex cultural phenomenon.

The literature review methodology forms the theoretical backbone of this study. Through extensive examination of both domestic and international scholarly works - including academic papers, industry reports, and critical reviews - regarding the development of Chinese film/television and their cultural localization, this research establishes a solid conceptual foundation. Particular attention has been paid to seminal works by leading Chinese scholars such as Yin Hong and Li Daoxin on Chinese film history and theory, as well as influential Western

researchers like David Bordwell in global cinema studies. These diverse perspectives have been critically analyzed to develop the theoretical framework guiding this investigation. Industry reports from major film research institutions have been consulted to understand market dynamics and audience preferences, while critical analyses of representative works like *To Live* and *The Grand Mansion Gate* provide valuable insights into reception studies and localized aesthetics.

Case study analysis serves as the empirical core of this research. Carefully selected representative works including *To Live*, *The Grand Mansion Gate*, and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* have undergone thorough textual and contextual examination. Each case study employs multi-dimensional analysis covering narrative structure (e.g., the linear storytelling in *To Live* aligning with traditional Chinese narrative conventions), cultural symbolism (e.g., the allegorical use of shadow puppetry), and cinematic techniques (e.g., color schemes reflecting historical periods). This micro-level analysis of specific works reveals patterns and strategies in successful cultural localization, providing concrete examples to support broader theoretical arguments about the localization process.

Historical research methodology provides crucial temporal context, with the 20th century divided into three distinct developmental phases: the Germination Period (early 1900s-1949), the Exploration/Development Period (1949-1978), and the Diversification Period (1978-late 1990s). Each era is examined in relation to its specific socio-political context - from the semi-colonial modernity of early 20th century China that shaped initial localization attempts, through the state-led cultural policies of the socialist period that created distinct cinematic idioms, to the market liberalization and technological advancements of the reform era that enabled artistic experimentation. This macro-historical perspective reveals how localization strategies evolved in response to broader social transformations.

The synthesis of these three methodologies creates a robust research framework that examines Chinese film/television localization from multiple angles - theoretical, textual, and historical. This comprehensive approach not only yields new insights into the Chinese context but also contributes to broader academic discussions about cultural adaptation in media studies. The methodological design consciously avoids Western-centric paradigms while developing analytical tools appropriate for studying Chinese cultural production in its own historical and social contexts.

### **3. Review of the development process of Chinese film and television art in the**

#### **20th century**

#### **3.1 Germination and establishment period (early 20th century - 1949)**

In 1896, cinema, an emerging art form, traveled across the oceans and arrived in China, initially appearing as a novel spectacle known as "Western shadow plays" in treaty ports such as Shanghai. At the time, film was an exotic and fascinating form of entertainment for Chinese audiences, captivating the public with its unique interplay of light and shadow. In Shanghai's teahouses and theaters, films were screened as supplementary attractions, offering audiences an unprecedented audiovisual experience.

The year 1905 marked a pivotal moment in Chinese cinematic history with Ren Jingfeng's *Dingjun Mountain*, widely regarded as the first Chinese film. This groundbreaking work ingeniously merged Peking Opera with the newly introduced medium of moving images, capturing iconic scenes from the opera, including "Requesting the Battle," "Sword Dance," and

"The Duel." Despite the rudimentary filming conditions, Dingjun Mountain pioneered the localization of cinematic expression, laying a crucial foundation for the development of Chinese cinema. It allowed audiences to see their own traditional art form on screen for the first time, ensuring that Chinese cinema was deeply rooted in native culture from its inception.

By the 1920s, Chinese cinema entered a phase of preliminary growth, with film production companies such as the Star Film Company emerging rapidly. Among the notable works of this era, *Orphan Rescues Grandfather* stood out as a milestone. This film conveyed traditional Confucian values through a family ethics narrative, telling the story of an orphan who, after enduring numerous hardships, ultimately saves his family's legacy through perseverance and virtue. Not only did the film resonate emotionally with audiences by reflecting social realities, but it also made bold artistic advancements in narrative structure and cinematography, establishing an early model for localized storytelling and setting a direction for future Chinese cinema.

