

UDC 008

National characteristics in contemporary Chinese and Russian posters

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Abstract

Both China and Russia have unique cultures. This unique national characteristic is particularly evident in Posters. Posters as a form of visual art, are deeply influenced by their culture in terms of their creative concepts, visual elements, and expression techniques. This study employs a systematic approach to investigate the causes and characteristics of the formation of national characteristics in China and Russia. Additionally, it analyses the national characteristics presented in poster design. The study revealed that Chinese posters are influenced by the philosophy of "harmony between man and nature," manifesting the aesthetics of "harmony" and conveying emotions in an implicit oriental manner. Russian posters, influenced by history, religion and geography, reflect the integration of multiple cultures, with freer and more innovative design forms, and brave expression of emotions. This study will facilitate mutual learning and inspiration between Chinese and Russian designers, with the potential for future collaborations on poster works that exhibit a more global perspective and embrace cultural diversity.

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Keywords

Contemporary poster design, national characteristic, China, Russia, creative concepts, visual elements, expression techniques.

Introduction

Over the course of thousands of years, countries have undergone significant changes, which have shaped their own unique cultural features. Russian scholar Vyunov, Yu.A. once profoundly pointed out that each nation will cultivate unique moral concepts and traditional customs in its development trajectory. These shaped the national character, also leave an indelible mark on the entire national culture [Vyunov, 2005]. China, located in southeastern Asia, is a country that has consistently represented Eastern culture. China's culture is distinguished by the presence of Eastern wisdom and aesthetics. Similarly, Russia, which spans both Asia and Europe, has also cultivated a diverse and distinctive cultural identity.

National characteristics are deeply rooted in the ways in which people in both countries think, behave, and value. This characteristic is particularly evident in the field of visual arts. As Ivanova observed in 2016, the design of a nation's works often reflects the character, mentality, and worldview of that nation. Creative concepts, visual elements, and expression methods of poster design is profoundly shaped by the cultural environment. In the creative process, designers will naturally integrate the aesthetic and cultural characteristics of their own nation into their works, thereby imparting the works with unique cultural connotations.

This study aims to examine the national characteristics reflected in contemporary poster design in China and Russia. The study employs a multi-disciplinary approach to examine the historical, geographical, philosophical, and religious factors that have shaped the national characteristics of China and Russia. By analyzing and comparing the visual elements and expressions in the posters of the two countries, the national characteristics of the posters of the two countries are revealed. The objective of this study is to facilitate mutual understanding and communication between the design communities of China and Russia, thereby promoting the advancement of cross-cultural design.

Literature review

The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, issued by UNESCO in 2001, defines culture as the sum of unique characteristics of a society or group at all levels, including spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional aspects. This definition encompasses a vast array of artistic forms, literary expressions, social norms, value systems, and deeply entrenched traditions and belief systems [Sun Yingchun, 2008, 67]. National characteristics thus become a comprehensive reflection of the overall spiritual outlook and culture of a nation [Zhang Xinli, 2024, 37]. Moreover, national culture has evolved into a symbol of identity. National identity not only represents a cultural standard, but also reflects the emotions and value orientation between an individual and national political system at a deeper level [Tsygankov, 2001]. Posters, with their distinctive artistic techniques, serve as a visual means of expressing cultural and national characteristics.

Although there is a paucity of research results directly pertinent to this topic, insights can be gleaned from research in related fields. In the field of graphic design, Shalygina and Kulikov [Shalygina, Kulikov 2011] undertook a comprehensive analysis of the identity construction problem in the Soviet period by examining propaganda posters during the Great Patriotic War. Wang Fang [Wang Fang, 2005] explored the national characteristics in Chinese poster design, particularly emphasizing the characteristics of the poster's nationality as it developed over time. Zhu Cheng [Zhu Cheng, 2023] focused on the national elements in the visual image system of the Beijing Olympics. Additionally, the national character, national identity, and national thinking of China and Russia have attracted the attention of scholars. Barsukova [Barsukova, 2017] explored the distinctive characteristics of Russian

national cultural values. Andrievskaya [Andrievskaya, 2022] discussed the Russian national. Zhang Xinli [Zhang Xinli, 2024] studied the national characteristics and global vision in Xi Jinping Thought, while Li Xiantang and Ma Doucheng [Li Xiantang, Ma Doucheng, 2003] conducted a comprehensive analysis in Chinese culture from multiple dimensions. Finally, the comparative study of the cultural differences between China and Russia also provides valuable references for this study. Iakupov [Iakupov, 2016], Zhang Xueping [Zhang Xueping, 2017], Chang Li [Chang Li, 2011], Zhao Rong, and Zhang Hongli [Zhao Rong, Zhang Hongli, 2010] all conducted detailed comparative analyses of Chinese and Russian cultures.

