

Reception and Representation in Traditional and Modern Chinese Culture: A Pragmatic and Aesthetic Study¹

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the phenomenon of reception and representation in the culture of China. The identification and separation of these concepts is possible in historiography. The reception in Chinese culture can be considered not only within the framework of certain phenomena, but also within the framework of the historical period image. The nature of reception phenomenon by social orientation can be described as aesthetic and pragmatic. The aesthetic nature of the reception is most often found in the fields of art. The pragmatic nature is specific in that the achievements of the past in the field of history are used to solve the problems of society in a utilitarian manner. The objects of both types of phenomena are most often those characters or events whose image becomes more relevant in the context of contemporary events. The pragmatic and aesthetic aspect is considered in the form of historical and sociocultural reception. The most striking example of reception is recognized as stratagems that can be used in real military activities, tactics and strategy of board games, the plots of works of art and even in the business world.

Keywords: Novel; Stratagem; Three Kingdoms; Reception; Representation.

1. Introduction

The culture of China is diverse, and this diversity is the result of a rich and ancient history. A reverent attitude from ancient times to the culture of writing and language, as well as a rich book tradition along with the realization of the fact of unity in the empire, all this made it possible to connect the life values of the educated elite of the empire with the life of the empire citizens. This order was maintained by the

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Chinese worldview. The part of it is expressed in the teachings of Confucius under the concept of ritual and the need for its observance. It embodies the correct behavior, consistent with the principles of the universe structure that have passed through the ages. It is precisely due to this phenomenon that Chinese historiography so often refers to the golden age of the early dynasties. All of the above creates favorable conditions for the use of reception within the framework of Chinese culture and history, which was the reflection of Heaven will for the Chinese (Malyavin, 2002). The doctrine of Confucius sets the transfer of traditions and knowledge of antiquity, and not the creation of new concepts as one of its tasks. The cult of ancestors, organically woven into the framework of this teaching, also refers to the past and the deeds of previous generations. The criterion for effectiveness evaluation of a particular emperor reign was the conformity of his activities and statements to the dogmas of antiquity and the basic principles of the teachings contained in them. Confucianism strove to preserve them and to observe their execution by the ruler, thus striving to bring the Celestial Empire to the model of ancient harmony. The idea that the harmonious order that existed in antiquity was lost, as well as the desire to return to it somehow, all this left a mark in the culture of Ancient China, the influence of which can hardly be overestimated.

2. Methods

The study is based on general scientific principles:

- historicism, which within the framework of a systematic approach allows the use of source studies, historical and genetic, in relation to military doctrines, as well as philosophical and religious movements, historical and comparative and biographical, which allow to work with the sources of personal origin, the research methods that allow to evaluate both sources and the subject of study.
- the systematic approach that allows one to consider both the specifics of the phenomenon of reception in various cultures and its influence on them.

3. Results

The examples of reception in Chinese culture are stratagems. Chinese stratagems have evolved over millennia, affecting many spheres of Chinese life in politics, military affairs, business, sports and international relations (Hong, 2015). Over the years, Western political leaders have argued that the Chinese know how to hide their intentions in politics well. In business, through the art of deception, a company can force competitors to invest resources in a sphere in which it is not going to compete, while it can get information about the opponent's plans to create psychological pressure. One of the intermediate elements of the reception on the way

from antiquity to modernity was dynastic stories. Due to the large number of conflicts in the history of China, as well as the presence of thinkers who could systematize the experience of stratagem use, this system developed. In addition to these sources, stratagems can also be found in fiction, such as the novel “Three Kingdoms” by Luo Guanzhong (Tung et al., 2010; Dittmer & Yu, 2015). In the future, this material becomes the donor for modern series and films, thereby transferring the part of antiquity culture to contemporary art. The ancient art of warfare interacts with the art of playing in various aspects of society. Since weiqi, games in the perception of the Chinese have served as a means to reflect on these methods and improve them (Warner & Rowley, 2013).

Currently, stratagems are actively used in Chinese business. One example of their application is the litigation between large Cisco and Huawei companies on January 23, 2003. The American company filed a lawsuit in the United States, containing 77 pages with the list of 21 cases of copyright infringement. Thus, counting on the court decision of their country in its favor, Cisco intended thus to oust Huawei from this market segment, inflicting a quick and decisive blow. The Chinese company, for its part, resorted to the help of the American law firm Heller Ehrman, whose lawyers, after reviewing the company products, concluded that its products are made independently. Having resorted to cooperation with another American company 3Com, the Chinese company acquired the image of a trustworthy player in the American market. Thus, the parties of the conflict came to a compromise, and the state which preceded the proceedings. Huawei in this situation used the American legal instruments and the concept of image, turning them against their opponent (Chiglintsev & Rung, 2017). In this case, it demonstrated the unique experience of ancient stratagem application in the field of Western business by the bearers of this culture.