The 1930s witnessed the rise of the Left-Wing Film Movement, a transformative period in Chinese film history. Masterpieces such as *The Goddess* and *Street Angel* emerged during this time. *The Goddess* portrayed the tragic life of a woman forced into prostitution to support her child, exposing the harsh realities faced by the lower classes under social oppression. *Street Angel*, on the other hand, focused on a group of marginalized characters in Shanghai, depicting their struggles, resilience, and fleeting moments of warmth amidst adversity. These films, grounded in realism and imbued with sharp social critique, marked a shift in Chinese cinema—from mere entertainment to a medium capable of enlightening the public and reflecting societal truths.

### **3.2 Exploration and development period (1949-1978)**

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, cinema was incorporated into the state's ideological apparatus, serving as a key tool for political propaganda and cultural education. Major studios such as Changchun Film Studio and Beijing Film Studio became the primary forces in film production, tasked with promoting revolutionary ideals and reinforcing political solidarity. This period produced numerous classic revolutionary films, including *The White-Haired Girl* and *The Red Detachment of Women*.

*The White-Haired Girl*, adapted from the revolutionary opera of the same name, tells the story of Xi'er, a peasant girl persecuted by a landlord, who flees into the mountains and becomes the "White-Haired Woman" before being liberated under the new socialist order. Through stark class contrasts, the film powerfully conveyed the theme that "the old society turns humans into ghosts, while the new society transforms ghosts back into humans," stirring deep resentment toward the feudal past and fervent support for the new regime. *The Red Detachment of Women*, based on the heroic deeds of an all-female revolutionary militia in Hainan, celebrated the spirit of resistance and gender equality, embodying the era's revolutionary romanticism.

In 1958, China's first television drama, *A Bite of Pancake*, was produced, marking the birth of domestic TV art. With its simple plot and unadorned performances, the drama conveyed a message of remembering past hardships to appreciate present prosperity, serving as an effective educational and propagandistic tool.

By the 1960s, rural-themed films like *Li Shuangshuang* emerged, reflecting the new socialist countryside and the evolving spirit of peasants. The film's protagonist, a bold and outspoken village woman who confronts social injustices, became an emblem of the era's collectivist ethos. Technologically, this period also saw significant advancements—black-and-white films gave way to color productions such as *Five Golden Flowers*, which incorporated vibrant ethnic aesthetics and enriched the visual language of Chinese cinema.

### **3.3 Prosperity and diversification period (1978 - late 20th century)**

China's cultural landscape underwent a profound transformation following the implementation of economic reforms, with the film and television sector experiencing particularly dramatic evolution. The post-1978 period witnessed the rapid commercialization of China's entertainment industry, creating fertile ground for artistic innovation while maintaining connections to cultural heritage. This era saw the emergence of what would become known as the Fifth Generation filmmakers - a cohort of directors whose cinematic language would redefine Chinese cinema's position in global film culture.

Among these pioneering figures, two directors emerged with particularly distinctive voices that would shape international perceptions of Chinese cinema. One director's early work, set in the rural northwest, employed a visceral visual style that combined raw naturalism with almost mythic symbolism. The film's unflinching portrayal of peasant life, rendered through a palette of bold primary colors and dynamic cinematography, announced a new era of Chinese filmmaking that was both deeply rooted in local tradition and startlingly original in its execution. Another auteur's magnum opus adopted an entirely different approach, weaving a decades-spanning narrative through the world of traditional Chinese opera to create a meditation on personal identity amidst historical upheaval. This film's intricate narrative structure and psychological depth demonstrated how Chinese cinema could engage with universal human themes while remaining firmly grounded in specific cultural contexts.

The small screen experienced its own renaissance during this period. A groundbreaking television serial captured the nation's imagination with its intimate portrayal of ordinary lives during times of social change, establishing the domestic drama as a staple of Chinese television programming. Meanwhile, an ambitious adaptation of a modernist literary classic proved that television could be a medium for sophisticated literary interpretation, with its careful attention to period detail and subtle character development setting new standards for production values in Chinese TV drama.

