



## Comparative Study Between Chinese and Western Culture in Kung Fu Panda 2

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### Abstract

*Kung Fu Panda 2* is a typical cinematographic works of the perfect integration of Sino-western culture. Through interpreted and understood Chinese traditional culture, this film is intertwined with western cultural elements, which convey the core ideas of multicultural coexistence and prompting mutual development of culture in Chinese and western culture collision. On the culture and idea side, *Kung Fu Panda 2* is the film which is integrated with Chinese and western culture successfully and delivers the culture. Based on this point, through comparative study between Chinese and Western culture in *Kung Fu Panda 2*, this paper further summarizes the enlightenment from this film to Chinese culture development.

**Key words:** Kung Fu Panda; Chinese and western culture; Comparison; Enlightenment

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The *Kung Fu Panda 2*, which was showed in 2011, made by the animation studio of DreamWorks and issued by the Paramount Pictures, is the sequel of the animation movie *Kung Fu Panda* in 2008. The story mainly talks about that the Panda Po, who became the Dragon Warrior, followed with Kung Fu Master and the Furious Five to protect the Peace Valley and enjoy a peaceful life. However, good times don't last long. The evil villain Lord Shen were about to conquer China and destroy the Kung Fu with an unstoppable secret weapon. The Panda Po was facing a new challenge and only through thinking

back and uncovering his mystery of life could he find the key power to defeat the enemies. This movie perfectly blends two principal themes of China, the Kung Fu and the Panda, in the culture transmission form of movie by western artists. It fully embodies their comprehensions and understandings about the Chinese culture and mixes many elements of western culture, displaying coexistence and integration of cultural diversity in the new period. The movie is an inspirational one which has Chinese and western culture and philosophical concept, not only reflects the American Dream idea "everyone can become a hero through struggle", but also actively advocate the Chinese traditional thought "justice will prevail". More importantly, this film has proven the successful blending of Chinese and Western Cultures, whether image design, embodiment of values or culture spread.

### 1. THE DISPLAYING ON THE CHINESE AND WESTERN CULTURAL ESSENCE IN KUNG FU PANDA 2

#### 1.1 Each Person's Attitude Towards Fate

The *Kung Fu Panda 2* all along discusses the attitudes towards fates of the persons hereinto and their struggles to control their own destiny. Panda Po, who was an orphan, made great efforts to be the Dragon Warrior. After this, he didn't think he had reached the highest point of fate, but continually fight for the peace to protect the villagers and his hometown. Unexpectedly, he found out the mystery of his own life in the fighting and knew his past after getting the memories of the Snootsayer. However, after Po knew what he had suffering in the past, he didn't sink into and tangle it, but struggled to fight for the future with his friends.

As for Lord Shen, he decided to change his fate and kill all pandas after knowing that he would be defeated

by the warrior of black and white from the Snootsayer. However, Man proposes but God disposes and the God's thoughts are more powerful. When he came to meet his parents to receive an award for his so-called successful plan, the faces of his parents showed a look of fear. Soon after, instead of inheriting the throne, he was driven out of Gongmen City. Under such a major blow, he did not repent to make a fresh start, but went his own way and collected the metal to produce cannons. His famous saying was, "Happiness must be taken, and I will take mine." Guided by this, he declared to retake the city and conquer China by force. Undoubtedly, he lost his fight against the fate. His failure was due to that he tangled the past and did not look to the future and always believed the prediction no matter how wrongly he had gone.

In the movie, there is another attitude towards life, negatively waiting. This referred to such as the Crocodile Warrior. They were shocked by the power of the cannon which killed the Master Rhino and became the black dog without any resistance. They thought, "The only hero has died and the Kung Fu has gone." Therefore, when Panda Po came to rescue them out of the prison, they refused resolutely to stay here waiting for death. They had lost their confidence of victory completely. This tells us that, in the face of terrible fate, we neither risk the life to fight for it at our own will, nor wait negatively, but actively cooperate with the fate to realize the dream.

### 1.2 What Kind of Person One Might Become

The Kung Fu Panda 2 proposes such questions: Who I am? Where I come from? What kind of person I want to be? And it just takes these to organize and unfold the plot. These questions are proposed aiming at the specific situations of Po and Lord Shen and are the ultimate questions that everyone must face. The most confusing questions for Panda Po are that: Who I am? Where I come from? And for Lord Shen, to be what kind of person is most important. The life journeys of Panda Po and Lord Shen reflect two kinds of attitudes towards life. Panda Po had suffered a terrible life, but he just accepted the reality that fate brought to him and realized his mission under fate's guidance. Lord Shen disobeyed and resisted the fate from the beginning, and he would rather guide himself in an evil way than change his fate in a positive way. Thus, he had not only harmed many innocents, but also failed to escape the arrangement of the fate. This is just like what Chinese Taoist and Confucian had said, "Good and evil lie in one's mind" and "Pursuit of the wrong thing is the reason for one's suffering". And this also reflects the viewpoints of original sin and redemption of the Western Christianity.

