

# **Nezha Reborn: Translation Mechanisms and Global Dissemination Pathways of Chinese Narratives**

**Qi Liu\*, Rui Yin**

*Faculty of Literature and Journalism and Communication, ShangRao Normal University, Shangrao, Jiangxi, China*

*\*Corresponding Author*

**Abstract:** The Nezha film series represents a modern reconstruction of a Chinese mythological intellectual property (IP). Through its distinctive narrative and visual style, it successfully integrates elements of traditional Chinese culture with contemporary cinematic techniques. This synthesis not only preserves the uniqueness of Chinese culture and reinforces cultural subjectivity but also enhances the global communicability of Chinese cultural values through symbolic translation and value elevation. By examining the cross-cultural communication practices of the Nezha series, this study identifies a tripartite translation mechanism of “anchoring-softening-symbiosis”. Under this mechanism, a dynamic balance can be achieved between maintaining cultural subjectivity and fostering emotional resonance and cultural identification among global audiences, thereby offering both theoretical and practical insights for the globalization of Chinese culture.

**Keywords:** Cross-Cultural Communication; Cultural Subjectivity; Global Dissemination; Chinese Narratives

## **1. Introduction**

In the global cinematic competition of the 2025 Spring Festival season, Nezha 2 leveraged the Chinese domestic market as its fulcrum to reshape the global cultural landscape. With a domestic box office of 15.414 billion RMB [1], the film entered the top five in global box office history solely through its performance in the Chinese market-marking the first time a non-English-language film has challenged Hollywood’s dominance on such a scale. In contrast, Captain America 4, released during the same period, grossed less than 200 million RMB in China. The “deification path” of Nezha 2 not only signifies a paradigmatic leap in China’s

film industry but also reflects current trends in audience cultural preferences. As the “American superhero” narrative shows signs of fatigue, mythological IPs rooted in Eastern philosophy are reconstructing the global landscape of cultural consumption through a technologically empowered audiovisual revolution and a renewed resonance of values. However, how to maintain cultural subjectivity while enhancing global communicability—and how to offer a non-confrontational Eastern approach to intercivilizational dialogue through symbolic translation and value elevation—remains an open question deserving further exploration.

## **2. The Cross-Cultural Translation Dilemma of Chinese Narratives**

In the context of globalization, the competition for cultural soft power has become increasingly intense. As a crucial medium of cultural communication, film plays a vital role in shaping and presenting a nation’s image and cultural appeal. However, the globalization of Chinese narratives faces two major challenges: on the one hand, it is constrained by the dominance of Western cultural hegemony; on the other hand, how to safeguard and establish China’s own cultural subjectivity remains a pressing issue. Together, these challenges constitute a formidable test for the international dissemination of Chinese culture.

### **2.1 The Dilemma of Suppression under Western Cultural Hegemony**

In the global film market, the West—particularly Hollywood—has long dominated cultural export through its powerful industrial system and extensive global distribution networks. Hollywood films embed American values and cultural symbols into the cognitive frameworks of audiences worldwide, effectively disseminating American ideology on a global scale and resulting in a phenomenon of cultural

dumping. A more serious issue lies in the fact that, throughout this process, the West has also monopolized the interpretive authority over global cultural standards. Consequently, non-Western cultures are often marginalized or misrepresented within global dissemination, constraining the cultural expression of other nations. In this context, Chinese narratives face the challenge of contesting this interpretive power: the cultural essence of Chinese cinema is frequently understood by global audiences only through the interpretive frameworks constructed by the West.

Chinese narratives possess an inherent complexity that presents distinctive challenges for cultural export. Many traditional Chinese concepts—such as *Dao follows nature*, *Heaven and Man Are United as One*, and *the doctrine of the mean*—carry profound philosophical and historical connotations. However, these ideas are often simplified or misinterpreted in cross-cultural communication. For instance, in Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, notions like *the martial arts world* and *chivalry*—the former being a uniquely Chinese sociocultural construct and the latter the moral core of martial-arts culture—are frequently perceived by Western audiences as a romanticized Oriental fantasy. The intricate social ethics and philosophical reflections embedded within them are thus reduced to mere visual spectacle and action sequences. Consequently, the global dissemination of Chinese narratives tends to be diluted by the complexity of their own cultural foundations, making it difficult for Chinese culture to fully assert its subjectivity in the global market.