As the 1990s progressed, filmmakers continued to explore the tension between tradition and modernity through various cinematic approaches. One visually sumptuous period piece used the microcosm of a wealthy household to examine the psychological and social constraints imposed by traditional power structures, particularly on women. In contrast, an epic historical drama took a more direct approach to China's recent past, following an everyman protagonist through the nation's turbulent twentieth century as a means of exploring themes of survival and human resilience in the face of catastrophic social change.

Technological advancements played a crucial role in expanding the creative possibilities available to Chinese filmmakers during this fertile period. The adoption of digital production techniques coincided with the emergence of new genres, including a particularly

## **4. Case analysis of the localization of Chinese film and television art in the 20th century**

### **4.1 "To Live": A Profound Exploration of Local Reality and Human Nature**

The movie "To Live" is directed by Zhang Yimou, starring Ge You and Gong Li. It is adapted from Yu Hua's novel of the same name and is a classic work of localization of Chinese film and television art in the 20th century. With delicate and realistic strokes, the film depicts the huge changes in Chinese society from the Liberation War to the early stage of reform and opening up through the ups and downs of the protagonist Fu Gui's life, and deeply reflects the local reality.

The fifth generation of Chinese directors grew up in the late period of the Cultural Revolution

and the early period of reform and opening up. Their films often reflect on the Cultural Revolution and return to traditional Chinese culture, actively "exposing" objective real problems. From the perspective of localized artistic characteristics, "To Live" has a unique narrative style and expression technique. The film adopts a linear narrative method, showing Fu Gui's life in chronological order, allowing the audience to clearly understand his fate trajectory. This narrative method conforms to the aesthetic habits of Chinese audiences, making the film have strong storytelling and coherence. The film pays attention to the portrayal of details, showing the characters' personalities and emotions through some small details. Fu Gui's love for shadow puppetry is not only his hobby, but also his sustenance for life. During the war, Fu Gui carried a shadow puppet box around, and even in the most difficult moments, he did not give up shadow puppetry. This persistence in shadow puppetry shows Fu Gui's love for life and inheritance of traditional culture. The film also uses symbolic and metaphorical techniques to enhance the artistic appeal of the film. The shadow puppetry in the film is not only an art form, but also a symbol of Fu Gui's fate. The rise and fall of shadow puppetry is closely related to Fu Gui's life experience, reflecting the changes of the times and the development of society. The old cow in the film is also an important symbolic symbol. The old cow symbolizes Fu Gui's toughness and tenacity. It has gone through countless difficult years with Fu Gui and has become his partner in life.

#### **4.2 "Da Zhai Men": Inheritance of Local Culture in Family Narrative**

The TV drama "Da Zhai Men" has become a classic work of localization of Chinese film and television art in the 20th century with its grand narrative structure and delicate character portrayal. The drama is based on the Beijing Tong Ren Tang and tells the legendary stories of Bai Jingqi and other three generations of the Bai family. The family is the smallest unit of society. In this place, the benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faith rooted in Chinese traditional culture can also be fully expressed, thus arousing the inheritance and development of these excellent traditions in today's society. Through family narration, rich local cultural connotations are displayed.

The narrative structure of "Da Zhai Men" has distinct localized characteristics, adopting a narrative mode of family rise and fall, closely combining the fate of the family with the changes of the times. The drama depicts the experiences of the Bai family in different historical periods such as the late Qing Dynasty, the Republic of China, and the War of Resistance Against Japan, showing the impact of the huge changes in Chinese society on the family. In the late Qing Dynasty, the Bai family was in trouble due to court struggles, Bai Jingqi's father Bai Yingxuan was dismissed, and the family business was also affected. In the Republic of China period, although the Bai family regained some vitality, it faced the situation of warlord chaos and social unrest. During the War of Resistance Against Japan, the Bai family suffered cruel persecution from Japanese invaders, and family members joined the anti-Japanese struggle one after another. Through this narrative structure, the audience can feel the changes in Chinese society in different historical periods, as well as the struggles and struggles of families in the changing times.