To summarize, research in related fields has provided a solid theoretical basis and analytical framework for this study. The principal objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive examination of the national characteristics of China and Russia from the perspective of poster design. In the contemporary world, where the trend of globalization is intensifying, such research not only has far-reaching theoretical value but also can provide practical guidance and reference for designers from different cultural backgrounds when conducting cross-cultural creation.

Research methods

The objective of this study is to identify the distinctive national characteristics reflected in the posters of China and Russia. To achieve this objective, study employ a comprehensive approach integrating literature investigation, case analysis, and comparative analysis. A comprehensive review of pertinent literature and materials was conducted, and the findings were organized and summarized. Furthermore, study selected representative works of well-known contemporary designers and poster works designed on the same theme in both countries. A comparative analysis of creative concepts, visual elements, and expression methods will be conducted to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the national characteristics reflected in the poster designs of China and Russia.

National characteristics

1. Chinese national characteristics.

In ancient China, family members resided and engaged in labor collectively. The cultivation of crops was conducted in accordance with the growth cycle of the plants, ensuring that the crops were cultivated at the optimal time and planted on suitable land. These principles exerted a profound influence on the Chinese national character, giving rise to the philosophical concept of "harmony between man and nature." This concept is intimately connected to the traditional philosophical tenets of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, and serves as the bedrock of Chinese culture. The Confucian tradition, as espoused by Confucius, advocates the values of moderation, integrity, and order. This concept is reflective of our nation's self-reliant, inward-looking culture that pursues an equilibrium with nature and the universe. It illuminates the national spirit of symbiosis [Jing Wei, 2015, 7]. Taoist thought posits that individuals should adhere to the laws of nature. Lao Tzu's theory of "Tao produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things." provides a profound insight into the origin and evolution of all things in the universe. This concept reinforces the notion that our nation adheres to the will of heaven and exercises governance through inaction. Chinese Buddhism regards the world as a unified entity, which is in alignment with the concept of harmony in Chinese culture. The concept of the unconscious state of nature, as exemplified by Zen aesthetics, and the philosophy of gradual and sudden enlightenment [Liao Feng, 2021, 130] further enriches our aesthetic concepts and philosophical thinking. The concept of the "golden mean" refers to the pursuit of

equilibrium and the maintenance of moderation in one's actions, which represents a fundamental tenet of Chinese conduct and thought.

2. Russian national characteristics.

The shaping of Russian national characteristics has been profoundly influenced by its unique history, geographical environment and foreign culture [Yurevich, 1999, 11]. Historically, the cultural traditions of Western Latin Europe and Mongol-Tatar East Asia have been integrated in Russia, resulting in the formation of a distinctive cultural phenomenon. As the foundation of the Russian national spirit, Orthodoxy plays a pivotal role in the formation of its national consciousness and identity [Cui Jiawen, 2021, 152]. The renowned Russian philosopher N. A. Berdyaev once made an analogy between the Russian soul and its expansive territory. This comparison symbolizes the Russians' aspiration for freedom and their capacious intellects [Andrievskaya, 2022, 123]. Russians display a unique "duality" [Yurevich, 1999, 2]. They not only have the analytical thinking and persistent pursuit of logic and rationality of Westerners, but also have the feelings of Easterners, who are rich in emotions and easy to express. This contradictory character has injected a deep emotional color into Russian art and culture and stimulated their desire for innovation. This unique way of thinking transcends pure rationality but is not completely separated from the scope of rationality; the rationality it contains is independent, spontaneous, and highly innovative [Andrievskaya, 2020, 197].

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1. Chinese poster: implicit lyricism under the visual tone of "harmony" in eastern culture.

Chinese poster design is profoundly shaped by the Chinese philosophical concept of "harmony between man and nature". This design concept not only exemplifies the distinctive symbiotic philosophy of the Chinese nation, which espouses unity in contradiction, but also reflects the profound cultural implications of the Chinese nation's advocacy of harmony and collaboration [Wang Yipeng, Zhang Shilin, 2022, 65]. Guided by the concept of "harmony," Chinese poster design deftly integrates traditional culture with modern aesthetics, thereby creating a distinctive artistic style. The artistic conception that it pursues is derived from the "imagery" theory in Chinese painting, which is also an important expression method employed by poster designers. Chinese posters use expression techniques such as the contrast between reality and reality, white space, and metaphor. The juxtaposition of the virtual and the real achieves a kind of visual harmony, making the image profound and intriguing. The use of blank space creates an artistic effect of "silence is better than sound," leaving unlimited imagination space for the audience. The utilization of these techniques renders Chinese posters to present a distinctive implicit beauty in expression [Li Guanlin, 2016, 77]. Furthermore, Chinese posters often incorporate elements of traditional Chinese culture, paying more attention to the expression of inner emotions and the transmission of inner spirit, showing a restrained artistic style.