## 2.2 The Dilemma of Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Chinese Narratives

In the process of cross-cultural communication, there often exists a binary opposition between “cultural export” and “cultural adaptation”. On the one hand, “cultural export”, exemplified by Hollywood's global cultural dumping, implies an underlying hegemonic logic that reduces communication to a unidirectional ideological expansion. On the other hand, in order to minimize “cultural discount”, excessive accommodation to target markets may lead to the dissolution of cultural subjectivity [2]. This either-or dichotomy is theoretically rooted in Huntington's confrontational presupposition of the “clash of civilizations”, while in practice it

manifests as a kind of “cultural schizophrenia” in communication—an anxiety of simultaneously desiring to assert uniqueness while fearing that difference may generate barriers to acceptance.

Furthermore, the phenomenon is evident in certain works driven by Western curiosity about the “mysterious East” and by commercial motivations, which demonstrate how “cultural adaptation” can erode cultural subjectivity. Although these films draw upon Chinese stories or settings, they often fall into the pattern of “cultural hegemony” critiqued by postcolonial theory. For example, *Mulan* replaces the Confucian core of filial piety—embodied in “joining the army in place of one's father”—with a distinctly American form of individual heroism [3]. The concept of *Qi*, simplified into a kind of “superpower”, reduces a complex cultural symbol to a decorative motif within a Western narrative framework. Similarly, *Kung Fu Panda*, though superficially rich in Chinese elements, follows a narrative logic that mirrors the “American Dream”; its driving force lies in individualism rather than collective ethics [4]. Essentially, such adaptation strategies conform to the Orientalist logic identified by Edward Said—distorting and romanticizing Eastern culture to reinforce the West's discursive hegemony [5].

Although postcolonial theory critiques Western centrism, it has not truly transcended this intellectual constraint. Its deconstructive narrative tends to overemphasize cultural antagonism—such as Edward Said's critique of Orientalism [6]—while overlooking the symbiotic logic of *harmony in diversity* inherent in traditional Chinese culture, and thus fails to adequately explain the constructive dimension of Chinese narrative practices. Disney's *Mulan* exemplifies the vicious cycle of this binary dilemma. To cater to Western markets, the film reconfigures *Mulan* as an individualistic heroine resisting patriarchy, aligning with liberal values centered on Western individualism by erasing the Confucian essence of filial piety embodied in “enlist in the army in place of her father,” which reflects Chinese collective ethics. Consequently, cultural difference is ultimately situated within a “conflict-compromise” framework.

This kind of “Procrustean” adaptation—cutting the narrative to fit preconceived ideological molds—may achieve commercial success but detaches itself from the Confucian roots of

loyalty and filial piety in Chinese culture. At the same time, it fails to genuinely integrate into the Western value system, as evidenced by feminist critiques of the film's "pseudo-feminist awakening". In the end, it falls into a state of double alienation, degenerating into a symbolic collage of cultural consumerism. Moreover, the dilution of cultural subjectivity caused by such cross-cultural adaptation ultimately leads to a state of cultural hollowing.

### **3. The Cross-Cultural Translation Mechanism of the Chinese Narrative System**

To overcome the dilemmas of cross-cultural communication and to promote the globalization of Chinese culture, this study proposes a threefold dialectical mechanism—"anchoring-softening-symbiosis"—as a reconstructed logic of communication that transcends the binary opposition between "cultural export" and "cultural adaptation".

