

# History of China-Japan Film Culture Exchange and Cooperation Strategy

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**Abstract:** China and Japan are two countries with different political systems. Since the two countries share great differences in social background and values, their artistic aesthetic understandings therefore various. The year of 2018 is the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between China and Japan, and on May 9 of the same year, China and Japan signed the Treaty on Joint Production of Chinese and Japanese Films, which laid a This article is based on the Sino-Japanese Film Co-production Treaty.<sup>[1]</sup> This article is based on the background of the signing of the Sino-Japanese Film Co-production Treaty.

**Keyword:** China-Japan Film ; Cooperation Strategy ; Cultural Exchange

## 1. Introduction

From a philosophical point of view, aesthetics is the opposition and unity of things.<sup>[2]</sup> The existence of different cultures in different countries makes the existence of opposites and the formation of different aesthetics; however, the influence of objective things on people's psychology is more or less the same, thus creating the "unity" of culture.

Ambassador of Japan to China Tarumi Hideo (Japanese: 垂秀夫) once said that "Japan and China are neighbors that cannot be moved away". During Shinzo Abe's administration he proposed a "strategic reciprocal relationship", the core of which is "to establish a stable and constructive relationship that is not influenced by the external environment". In other words, the cultural exchanges and cooperation are essential. As the saying goes, "seeking common ground while preserving differences", China and Japan must grasp the sameness of things while consider the opposites and correctly understand the opposites and unity of things in the exchange of film culture.

## 2. Flow between Chinese and Japanese films

With the frequent cultural exchanges between China and Japan in recent years, instead of the consistently sluggish performance in the box office in China, Japanese films in fact won considerable favor among Chinese audiences than ever before. In particular, the 2015 animated film *Your Name* (Chinese: 《你的名字》; Japanese: 『君の名は』) earned 577 million yuan at the box office after its release in mainland China.<sup>[3]</sup> In September 2020, the warm-hearted road movie Japanese movie "Kikujiro's Summer" (Chinese: 《菊次郎的夏天》; Japanese: 『菊次郎の夏』) was released in mainland China after 21 years since the premiere. Many netizens have said "I didn't expect to see it on the big screen 21 years after it was released". At the same time, this is also the first time that Takeshi Kitano's (Japanese: 北野武) work is shown in mainland China. Of course, the hottest Japanese movie in mainland China in recent years is definitely "A Thousand and One" (Chinese: 《千与千寻》; Japanese: 『千と千尋の神隠し』), which earned 460 million yuan at the box office in just 19 days of release. The movie has also gained incredible reputation, and that section of the sea subway has even made the original scene Xiamen subway line 1 and other cross-sea subways attract lots of tourists.

Similarly, Chinese movies have also gained better box office and reputation in Japan, and the movie "Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons" (Chinese: 《西游·降魔篇》; Japanese: 『西遊記・はじまりのはじまり』), which was released in Japan in November 2014, even made the legendary Japanese manga artist Akira Toriyama (author of the Seven Dragon Balls) comment that the movie can show the audience the familiar Journey to the West and also a different Sun Wukong. In February 2018, after releasing the movie "The Legend of the Demon Cat" (Chinese: 《妖猫传》; Japanese: 『空海』), directed by Chen Kaige for just one month, the number of viewers exceeded 1.13 million,<sup>[4]</sup> setting a new box office high for Chinese films in the Japanese film market in the past decade. From this perspective, such a neighborly relationship between China and Japan is bound to have many cultural commonalities, thus facilitating the exchange of cultures between the two countries.

## 3. Sino-Japanese Cooperation

The history of Sino-Japanese film cooperation can be traced back to 1920. At that time, around 100 film companies were concentrated in Shanghai, which was known as the "Hollywood of the East". During this period, many filmmakers traveled to Shanghai to make Chinese films. Several Japanese cinematographers, including cinematographer Kawatani Shohei (Japanese: 川谷庄平), were active in Shanghai's studios. Japanese films are often shot in Shanghai, and Japanese actors who are eager to appear in

Chinese films are also looking for opportunities in Shanghai. For example, the film “Shanghai Floating Life” (Chinese: 《上海浮生记》; Japanese: 『上海バンスキング』), which was produced in 1984, had many Japanese artists trying to break new ground on the Shanghai stage at the time.