The drama also pays attention to the portrayal of details, showcasing the charm of Chinese traditional culture through the depiction of family life details. The drama meticulously depicts the Bai family's diet, clothing, etiquette, and other aspects, allowing the audience to feel the profoundness of Chinese traditional culture. In terms of diet, the Bai family pays attention to the selection of ingredients and cooking skills, emphasizing color, aroma, and taste. The drama often features the banquet scenes of the Bai family, with various delicacies on the table, making people drool. In terms of clothing, all men, women, and children of the Bai family dress appropriately, paying attention to the style and texture of their clothing. Bai Jingqi's mother, Bai Wenshi, often

wears gorgeous qipao, showing her noble temperament. In terms of etiquette, the Bai family strictly adheres to the rules and traditions of the family, paying attention to the details of etiquette. The Bai family's ancestral worship ceremony, wedding, birthday banquet and other scenes often appear in the play, which demonstrate the importance of etiquette in traditional Chinese culture.

### **4.3 Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: Internationalization of Local Martial Arts Culture**

The movie "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" is a work with profound influence. It cleverly integrates Chinese local martial arts culture with international aesthetics, showing unique charm in narrative, audio-visual language, and making important contributions to the internationalization of Chinese film and television art.

In terms of narrative, "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" cleverly combines the unique elements of Chinese martial arts culture with internationally accepted narrative methods. Ang Lee presents an ancient Chinese story in a way that Westerners can naturally accept. The film takes the theft of the Qingming Sword as a clue and unfolds a legendary story of the martial arts world. In this story, there are not only common grudges and sectarian disputes in Chinese martial arts culture, but also profound discussions on universal themes such as human nature, love, and freedom. The rebellion and pursuit of freedom of Yu Jiaolong, the chivalrous spirit and emotional entanglement of Li Mubai, and the forbearance and perseverance of Yu Xiulian are intertwined, forming a complex and fascinating story. The film grasps the narrative rhythm perfectly, with both tense and exciting martial arts scenes and delicate and touching emotional scenes, allowing the audience to feel the passion and passion of the martial arts world while appreciating the film, as well as the emotional waves in the characters' hearts. In the night fight scene between Yu Jiaolong and Yu Xiulian, the tense atmosphere and intense fighting rhythm make the audience hold their breath; while the implicit and deep love scenes between Li Mubai and Yu Xiulian make the audience feel the warmth and beauty of human nature.

From the perspective of audio-visual language, "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" perfectly integrates localization and internationalization. In terms of composition, the film draws on the aesthetic concepts of traditional Chinese painting and emphasizes the creation of artistic conception. The scene of fighting in the bamboo forest can be regarded as a classic, with the green bamboo forest, flying bamboo leaves, and the movements of the characters complementing each other, forming a beautiful picture. In this scene, the director uses a large number of distant and panoramic shots to show the vastness and depth of the bamboo forest, while also highlighting the insignificance and agility of the characters in the natural environment. The character's movement design is flowing and complements the natural beauty of the bamboo forest, creating an ethereal and elegant artistic conception, demonstrating the pursuit of natural beauty in traditional Chinese painting. In terms of color application, the film uses natural colors such as cyan and green as the main tone, creating a fresh and elegant atmosphere, reflecting the aesthetic pursuit of "elegance" in traditional Chinese culture.

The music in the film is also very distinctive. The soundtrack created by Tan Dun combines traditional Chinese music elements with Western modern music techniques, adding unique artistic charm to the film. The soundtrack uses traditional Chinese instruments such as erhu, pipa, and bamboo flute, and the unique sound of these instruments creates a strong oriental atmosphere for the film. In the bamboo forest fight scene between Li Mubai and Yu Jiaolong, the soundtrack is mainly composed of bamboo flute and pipa, and its melodious melody contrasts sharply with the intense fight scenes, allowing the audience to appreciate the martial arts scenes while also feeling the beauty of the music. The film also uses Western symphonic elements, echoing with traditional Chinese instruments, enhancing the sense of hierarchy and expressiveness of the music. The

theme song "Moonlight Lover" perfectly integrates Eastern and Western music elements, with beautiful melodies and poetic lyrics. It not only has the graceful beauty of Eastern music, but also the romantic feelings of Western music.