#### **3.1 The Principle of Anchoring: Emphasizing Cultural Subjectivity**

The anchoring principle underscores the necessity of safeguarding cultural subjectivity. Through the anchoring of symbols and values, it ensures that the uniqueness and core essence of Chinese culture are not diluted in global dissemination. In the 1970s, Lin Yusheng, in his reflection on the radical anti-traditionalist thought of the May Fourth Movement, proposed the theory of "creative transformation". He argued that "on the premise of preserving the fundamental values and spirit of traditional Chinese culture, one should innovate in ways that allow it to adapt to the developmental demands of modern society, thereby realizing the modern transformation of traditional culture." [7]

This suggests that traditional culture must achieve compatibility with modernization through critical inheritance and structural reconstruction. Preserving the genetic code of culture amid transformation thus becomes a central proposition in the process of modern social development—a notion that resonates deeply with the core of China's cross-cultural exchange practices.

Joseph Nye was the first to propose the concept of soft power, yet his understanding of the role and significance of culture within soft power remains relatively limited. He regarded culture merely as one of its sources. However, as later

scholars have emphasized, "none of the elements of soft power can be separated from culture" [8]. Culture is not only a key component of soft power but also its core driving force. Cultural soft power highlights a nation's or society's capacity to attract and influence others through non-coercive means—such as culture, values, and lifestyle. Its appeal derives from the uniqueness, creativity, and irreplaceability of a culture rather than from imitation or replication of others. Therefore, the effectiveness of cultural soft power is closely correlated with the degree to which cultural subjectivity is maintained. In order to establish "brand" recognition in the globalized market, cultural products should construct differentiated symbolic anchors—such as the visual emblem of Nezha's "three heads and six arms"—to form a distinctively "Chinese" cognitive label that distinguishes itself from Hollywood's superhero narratives.

From the perspective of semiotic communication mechanisms, to ensure that cultural products are not misinterpreted or distorted during dissemination, cultural producers must pre-establish the core framework of meaning during the encoding process. Stuart Hall's theory of encoding and decoding posits that the production of meaning in cultural texts is a dynamic negotiation between the dominance of the encoder and the agency of the decoder. Its essence lies in how a preferred reading—a pre-constructed interpretive framework within the symbolic system—can preserve the stability of cultural meanings amid the audience's plural interpretations (oppositional, negotiated, or adaptive) [9].

Encoders, therefore, must construct a non-negotiable "semantic firewall" through strongly encoded symbols—such as visual anchors like Nezha's "Hun Tian Ling" (Red Armillary Sash) or narrative motifs like "defying fate"—to resist cultural appropriation during decoding (as exemplified by Disney's erasure of filial-piety ethics in *Mulan*). This provides the anchoring principle with a methodological foundation for semiotic operation: by reinforcing the density of dominant ideological encoding, it reduces the entropy of meaning deviation and preserves the cultural integrity of the narrative.

#### **3.2 The Principle of Softening: A Universal Translation for Conflict Resolution**

The principle of softening seeks to mitigate cultural conflicts and achieve value

transformation by converting complex concepts in Chinese culture into socially resonant issues, thereby reducing intercultural antagonism. As exchanges between different cultures become increasingly frequent, cultural conflict has become more pronounced: “different cultures encounter clashes on material, institutional, and spiritual levels” [10]. Meanwhile, cultural subjects must simultaneously resist the homogenizing forces that erode their uniqueness and avoid the isolation that results from overemphasizing cultural difference—the so-called “cultural exceptionalism” dilemma.

Cross-cultural interaction requires individuals or groups to adjust their behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions in order to adapt to different cultural contexts. This process is not static but evolves dynamically over time and across situations. To resolve the paradox of communicative effectiveness, a dynamic equilibrium must be established between “anchoring” and “adaptation”, between “resistance” and “dialogue”, through continuous processes of meaning negotiation.

As Berry’s bidimensional model of cross-cultural adaptation illustrates, the two dimensions of ethnic maintenance and cultural adaptation describe strategies individuals adopt in intercultural environments. That is, individuals must preserve the core identity of their native culture (such as values and ethics) while flexibly adapting to the surface symbols of the host culture (such as etiquette and language), thereby avoiding the “cultural hollowing” that results from unilateral compromise [11]. This underscores the necessity for individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds to find a balance between cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation in order to achieve effective cross-cultural interaction.