Chinese characters, one of the longest-used writing systems in the world, embody the essence of Chinese culture. Han Jiaying, a renowned Chinese designer, offers a distinctive interpretation of the Chinese characters. His oeuvre deftly fuses national culture with contemporary design principles, resulting in creations that are both culturally profound and contemporary in their aesthetic. As illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, Han Jiaying's poster works employ a black-and-white palette to convey the philosophical tenets of "being" and "non-being" as espoused by Chinese Taoism in a strikingly vivid manner. Figure 1 presents a visual effect of reality outside and virtuality inside, while Figure 2 illustrates the beauty of the interweaving of virtuality and reality. Both pieces serve to illustrate the appeal of the combination of rigidity and softness that characterises calligraphy. In Figure 2, Han Jiaying drew inspiration from the Chinese character "xiang (象)" and integrated elements such as Taihu

stones, ink paintings, and natural landscapes in an organic manner. The elements coexist in a harmonious manner, not appearing disordered, and instead, they create a sense of equilibrium. This exemplifies the artistic pursuit of "calligraphy and painting from the same source" under the idea of "harmony." In Han Jiaying's design, Chinese characters are not merely design elements; they also directly reflect the deep artistic conception. This reflects the Chinese people's profound understanding of the concepts of the "golden mean", as described by Li Guanlin in 2016 [Li Guanlin, 2016, 79]. Han Jiaying's design works can be described as visual poems and emotional songs, which resonate deeply with the viewer.



Figure 1 - Poster "Wonderful Nature", Han Jiaying, 2011

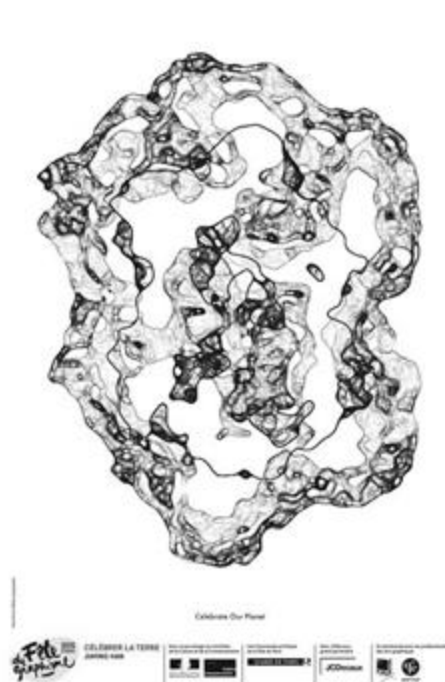


Figure 2 - Poster "In Praise of Our Planet", Han Jiaying, 2015

The contemporary Chinese poster remains influenced by the lyrical style of traditional literati, with the visual expression of the poster also reflecting the metaphors in poetic language. This metaphorical expression is conveyed through specific objects, which evokes a kind of spiritual perception [Li Guanlin, 2016, 78]. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the poster designs for the Beijing International Film Festival. In Figure 3, the bonsai plant grows freely against an abstract background of Chinese-style buildings, skillfully integrating the logo of the Beijing Film Festival. In Figure 4, the willow branches hang lightly on the water, and the ripples formed just form the official logo of the Beijing International Film Festival. The pine bonsai and willow branches are transformed into the image of film strips, expressing good wishes for the prosperity and development of the Chinese film industry through implicit metaphors. The poster integrates people, emotions, scenery, and objects through a combination of reality and illusion processing techniques, reflecting the essence of Chinese national philosophy in a profound manner.



Figure 3 - Poster of the 14th Beijing International Film Festival, Yang Pengfei 2024

2. Russian poster: A brave expression of freedom and innovation under multiculturalism.

Russia is a country with a rich and diverse cultural heritage. The poster art also demonstrates the richness and diversity of modernist art, while simultaneously highlighting the national characteristics of Russian design. The influence of religious culture on Russian posters is evident in their bold expression of emotions, particularly in their embrace of innovation. Posters skillfully integrate rational, logical aesthetics with abstract and experimental design elements. In the domain of poster art, we frequently observe the coexistence of diverse forms of expression, including abstract geometric art, elements of humor, collage techniques, and the use of metaphors. Abstract geometric art presents objects and phenomena in the real world through symbols. Kandinsky believed that the relationship between color and shape in art is related to objects and meanings in modern culture, and the harmonious forms they present can trigger people's inner emotional resonance [Kandinsky, 1992, 30-37]. The humorous elements inject a lighthearted atmosphere into the posters, reflecting the optimism and cheerfulness of the Russian people. Another prevalent technique is collage, which involves the combination of paintings with real objects and various materials [Afasizhev, Oganov, 2011, 67], breaking traditional boundaries, bringing strong differentiation and visual impact to the works, and reflecting the free and innovative design concept. Metaphors, through symbols and images, profoundly

convey the designer's unique thinking about life. This brave way of expression is the charm of Russian poster art.