The reception in Chinese culture can be considered not only within the framework of certain phenomena, but also within the framework of the historical period image. The influence of the Three Kingdoms era and the novel of the same name by Luo Guanzhong on the culture of China is widely known. The image created by the novel and its characters, in some cases, replaces the concept of the era in the perception of the Chinese. Each of them has a specific role. In the Beijing opera, staging Three Kingdoms, Qao Qao wears white makeup and his mask has a narrow cut of eyes. All these elements serve the purpose of emphasizing the cunning of the character. Red color is one of the attributes of Guanyu and it symbolizes the directness of his intentions, loyalty and shyness of the character. A further reception of Guanyu image can be traced on the example of the deity Guandi, who is the divine patron of both criminal elements and servants of the law in its black and white hypostasis, respectively. The elements of the novel and the historical era are reflected not only in specific cults, but also in everyday culture, one of the examples of which is represented by folk popular pictures - nianhua. Subsequently, nianhua served as

an integral element of the decoration and interior decoration of the house. For reproduction, well-known plots were used, one of the sources of which is the Three Kingdoms. Most of them were dictated by Confucian morality, such as the death of Liu Bei's wife while saving his child, when General Zhao breaks through the forces of Cao Cao carrying a baby on himself after the child's mother sacrifices herself, fearing that caring for two of them will be too burdensome for the warrior, and they will not be able to leave. Thus, the woman puts the good of the kingdom and the salvation of the heir above her own life. Already in the camp of Liu Bei, the commander reproaches Zhao for being too reckless and he (Liu Bei) almost lost his handsome general. Later, Liu Bei's escape during the try to capture him, undertaken by Sun Quan after marrying his sister Sun Quan, demonstrates the loyalty of the commander's new wife to the Confucian ideals, that the will of the husband is still higher than the will of the former family and brother.

4. Discussion

The phenomenon of representation in the scientific literature is often identified by the phenomenon of reception. The reception is a borrowing and reproduction. This term is widespread in various fields, in the language it can mean perception and transformation, or borrowing and adaptation. Evgeny Chiglintsev speaks of it as the concept that is beyond the boundaries of a certain humanitarian science and located in the interdisciplinary field of humanitarian knowledge (Chiglintsev & Rung, 2017; Chiglintsev, 2015). Degtyarev and Rogov (Smith, 2013) offer to define it as perception, assimilation of understanding and further development within the framework of one's own culture of a certain phenomenon borrowed from another culture. The term "reception" within the framework of culture implies an almost continuous borrowing of achievements and concepts from the culture of the donor to the culture of the recipient. Most often, reception is written in the context of antiquity culture achievement use and their adaptation to modern realities (Degtyarev & Rogova, 2013; Almagor & Maurice, 2017; Huang, 2014). In this case, the problem of the cultural element novelty arises, so with some probability a prototype in antiquity can be found. The criterion of uniqueness can be a time period. The nature of the phenomenon of reception by social orientation can be described as aesthetic and pragmatic. The aesthetic nature of the reception is most often found in the fields of art. The pragmatic nature is specific by the fact that the achievements of the past in the field of history are used to solve the problems of society in a utilitarian manner. The objects of both types of phenomena are most often those characters or events whose image becomes more relevant in the context of contemporary events. The pragmatic and aesthetic aspect is considered in the form of historical and sociocultural reception.

5. Conclusions

Summing up the characterization of reception as a phenomenon in Chinese culture, it should be noted that it is inherent in many different areas, starting with politics and building a state in antiquity, when they turned to even more ancient examples. “Globalization leads to structural changes in the modern world and economy” (Glushkova et al., 2019), but Confucianism uses reception as an instrument of perception and an instrument of active action.

And if in the process an acting actor is faced with resistance or a threat, he turns to an equally ancient experience of conflict resolution by the means of a stratagem. The experience of the battles of antiquity shows high vitality and efficiency in the conditions of business conflicts. The specificity of reception as a phenomenon is the wide coverage of this process.

In China, due to deep respect and admiration for antiquity and the powerful cultural influence emanating from its images, the reception was passive until the 20th century. Most often, they strived to recreate antiquity verbatim. Confucianism had a great influence on the reception process, citing traditions and cultural heroes of antiquity as the examples to follow. The consequence of antiquity influence is stratagem in thinking, which originates from ancient Chinese military doctrines. They are reflected in the field of board games on the example of weiqi or yi-go which was the reflection of numerous conflicts during the time of turmoil in China. From board games, stratagem doctrine flows smoothly into the sphere of business, so in modern culture, especially in the western one, business strategy is often equated with drawing up a plan of military operations. For this reason, the mechanisms of reaction to a threat and its anticipation from antiquity are often used by Asian companies when they conduct activities in Western markets, which brings an effective result due to the fact that in most cases their opponents are not familiar with such specifics of making decisions and drawing up a long-term strategy. Not so much stratagems but the plots related to them are represented in the cultural sphere.

6. Summary

Based on the material presented in this text, we can conclude that the reception is indeed a form of dialogue between the culture of the past and the culture of the present. Thanks to it, we are able to introduce new elements into art, using the already known and deposited in historical memory. The concepts for the development of work plot, character images, the styles of fine art, the influence of this phenomenon is not limited only to the field of creativity. The political sphere of society is also subject to the influence of history and ancient culture. For example, the ancient era became the basis for the creation of sports of a comprehensive world format, as the symbol of peace in modern culture, based on the traditions of antiquity. Borrowing or returning to a certain concept of the past, the present also changes the view of antiquity, thus providing an opportunity for further reception.

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