How can dynamic equilibrium truly be achieved? Influenced by postcolonial thought, Homi Bhabha’s theory of the “Third Space” posits that cultural identity is dynamic and fluid, continuously formed through cultural interaction. The generation of cultural meaning does not arise from pure nativeness or externality, but rather through hybridity—the reconstruction of new fields of meaning within the “Third Space”. As Bhabha emphasizes, “Hybridity is a powerful weapon for deconstructing binary oppositions of identity.” [12] The binary identities he critiques—those of the “self” and the “other”—are derived from Western colonial discourse, yet

this process of cultural collision closely parallels the conditions of contemporary intercultural interaction. Hybridity thus operates in the liminal “Third Space”, mediating the differences between cultures.

This notion resonates with the *Confucian Doctrine of the Mean*, which advocates holding to the mean between two extremes and opposes both cultural conservatism and radical assimilation. It emphasizes seeking the greatest common ground within a dynamic balance and resolving cultural differences through moderation and harmony. In the context of cross-cultural communication, this principle promotes respect for cultural diversity, discourages extremism and polarization, and encourages dialogue and exchange to achieve cultural coexistence and harmony.

In *Nezha 2*, the traditional Daoist concept of “*becoming a saint with one’s physical body*” is hybridized with Hollywood’s hero’s journey narrative structure, creating a transcultural text that is neither purely Eastern nor entirely Western. This hybridity dissolves binary oppositions such as “tradition vs. modernity” and “East vs. West”, while fostering cross-cultural proliferation of meaning through secondary decoding by audiences—for instance, overseas viewers may interpret *Nezha*’s declaration “My fate is mine, not heaven’s” as a gender-equality slogan. Therefore, softening does not entail the elimination of difference; rather, it transforms cultural conflict into creative tension through the recontextualization of symbols.

### **3.3 The Principle of Symbiosis: Cross-Cultural Weaving of Meaning Networks**

The principle of symbiosis emphasizes the interdependence and co-development of cultures, aiming to achieve mutual prosperity through the construction of cross-cultural networks of meaning. In the context of globalization, cross-cultural communication should pursue the collective development and shared interests of multiple cultural subjects, rather than a one-dimensional model of cultural export.

Sun Chunying characterizes the contemporary global field as a “dual structure” composed of the coexistence, differentiation, and co-evolution of both international society and world society. This duality “reveals the dynamic relationship among actors in a complex world—one marked by close interconnection, mutual dependence,



and simultaneous opposition and differentiation.” Within this field, cross-cultural communication operates on three interconnected levels: everyday interaction, cultural exchange, and community building. The latter, community building, entails “transforming the closed global cultural order dominated by the West into one where multiple cultural subjects coexist and interact.” [13]

The principle of symbiosis thus serves as a concrete practice of community building. It underscores the importance of controlled semiotic flow, participatory co-creation by audiences, and the co-evolution of cultural elements. Through cross-cultural interaction and integration, a multidimensional and symbiotic cultural ecosystem can be established—one that fosters mutual flourishing and sustainable cultural prosperity across civilizations.

Within the conceptual framework of participatory culture, all internet users—relying on online platforms and forming identity-based connections—collectively generate a new type of media culture characterized by freedom, equality, and sharing, primarily through the creation of media texts, dissemination of content, and reinforcement of online interaction [14]. Participatory culture emphasizes user co-creation as the driving force behind the reproduction of meaning. As both consumers and producers of content, users actively engage in the creation and dissemination of cultural material via social media and digital platforms, thereby facilitating cultural reproduction and innovation.

Particularly on short-video platforms, users imitate and recontextualize existing content to generate new cultural symbols and meanings that continually evolve and expand through processes of dissemination—forming a rich and dynamic cultural landscape. As a prominent manifestation of participatory culture, Internet memes can circulate within a single cultural community or homogeneous network, yet also transcend linguistic, racial, and cultural boundaries to become globally shared cultural experiences [15].