Figure 4 - Poster of the 13th Beijing International Film Festival, Chen Zhen 2023

The works of Russian poster artist Peter Bankov vividly display the national characteristics of Russia. In Bankov's view, posters serve as a testing ground for modern design. He is adept at employing abstract geometric techniques to convey perceived objects or phenomena, thereby imparting a distinctive meaning to his works. Figure 5 illustrates a poster designed by the artist for the International Council of Design. The poster employs metaphorical language to represent the eye as a bell, symbolizing the designer's distinctive ability to discern and create aesthetically pleasing designs.



Figure 5 - Poster of World Design Day, Peter Bankov

The poster's free and fluent handwriting evinces the author's profound attachment to the field of design. In the poster (Figure 6) for the Golden Bee Biennale, Bankov selected elements such as blooming flowers and diving athletes and employed graphic collage techniques. He maintains that

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physical exercise can provide both physical and mental pleasure, thereby motivating individuals to persevere. Consequently, designing posters should also become a movement to pursue happiness. He employs an innovative approach to combining different visual symbols, transcending traditional boundaries and exemplifying a spirit of exploration and design freedom. Bankov's works not only present a visual feast for the audience, but also deeply reflect his personal style, as well as the national characteristics of freedom and innovation in Russian culture.



Figure 6 - Poster of Golden Bee Biennial, Peter Bankov

Figures 7 and 8 illustrate the posters for the Moscow International Film Festival. The posters have consistently employed a geometric abstract style over the years, becoming a distinctive and recognizable feature of the film festival. The geometric shapes employed in the design are both rigorous and varied, which precisely reflects the national characteristics of Russia include a valuation of rationality and a penchant for freedom. The posters exemplify a style that is both free and innovative, demonstrating the profound connotations and infinite creativity of Russian films to the world.



Figure 7 - Poster for the 46th Moscow International Film Festival, 2024



Figure 8 - Poster for the 45th Moscow International Film Festival, 2023

Conclusion

This study examines the national characteristics of Chinese and Russian poster designs. Chinese posters are profoundly influenced by the traditional Chinese philosophy of "harmony between man and nature," and their design concepts are clearly reflective of the admiration of the aesthetic principles of "harmony." In terms of design expression, Chinese posters are adept at creating an artistic conception. By ingeniously integrating elements of reality and illusion, the use of blank space, metaphors, Chinese posters effectively convey emotions in an implicit manner, fully reflecting the Chinese nation's unwavering pursuit of inner spiritual beauty. In contrast, Russian posters exhibit a more contemporary art style, resulting from the fusion of multiple cultural influences. The emotional expression in the posters is more direct and courageous. Russian posters integrate rational, logical aesthetics with abstract and experimental design elements. The use of abstract geometric figures, humorous expressions, collage art, and metaphors allows for the deep expression of the Russian nation's persistent pursuit of freedom and innovation. The distinct features exhibited in the posters of both nations have positively impacted the collaboration between Chinese and Russian designers in the domain of cross-cultural design. Through mutual learning, experience sharing, and inspiration drawing, it is anticipated that Chinese and Russian designers will jointly produce exceptional works encompassing an international perspective coupled with multicultural allure. Such creations are envisioned to facilitate deeper cultural exchanges and integration between the two countries.

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Национальный характер в современных китайских и российских плакатах

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Аннотация

И Китай, и Россия имеют уникальные культуры. Уникальная национальная особенность особенно проявляется в плакатах. Плакаты как форма изобразительного искусства находятся под глубоким влиянием своей культуры с точки зрения творческих концепций, визуальных элементов и методов выражения. В настоящем исследовании использован системный подход к изучению причин и особенностей формирования национальных особенностей в Китае и России. Дополнительно анализируются национальные особенности, представленные в дизайне плаката. Исследование показало, что китайские плакаты находятся под влиянием философии «гармонии между человеком и природой», проявляя эстетику «гармонии» и передавая эмоции в неявной восточной манере. Русские плакаты, вдохновленные историей, религией и географией, отражают интеграцию множества культур с более свободными и инновационными формами дизайна и смелым выражением эмоций. Данное исследование будет способствовать взаимному обучению и вдохновению между китайскими и российскими дизайнерами, а также потенциалом для будущего сотрудничества в создании плакатов, которые демонстрируют более глобальную перспективу и охватывают культурное разнообразие.

Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

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Ключевые слова

Современный дизайн плаката, национальная специфика, Китай, Россия, креативные концепции, визуальные элементы, приемы выразительности.

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