The success of "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" has provided valuable experience for the internationalization of Chinese film and television art. It proves the strong attraction and vitality of Chinese local culture. As long as we can combine local culture with international aesthetics to create works with unique charm, we can gain recognition and praise in the international market. The film showcases the profoundness of Chinese martial arts culture to the world through wonderful stories, exquisite visuals, and moving music, allowing more people to understand and love Chinese culture. It also provides inspiration for Chinese film and television creators. In the context of globalization, we should strengthen our cultural confidence, deeply explore the connotation of local culture, use modern film and television technology and creative concepts, create more film and television works with Chinese characteristics, Chinese style, and Chinese style, and promote Chinese film and television art to the world.

## **5. The significance and value of the localization of Chinese film and television art in the 20th century**

### **5.1 Cultural Inheritance and Promotion**

The process of cultural inheritance and promotion through localized film and television production represents a sophisticated mechanism of cultural regeneration through symbolic reconstruction and modern reinterpretation. This phenomenon manifests most powerfully in works that successfully bridge historical cultural elements with contemporary narrative forms and production techniques. The biographical epic "Confucius" exemplifies this approach through its cinematic translation of Confucian philosophy, transforming abstract ethical principles into visual narratives that resonate with modern audiences. By dramatizing key moments in the philosopher's life and teachings, the film creates an accessible pathway for contemporary viewers to engage with traditional Chinese values of social harmony, filial piety, and moral cultivation.

Similarly, the martial arts classic "Shaolin Temple" operates on multiple cultural levels, simultaneously serving as an action spectacle while transmitting the profound spiritual dimensions of Zen Buddhism and the philosophical foundations of Chinese martial arts. The film's enduring popularity demonstrates how localized storytelling can package complex cultural concepts within entertainment formats, effectively preserving and promoting intangible cultural heritage. The regional saga "Chuangguandong" extends this cultural transmission to the realm of geographical identity, encoding specific northern Chinese cultural markers into its narrative DNA through dialect, customs, and collective historical memory.

What makes these cultural transmissions particularly significant is their ability to activate traditional aesthetic systems within modern viewing contexts. The visual language of ink painting, the narrative structures of classical literature, and the performance conventions of traditional theater all find new life through cinematic adaptation. This transformative process allows core cultural values - including patriotism, familial duty, and social ethics - to maintain their relevance among younger generations increasingly distanced from traditional cultural forms. The success of these adaptations lies in their dual capacity to preserve cultural authenticity while meeting contemporary audiences on their own aesthetic terms.

The animation phenomenon "Monkey King: Hero Is Back" represents a particularly successful case of transgenerational cultural transmission. By reimagining one of China's most enduring mythological figures through cutting-edge animation technology, the film bridges centuries of



storytelling tradition with modern visual spectacle. This approach demonstrates how cultural IP can remain vital through continuous reinterpretation, maintaining core symbolic meanings while adapting to evolving media landscapes. Similarly, the visually sumptuous "Legend of the Demon Cat" achieves cultural innovation through its meticulous reconstruction of Tang Dynasty aesthetics, creating a cinematic tapestry that weaves historical detail with fantastical elements. The film's success illustrates how contemporary productions can serve as cultural time machines, making distant historical periods emotionally accessible while showcasing the sophistication of traditional Chinese arts.

These examples collectively demonstrate that effective cultural inheritance in film and television requires more than simple preservation - it demands creative reinvention. The most successful localized works function as cultural palimpsests, where traditional meanings are neither erased nor rigidly preserved, but rather carefully rewritten for new contexts. This process ensures that cultural symbols maintain their essential meanings while acquiring new layers of contemporary relevance. Through this dynamic approach, Chinese film and television have developed a unique capacity to sustain cultural continuity while allowing for creative evolution, proving that traditional culture can indeed achieve cross-generational appeal when presented through innovative audiovisual forms. The commercial and critical success of these works suggests that cultural localization, when executed with both fidelity and imagination, can satisfy both artistic integrity and popular appeal, creating a virtuous circle of cultural preservation and renewal.