The concept of the meme, first proposed by Richard Dawkins, refers to an informational or behavioral pattern transmitted within a culture through imitation and replication. In the digital era, the speed and scope of meme propagation have been vastly amplified. As units of popular culture, Internet memes are disseminated,

imitated, and remixed by online users, thereby constructing a shared field of cultural experience [16].

The dissemination of cultural memes follows an evolutionary logic of variation–selection–retention, and those dominant memes that can be widely replicated and re-created tend to exhibit three essential traits: longevity, fecundity, and fidelity of replication [17]. Among these, fidelity of replication requires memes to possess modularity—that is, the core symbol remains stable while peripheral elements (such as visual style or narrative form) allow for localized variation. This structural design both preserves the continuity of a culture’s genetic code and activates the potential for the reproduction of meaning. Through meme-based dissemination, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds can rapidly comprehend and internalize new cultural symbols and meanings, thereby fostering cultural integration and innovation.

#### **4. An Analysis of Nezha’s Path of Cultural Translation**

##### **4.1 Anchoring: Defending the Semiotic Sovereignty of Chinese Discourse**

The defense of semiotic sovereignty within Chinese discourse is manifested through the dialectical unity of cultural gene anchoring and modern reinterpretation, which in *Nezha* is primarily embodied in the anchoring of visual symbols and spiritual essence.

The anchoring of visual symbols serves as the material carrier for constructing cultural subjectivity. The cyberpunk-style reconstruction of *Nezha*’s iconic artifact—*Hun Tian Ling*—does not dilute the traditional oriental aesthetics inherent in silk fabric; rather, through its data-stream lighting effects, it metaphorically conveys a technologically empowered modernity, producing a smoother and more dynamic visual experience.

Similarly, the visual intensification of *Nezha*’s “three heads and six arms” not only subverts Disney’s feminized imagination of Eastern deities but also challenges the hegemony of muscular aesthetics prevalent in Western cinema. By presenting a non-Western corporeal paradigm, the film reconstructs the physiological foundation of cultural identity.

Moreover, elements such as Daoist magic spells, the Sanxingdui-inspired design of the guardian beasts, the reproduction of *The Auspicious*

*Cranes* mural in the *Palace of Jade Emptiness*, and the throat singing accompanying the emergence of the *Heavenly Cauldron* (Tian Yuan Ding) together form a firm aesthetic anchoring of Chinese Oriental visuality. These cultural signifiers significantly enhance the film's resistance to deconstruction in cross-cultural communication, reinforcing the stability and recognizability of the Chinese aesthetic paradigm.

The anchoring of spiritual essence requires the semiotic suturing of individual narratives and institutional discourse. In *Nezha*, "*The Investiture of the Gods (Fengshen Bang)*" carries profound metaphors of power. The film portrays the *Chan Sect (Chanjiao)* as the monopolist of Heaven's Mandate, while symbolic images such as the white-headed eagle emblem of the *Yuxu Palace* and the alchemy furnace resembling a dollar sign directly allude to the collusion between rule-making authority and economic hegemony in the Western-dominated international order. The moral standards inscribed in the Investiture List are, in essence, tools of privilege preservation wielded by those in power.

*Nezha's* stigmatized identity as a *Demon Pill* and the systemic discrimination faced by the *Dragon Clan of the East Sea* both preserve the narrative genes of *The Investiture of the Gods (Fengshen Yanyi)* while simultaneously serving as a metaphor for cultural decolonization in a postcolonial context through the rebellion of the demon clans. The dual narrative of violent rupture (breaking the *Heavenly Cauldron*) and collective awakening (the dragons' resistance) continues the Oriental spirit of defiance embodied in the phrase "Are lords and nobles born with different bloodlines?"—a challenge to hierarchical determinism—while the open-ended conclusion suggests the complexity of structural transformation, thereby avoiding the reductionist logic typical of Western superhero narratives.