A Sino-Japanese co-production was released in both China and Japan in January 1982, which attracted the attention and deep thoughts of people in both countries - “A Game of Chess Not Finished” (Chinese: 《一盘没有下完的棋》 Japanese: 『未完の対局』). The film was co-directed by Chinese director Duan Jishun and Japanese director Junya Sato (Japanese: 佐藤純弥), and co-starred famous Chinese actor Sun Daolin and famous Japanese actor Rintaro Mikuni (Japanese: 三国連太郎). The film, which follows the decades-long lives of two chess players in China and Japan during the war, encompasses the common culture of both countries and provides a good start for subsequent Sino-Japanese film co-productions.

The year 1988 was the “sweetest year” for Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. Such a good environment for Sino-Japanese relations created a remarkable film, “Dunhuang”, which can be considered the pinnacle of Sino-Japanese film cooperation so far. 2005 was the year when Zhang Yimou (Chinese: 张艺谋) directed by Zhang Yimou (Chinese: 《千里走单骑》; Japanese: 『単騎、千里を走る』) (Japanese: 高倉健), brought in the famous Japanese actor Ken Takakura to contribute to Japan-China friendship by integrating him with China in a cross-country drama.

Of course, there are also other films that made in the collaboration between China and Japan, and such transnational cooperation is for the promotion and development of the common culture of the two countries, as well as contributing to the long-lasting excellence of China and Japan.

## 4. Development Trend

The 2018 signing of the Sino-Japanese Film Co-production Agreement between China and Japan can be seen as a positive trend for future exchange and development through film production. As the second and third largest film markets in the world, this agreement is conducive to bringing the film industries of the two countries closer together and will also affect the pattern of the international film industry.<sup>5</sup> This has also prompted a new stage of cultural exchange between Chinese and Japanese films.

Faced with the friendly relations between China and Japan in recent years, the two governments have dealt with political and economic exchanges, and cultural exchanges are also essential. Japanese films are among the best in the world today, thereby China can take this opportunity to improve its own film industry. From a commercial point of view, transnational films can meet the needs of audiences in both countries to the greatest extent, thus boosting the growth of box office.

As the policy promotes, there will be more Sino-Japanese film co-productions in the future. However, after overcoming the policy and financial difficulties, how to reconcile the differences in film culture and audience tastes between China and Japan is a realistic issue to be considered when co-producing.

## 5. Cooperation Strategy

(1) Strengthen the exchange and cultivation among talents. Education is the key to human resource cultivation, and foreign students are the messengers of cultural exchange. As a platform for exchange between the two countries, it is beneficial for public students (called “national students” in Japan) to take up this sacred mission. In this regard, both countries should expand the selection scale of international students, cultivate multinational artistic talents, and expand the ways and means of cultural exchange.

(2) Promote transnational creative cooperation. As two neighboring countries that cannot be moved away, China and Japan must have cultural commonalities, which gives film workers of both countries the opportunity to cooperate. For example, the 2021 Chinese New Year movie “Tang Dynasty Detective 3” brings Chinese people to Japan for a story, and Japanese attractions such as Tokyo Tower, Asakusa Temple, Shibuya, Akihabara and Shinjuku, and Japanese culture such as cosplay, are all shown on the Chinese screen through the movie. This kind of transnational cultural exchange using elemental symbols is relatively easy in creation and is relatively worth taking.

(3) Establishing a multinational film company. In the absence of multinational companies, more cooperation needs to be initiated between companies of both countries. However, in order to make the “Sino-Japanese Film Co-production Agreement” work, the establishment of a multinational film and television company is an extremely correct choice. This kind of enterprise across the ocean is conducive to the joint development of the two countries, whether politically, economically or culturally, and makes the friendship between the two countries warm up.

## 6. Conclusion

As an important medium of communication among different cultures, film is conducive to promoting communication activities among members of societies with different cultural backgrounds, and when it works for people, it is linked to different cultural exchanges in daily life. The search for the symbols of national cultural values that are compatible with overseas cultures, and the discovery of the cultural identity obtained by generating wonderful intertextuality with symbols that have special meanings in other national cultures, provide a stronger methodology for the exchange and innovation of human civilization.

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