## **5.2 Artistic Innovation and Development**

The localization process promotes the construction of the film and television language system. "Hero" transforms the artistic conception of ink painting into film visual grammar, "Crazy Stone" creates a new paradigm of dialect comedy, forming the characteristics of "Eastern narrative aesthetics". The folk wonders of the fifth-generation directors, the street documentaries of the sixth-generation directors, and the typological exploration of new mainstream films jointly construct a diverse creative pattern. "Youth" achieves artistic sublimation through collective memory writing, and "Chang'an 30,000 Miles" reconstructs poetic aesthetics through animation, demonstrating the sustained vitality of local artistic innovation.

## **5.3 International Communication and Influence Enhancement**

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon "opened up the international film industry with martial arts philosophy, and the fight scenes in the bamboo forest became a visual symbol for Western understanding of China." Empresses in the Palace "uses palace intrigue narration to output the wisdom of Eastern power struggles, triggering a cultural decoding craze in South Korea and Japan. These works use the "Chinese story + international expression" model to transform cultural elements such as traditional Chinese medicine, tea ceremony, and calligraphy into globally circulated cultural capital. The "Wandering Earth" series also breaks through the science fiction genre, showcasing Chinese-style heroism in overseas markets and promoting the enhancement of cultural soft power.

## **6. Research summary**

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of the localization process of Chinese film and television art throughout the 20th century, tracing its evolution from initial technical adaptation to mature cultural self-expression. The research reveals a clear developmental trajectory beginning with the experimental fusion of Peking opera and film technology in "Dingjun Mountain," progressing through the revolutionary narratives of works like "The White-Haired Girl," and culminating in the sophisticated cultural symbolism of "Red Sorghum." This progression

demonstrates how Chinese filmmakers gradually developed a distinct cinematic language that balanced local cultural specificity with universal artistic appeal.

Three fundamental forces emerge as key drivers of this localization process. First, China's rich cultural heritage - particularly Confucian ethics, Taoist philosophy, and traditional aesthetic principles - provided a deep well of creative inspiration and thematic material. Second, the nation's dramatic social transformations, from revolution to reform, continuously reshaped the content and direction of audiovisual arts. Third, technological advancements enabled increasingly sophisticated expressions of cultural identity, from basic cinematography to digital media. These elements combined to form what we term the "traditional core + modern expression" paradigm, where contemporary techniques serve to reinterpret and revitalize ancient cultural elements.

The study examines several landmark works that exemplify successful localization strategies. "To Live" demonstrates how personal narratives can encapsulate national historical memory, while "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" modernizes traditional wuxia philosophy for global audiences. "Chang'an 30,000 Miles" showcases innovative approaches to classical Chinese poetry and painting aesthetics. These cases reveal film and television's dual role as both preservers of cultural heritage and catalysts for its continuous renewal - a crucial function in our globalized era.

Several key factors emerge as critical to the localization process. China's cultural traditions provide fundamental frameworks for storytelling and visual expression, creating what scholars call the "Chinese cultural imaginary" in cinema. Social transformations have consistently pushed filmmakers to reinterpret traditions in light of contemporary realities, producing distinct "period-specific cultural coding." Meanwhile, technological progress has dramatically expanded the possibilities for cultural representation, from recreating historical settings to visualizing classical aesthetic concepts.

The localization of Chinese film and television carries profound cultural significance. It has created a dynamic archive of traditional practices, facilitated intergenerational cultural transmission, and sparked renewed interest in classical arts among younger audiences. Artistically, it has developed unique narrative modes and visual styles that blend traditional and modern elements. Internationally, successful localized works have served as cultural ambassadors, demonstrating the global relevance of Chinese storytelling while expanding the vocabulary of world cinema.

This century-long process represents what we term "cultural retro-innovation" - a phenomenon where artistic creation simultaneously reaches back to reclaim traditional resources while moving forward with innovative expression. As Chinese audiovisual arts continue to evolve in the digital age, the lessons from this localization journey offer valuable insights for maintaining cultural distinctiveness in an increasingly interconnected media landscape. The study ultimately reveals how Chinese filmmakers have forged a unique path that respects cultural roots while embracing creative innovation, providing a model for cultural expression in the global era.

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