By integrating the *Investiture List's* power metaphors with modern political and social discourses, the film constructs a cultural text that embodies creative transformation—revitalizing traditional mythology through contemporary significance and reaffirming the enduring vitality of Chinese cultural identity in global cinematic expression.

#### 4.2 Softening: From Cultural Particularity to Global Commensurability

The deeper logic of the softening strategy lies in achieving a dynamic balance between the preservation of cultural particularity and the construction of universal values through flexible semiotic translation. The Daoist pantheon is characterized by its intricate hierarchies, plural origins, and dynamic evolution—interacting and merging with Confucian thought across different historical periods to form an open, fluid, and self-generating system with blurred boundaries.

In *Nezha*, complex sectarian structures such as The Twelve Golden Immortals are secularized into a conflict between power oppression and ethnic equality. Western audiences, through contextual association, can interpret this as addressing issues of class disparity and racial discrimination. Such selective accommodation strategically reduces the cognitive load associated with the mysticism of Eastern theology, enhancing accessibility for global viewers.

Within the Daoist system of cultivation, the concept of the *Heavenly Curse of Calamity* functions as the mechanism of cost for "defying the will of heaven." It originates from the internal tension between "*Dao follows nature*" and "My fate is mine, not heaven's" [18]. In the film, the Three-Year *Heavenly Curse of Calamity* imposed by *The Primeval Lord of Heaven* symbolizes systemic exclusion of the *Demon Pill's* reincarnation by the ruling class, implying that the underclass is stigmatized from birth as inherently dangerous. Thus, the *Heavenly Curse of Calamity* is transformed from a Daoist principle of karmic retribution into a metaphor for institutionalized discrimination—a reflection of how fate, power, and social hierarchy intertwine within both mythic and modern contexts.

Furthermore, in *Nezha 2*, the narrative thread of *Nezha's* journey to *Yu Xu Palace* shares structural similarities with Hollywood's "Hero's Journey" paradigm. It follows the three essential stages outlined by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*—departure, initiation, and return [19]. *Nezha*, whose physical body is on the verge of dissolution, is compelled to undertake the mission of reconstructing his corporeal form, a pivotal moment that mirrors the transition from the "ordinary world" to the "call to adventure" within Campbell's archetype. At *Yu Xu Palace*, *Nezha* must overcome three successive trials that, while external in nature, catalyze his internal transformation. What

distinguishes the film, however, is its integration of these trials with the Eastern philosophical notion of breaking through attachments (Po Zhi). Nezha's ultimate act of shattering the *Heavenly Cauldron* is not merely a defiance of celestial authority but a profound meditation on the dialectical relationship between body and spirit. Through his journey within *Yu Xu Palace*, Nezha completes his metamorphosis from the Demon Pill to a true hero, and upon returning to Chentang Pass, fulfills the "return to the ordinary world" phase of the hero's journey. Yet, unlike Western heroism, Nezha's awakening transcends individual triumph—it embodies a critical reflection on collective destiny and the hierarchical order of the celestial realm.

The film's hybrid strategy, which fuses Eastern philosophical speculation with Western narrative structure, not only enhances its global market accessibility but also establishes a new paradigm for the international expression of Chinese mythological IPs, offering a model of narrative globalization rooted in cultural authenticity.

#### **4.3 Symbiosis: Constructing a Cross-Cultural Network of Meaning through Meme Communication**

The Nezha film series achieves meme-based communication through the synergistic interplay of emotional resonance, platform adaptability, and subcultural empowerment, thereby facilitating cross-sphere diffusion from cinematic text to broader social discourse. This process constructs a cross-cultural network of meaning that fosters participation and co-creation among audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds on a global scale.

Global emotional resonance around core social issues. The film distills themes such as resisting prejudice and defying fate into core memes like "My fate is mine, not heaven's" and "So what if I'm a demon?", whose semantic ambiguity enables empathy and reinterpretation across multiple cultural contexts. Contemporary youth reinterpret these memes as declarations of resistance against workplace manipulation (PUA), while LGBTQ+ communities reframe them as symbols of identity affirmation. This polysemic ("one sign, multiple meanings") characteristic allows the meme to transcend its original cultural framework, transforming into a universal emblem of global emotional expression.