After the tough search, the Panda Po uncovered his mysteries of life. More importantly, he knew what kind of person he would be: He is Panda Po, also the Dragon Warrior and especially the son of Goose Father. All problems in the life could be ascribed to find true to

ourselves like what the Panda Po had said, "I know who I am, I am your son". And this just likes what the movie tells us, "Perhaps the beginning of your life is full of hardships, but this will not affect what kind of person you will be. The key is that how you will fight for the rest life and what choices you will make". However, Lord Shen not only lost his desired rights and powers, but also the recognition of his parents and the supports of the people. Finally, he lost everything because of his greediness. He just went back to the beginning after walking a round in the unseen world.

### 1.3 Personnel Power and Collective Power

The Panda Po is undoubtedly the leading role in the movie, but his success is not his own one, but the one made by the collective and his own struggles. The Panda Po, guided and taught by his master and helped by the Furious Five, that are Tigress, Mantis, Master Viper, Crane and Monkey, prevented the wild ambition of Lord Shen step by step and saved all living things. This movie both displays the successful discuss on the collective power of China socialist society and the personnel power in struggling for success of western individualism society. It is the combine of these two powers that brings the success to the Panda Po. From this we can say that, only by combining the collective power and the personnel power can they succeed, which is the point the movie has expressed.

The Panda Po guided himself to be the right one and finally succeeded to be with helps of his master, father and friends. As for Lord Shen, he failed because he fight alone all the time, never listened to the advice and gave up the family affection and friendship. Finally, Lord Shen completely lost everything. The individual and the collective are inseparable for a success.

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## 2. THE COMPARISON BETWEEN CHINESE AND WESTERN CULTURE IN KUNG FU PANDA 2

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We can see the general sense of worth and view of life exiting in Chinese society and western society in Kung Fu Panda 2, of course both the positive and negative. And we can also see that the original intention of pursuing the truth, the good and the beauty will never change and the people's expectation for justice is the same no matter what kind of places, societies and culture backgrounds. This common ground of Chinese and western culture is fully described in the Kung Fu Panda 2.

### 2.1 Comparison of Spiritual Pursuit

During the movie "Kung Fu Panda2", the intension and nature of the story didn't change a lot; still use the growth of the American hero as theme to tell the story. But from the perspective of spiritual pursuit, the movie brings us

such a kind of cultural connotation that Americans regard Savior as their heroes, while the heroes bear people's longing and hope for world peace. Chinese heroes are the persons who can be around them and exclude the difficulty and anxiety for them when they encounter disasters. Understanding of Chinese and the Westerners to hero has much to do with cultural difference, while the difference is completely embodied in their spiritual pursuit. The hero in Western culture often refers to someone, as for how to become a hero is not pursued excessively by them, while the hero in Chinese culture becomes a genius one, which needs a team to give assistance, like the leading character, panda Po, his five partners accompanied him when he accomplishes each arduous task. Therefore, it is not hard to see that Chinese culture emphasizes team spirit. They think it difficult to accomplish task by one person, mind hands make light work, with the help of collaboration, what one person cannot complete can be achieved. But in Western culture, people do not think so, although they acknowledge team spirit and highlight individualism more.

## 2.2 A Comparison in the Emotional Values

*Kung Fu Panda 2* runs through the main thread of love, and values of gratitude and self-dedication awakes good desire for world. The movie adopts the joint point of Chinese and western culture in the emotional values, through displaying the orphan, panda Po's growth experience, and has people feel the values of kinship and friendship. *Kung Fu Panda 2* annotates vividly the sense of nurture father geese gave Po, and the natural affection that mother panda sacrificed herself to rescue her son, which happens to hold the same view with Chinese traditional emotional values. The deep friendship between Panda Po and Master Tigress is also the bright spot of the plot, through deducing their friendship; people know that they can get same emotional spending of the opposite side only after they first pay sincere and friendship. There are some emotional elements added in the several details of *Kung Fu Panda 2*, which is the necessary sensational element in Chinese screen culture, and enhances the emotional aspects of the whole movie, meanwhile, awakes westerner's resonance in the emotional values.