The dissemination of dominant memes

fundamentally depends on emotional resonance; by triggering affective empathy among audiences from different cultural backgrounds, memes generate psychological identification, thereby accelerating their spread. When the line "Prejudice in people's hearts is like an unmovable mountain" is appropriated to address issues such as racial discrimination and gender equality, its communicative power extends far beyond traditional box-office logic—it evolves into a metalinguistic symbol within global public discourse, bridging entertainment and socio-political commentary through the shared emotional language of memes.

The Cross-Cultural Reproduction of Platform-Based Models. Following the explosive success of Nezha 2, content creators across short video platforms engaged in pre-emptive meme design by re-editing footage from Nezha 1. Iconic lines such as "Break the chains!" and "My fate is mine, not heaven's!", with their strong rhythmic cadence, were paired with the 15-second narrative rhythm characteristic of short-form video content, producing a remarkably powerful viral effect.

The line "Break the chains!", which appears in the climactic scene where Nezha breaks through the *Heavenly Cauldron*, combines an explosive phonetic rhythm with a stunning visual display of erupting energy—creating intense sensorial stimulation that perfectly aligns with the short video platform's "Golden 3-Second Rule". Short video users then remixed this segment with real-life scenes of ordinary people overcoming obstacles, elevating the act of "breaking" from a mythological narrative to a modern metaphor for shattering systemic oppression and transcending social confinement.

In China, the deep logic behind this dominant meme lies in the emotional projection of collective aspiration. As the film surpassed the 10-billion-yuan box office mark and ascended to a historic position in global cinema, the success of the line "Break the chains!" became symbolically intertwined with the audience's desire to overcome structural barriers such as technological dependency and the absence of cultural discourse power. The emotional investment in the film's commercial miracle thus reflected a collective yearning for cultural self-determination and technological sovereignty.

Internationally, the meme underwent localized reinterpretation. On Western social media, users reframed "Break the chains!" within contexts of

personal struggle, self-liberation, and breaking social barriers, generating cross-cultural emotional resonance that transcended linguistic and cultural boundaries, extending the meme's symbolic vitality across global audiences.

The Cross-Cultural Symbiosis of Subcultural Communities. The Nezha × Ao Bing CP fan community has exhibited explosive growth since the release of *Nezha1*, not only within China but also across the globe, sparking a cross-cultural wave of fan-created content. On platforms such as Bilibili, TikTok, and Twitter, fan creations centered around the Nezha × Ao Bing CP have significantly extended the text's life cycle, while their cross-fandom and cross-cultural dissemination has reconstructed the map of cultural reception.

The official production provides the narrative framework—the world-building and character backstories—while grassroots creators worldwide actively fill narrative gaps, expand textual boundaries, and even feed back into the original work's interpretation and global diffusion. Overseas fans often merge the Nezha × Ao Bing CP with Western mythological hero narratives, creating hybrid transnational texts that preserve the essence of Eastern philosophy while absorbing Western symbolic motifs. Together, official and fan-created texts co-construct an open story universe, reflecting the depth and creativity of audience participation in contemporary transmedia storytelling.

The Nezha × Ao Bing CP phenomenon exemplifies a symbiotic relationship wherein the official narrative serves as the skeleton, while grassroots reinterpretation provides the flesh and blood. This dynamic not only enhances the global vitality of the IP, but also underscores the agency of subcultural communities in responding to and reshaping mainstream texts on a global scale.