## 2.3 A Comparison in the Way of Thinking

The leading character of the movie, panda Po was aroused the dust-laden memories by its patterns on its body in a battle with the peacock king that was panda Po's father who was not a goose, but a panda king, so the leading character stepped on finding out the mystery of his own life. Although this moment copies the plots of *Who Am I* to a large extent, we can also realize the dominant questioning from it, which embodies fully the difference between Chinese and western culture in the way of thinking. During pursuing the answer of "who am I", he felt that he had changed and was not usual ego, he trapped

in the dilemma of the lost during looking for himself, thus human foibles also embodies. The way of thinking that Chinese culture embodies basically follows normal law of development of things, while western culture embodies active exploration and quest in the way of thinking, and striving for searching for the sake of finding answer, which is the most typical difference between western and Chinese culture in the way of thinking.

## 2.4 A Comparison in the Ecological Culture

*Kung Fu Panda 2* is not only a recreational and inspirational movie but also a movie revealing the technological civilization, the moral principles and essence of the ecological culture. The peacock in the movie tried in vain to use technological weapon to achieve destroying kung fu, conquering China, which conveys a kind of a naked war thought and fully shows a non-peaceful concept that the force can resolve everything, and seriously goes against an ecological culture concept of harmonious development among man, nature and society. However, the panda Po finally defeated the powerful weapons of the peacock on the condition of internal peace, good soul and natural status in the mind, thus fully demonstrates an ecological development view and a world outlook, embodies theme of the core spirit of human in the ecological culture, and also accords with the main ideas of ecological balance, developing environmental protection technology and harmonious coexistence that various countries of China and the west pursue.

# 3. IMPLICATIONS OF KUNG FU PANDA 2 FOR CHINESE CULTURE DEVELOPMENT

## 3.1 Always Adhering to Nationalization

The nationalization not only emphasizes own national culture, meanwhile, but also is a recognition of communication relationship for different national cultures. The nationalization is no longer a stereotypical, conventional and behindhand slogan any more, and it reflects another meaning: the communication and integration of the culture among different nationalities. The nationalization is an opposite of globalization of the culture, and the two complement, rely on and promote each other. Therefore, the existing culture heritage around us should be protected and cherished so that all mankind can enjoy unique culture treasure of Chinese sign characteristic all the time.

## 3.2 Coexistence of the Multiplicity and Synchronous Development

With the continuous development and progress of society, process of globalization is also continually accelerating, thus make us easily observe that globalization of culture has gradually become an objective existing fact. Whether

the fact was admitted or not by people, it has been an irreversible historical trend. As it were, since the reform and opening of our country, China has gradually blended in the big wave of civilization and progress. Human development is based on social development, while development of culture should be built on the premise of globalization of culture. We must accept the common value in the culture in order to really blend in the world culture. Only when understanding and learning the national culture of developed countries and absorbing some essences into Chinese culture, can we further promote the cultural development of China. Thus we should insist on the principle of coexistence of the multiplicity and synchronous development all the time to promote Chinese culture development in a wider international language environment.

### 3.3 Strengthening Communication Between Cultures, Promoting Culture Regeneration

As far as globalization of culture is concerned, it belongs to a dynamic developing process and involves diverse communication and conversation. In a certain sense, emphasis of globalization is not merely cultural simplification, but diverse coexisting culture connotation. Consequently, every country and nation should spare no effort to do their best for realizing coordination and coexistence of diverse culture, and contribute their due share to promote the communication and development of world culture for this reason. During communication of the international culture, we should not only persist in exploring our traditional culture resources, but also combine with western up-to-date cultural elements selectively. Apparently only if it is far away from just copying traditional culture, thus we should also combine innovative ideas that people love with the traditional culture organically to promote culture regeneration.

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## CONCLUSION

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In a word, *Kung Fu Panda 2* has brought a strong viewing impact on audiences of China and the west both in image molding, landscape design and plot arrangement, embodiment of values and so on. This movie, combining western culture elements with Chinese traditional culture charm, displays the essence of Chinese and western culture as much as possible and blends this two different kinds of culture background successfully. The successful experience of *Kung Fu Panda 2 I* is recognized by the Chinese and western society. As thus, this could be used for reference by Artistic creation of movie and television of China and other domains also need to seriously consider this event. Only through enriching diverse culture, excavating and integrating with national features continuously can we promote the communication of Chinese culture and improve China's soft power in the world.

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