## 5. Conclusion

Through an in-depth analysis of the *Nezha* film series and its global communication practices, this paper explores the mechanisms of cultural translation and narrative construction in the cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese mythological IPs. The globalization of Chinese mythological narratives requires a comprehensive effort that integrates technological innovation, such as building a dynamic database of Eastern aesthetics, optimization of communication systems through

a flexible framework of official guidance and grassroots co-creation, and the contestation of cultural interpretive power by actively participating in the formulation of cultural standards in the digital age. Only by anchoring these endeavors in the genetic foundation of Chinese culture, empowering narratives through technological agency, and navigating meme evolution with ecological thinking, can China achieve a paradigmatic transformation—from “Mythical China” to “Chinese Mythology”—in global cultural exchange. This transformation not only signifies the enhancement of China's cultural soft power, but also embodies a historic mission to reconstruct the global communication order and to promote the symbiotic evolution of human civilization.

## References

- [1] Feng Qianyun. From “Prince Nezha's Triumph against Dragon King” to “Nezha 2”: Deconstructionism by New-Generation Director. *Advances in Social Behavior Research*, 2025, 16(5): 104–109.
- [2] Ge Jihong, Ye Sen. Research on the Development of China's Foreign Cultural Trade: Current Situation, Problems, and Countermeasures. *Zhejiang Social Sciences*, 2022(12): 93–99+158.
- [3] Jia Jichuan, He Miao. Hollywood's Imagination of China: The “Borrowing” of Chinese Cultural Elements in Recent Hollywood Films. *Journal of Chengdu University (Social Science Edition)*, 2011(3).
- [4] Liu Jingyue. An Analysis of Chinese and American Heroism—A Comparative Study between “Kung Fu Panda” and “The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils”. *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research*, 2023, 6(4):225–230.
- [5] Said Edward W. *Orientalismo*. Vol. 279. Milan: Feltrinelli Editore, 1999.
- [6] Miao Ying. The Implantation and Evolution of the Concept of “Hybridity” in the Postcolonial Cultural Context. *Journal of Central South University (Social Science Edition)*, 2013(6).
- [7] Chen Lai. The “Creative Transformation” in the Study of Twentieth-Century Intellectual History. *History of Chinese Philosophy*, 2016(4).
- [8] Zhang Guozuo. Theoretical Innovation of China's Cultural Soft Power: A Parallel Analysis of Joseph Nye's Concept of “Soft



- Power". *Social Sciences in China*, 2023(5).
- [9] Chen Lidan, Lin Yufeng. Inheritance and Innovation: A Study of Stuart Hall's "Encoding/Decoding". *Journalism & Communication Research*, 2014(8).
- [10] Zhao Limin. Theory, Identity, and Power: Three Dimensions of Deep Conflicts in Cross-Cultural Communication—A Case Study of Chinese Buddhism's Dissemination in China. *Chinese Journal of Journalism & Communication*, 2020(9).
- [11] Sun Jin. Studies on Cultural Adaptation: Western Theories and Models. *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Science Edition)*, 2010(5).
- [12] Wang Lixia. Cross-Cultural Identity Construction—Based on Homi Bhabha's Theory of Hybridity. *English Square*, 2020(16).
- [13] Sun Yingchun. The "Dual Structure" of the Global Field and the "Knowledge Strategy" of Local Cross-Cultural Communication Research. *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)*, 2022(3).
- [14] Zheng Fangyuan. The Transformation of Media Landscapes in the Context of Participatory Culture. Jilin University, 2016.
- [15] Zhou Xiang, Cheng Xiaoxuan. Boundless Participation: The Adaptability and Cross-Cultural Communication of Internet Memes. *Academic Research*, 2016(9).
- [16] Dou Donghui, Liu Xiaocen. Internet Memes from the Perspective of Social Psychology. *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Science Edition)*, 2013(6).
- [17] Li Shuang. An Analysis of Sexist Words in English and Chinese from the Perspective of Memetics. *Chinese Language and Literature*, 2023, 2(2):17.
- [18] Zhang Xuefei. An Analysis of the Taoist Idea "My Fate Is Determined by Myself, Not by Heaven" and Its Contemporary Significance. *Science, Education, and Culture Collection (Second Half)*, 2006(14).
- [19] Liu Xiumei, Wang Yani. Dissemination of National Culture in Chinese Animated Films—A Case Study of "Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child". *Journal of Liaoning University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2021(3).