

CURRENT SITUATION, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF THE LITERATURE STUDY ON CULTURAL MEANING AND SOCIAL VALUES COMMUNICATION OF CHINESE HISTORICAL DRAMA

Wang Jingjing

Student of Doctor of Communication Arts Program in Communication,
Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand

E-mail: S64584946036@ssru.ac.th

Somsak Klaysung

Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

E-mail: somsak.kl@ssru.ac.th

Abstract

This paper employs the literature review method to systematically analyze relevant literature from platforms such as "China National Knowledge Infrastructure" (CNKI) on the cultural meaning and social values communication strategies of Chinese historical dramas from 1980 to 2024. The study reveals that research in this field started relatively late, with insufficient accumulation of achievements, yielding only 27 relevant studies, and several key areas remain unexplored. Although the research perspectives are diverse, studies specifically focusing on the cultural meaning and social values communication of Chinese historical drama are scarce. The theoretical foundation is weak, often confined to single disciplines, and the research methods primarily rely on textual and case studies, lacking diversity. This paper aims to clarify the conceptual framework, fill research gaps, and promote academic development and practical innovation in this field. By introducing interdisciplinary theoretical construction and diversified research methods, this study provides new perspectives and methodological support for future research, facilitating the further development of Chinese historical drama in cultural inheritance and value communication.

Keywords: Cultural Meaning, Social Values, Historical Drama Communication

Introduction

Chinese historical drama, with its unique artistic charm, carries profound historical memories, deep cultural meaning, and diverse social values. Deeply rooted in the long-standing traditions of Chinese culture, it has endured for centuries, consistently serving as a crucial medium. Historical dramas not only present awe-inspiring artistic spectacles on stage but also act as important vehicles for transmitting national traditions and the spirit of the times. From the perspective of historical development, historical drama is intricately intertwined with the evolution of Chinese culture, vividly reflecting the social landscapes, moral concepts, and aesthetic pursuits of different historical periods. However, despite the significant role of Chinese historical drama in artistic expression and cultural communication, current academic exploration of its cultural meaning and the communication of social values remains in its infancy. Although there are rich theoretical resources in related fields such as drama studies, cultural communication studies, and sociology, these theories have yet to be organically integrated. In particular, there is a lack of systematic research on the unique aspects of Chinese historical drama in terms of cultural meaning and value communication. Existing studies are often confined to single disciplinary perspectives, failing to establish an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, which limits the depth and breadth of research. Moreover, research on how historical dramas communicate social values through artistic forms is especially scarce,

with a notable absence of comprehensive case analyses and practical discussions. This research gap not only restricts the academic community's in-depth understanding of Chinese historical drama but also impacts its effectiveness in contemporary social communication and cultural influence. Therefore, this study aims to systematically review existing literature, integrate multidisciplinary theoretical resources, and construct a comprehensive theoretical framework to address this research gap. By deeply analyzing the unique role of historical drama in the communication of cultural meaning and social values, this research will provide a solid theoretical foundation for subsequent academic studies and practical innovations, further promoting the development of Chinese historical drama in cultural inheritance and value communication.

Research Objectives

1. **Comprehensive Review of Existing Research:** By systematically collecting and comprehensively analyzing relevant literature, this study aims to thoroughly review the research outcomes in the field of cultural meaning and social values communication of Chinese historical drama, accurately outline the current state of research in this area, and deeply analyze the existing problems and shortcomings.

2. **Establishing a Research Foundation and Promoting Innovation:** By addressing the gaps in the construction of theoretical frameworks and the analysis of practical cases, this study seeks to provide a solid theoretical foundation for subsequent research, promote the field's academic and practical innovation, and facilitate further exploration and practice of Chinese historical drama in cultural inheritance and value communication.

Scope of the Research

1. Population Scope

The overall scope of this research is limited to the literature research related to the communication of Chinese historical drama from modern times to the present. The research content widely covers various aspects such as script creation, performance and direction, cultural meaning conveyance, and social value communication, with a particular focus on how they convey cultural meaning and social values through the art form of historical drama.

2. Variable Scope

2.1 **Creation Research:** Conduct in - depth research on literature related to script structure and narrative, historical figure creation and character shaping, performance and direction, and creation theory, and explore the internal laws and artistic techniques of historical drama creation.

2.2 **Communication Research:** Focus on the current situation and existing problems of literature research on the communication of Chinese historical drama, analyze elements such as communication channels and audience feedback, and provide a basis for optimizing communication strategies.

2.3 **Cultural Meaning Research:** Deeply analyze the cultural meaning and cultural value contained in Chinese historical drama, as well as its role in the process of cultural inheritance and development, and explore the cultural deposits behind historical drama.

2.4 **Social Value Research:** Explore how Chinese historical drama reflects social values and its impact on the communication of social values. During the research, not only cover the research on social values in different historical periods in China, but also take relevant foreign research results as a reference to broaden the research perspective.

3. Time Scope

The time scope of literature retrieval is set from 1980 to 2024. This period covers

the key stage of the development of academic research in this field in China, from its infancy to gradual development, which helps to comprehensively sort out the research context and grasp the research trends.

Research Methodology

This study relies on the "China National Knowledge Infrastructure" (CNKI) database and employs the literature review method, with the core theme of "Cultural Meaning and Social Values Communication Strategies of Chinese Historical Dramas." Search terms such as "cultural meaning of historical dramas" and "social values communication of historical dramas" are used. The search scope is expanded to include areas such as historical drama creation, performance, direction, cultural meaning communication, and the communication of social values.

1. Literature Selection Criteria

1.1 Inclusion Criteria: The research topic is directly related to the cultural meaning, social value communication of Chinese historical dramas, or relevant fields such as creation, performance, and direction; the publication date is from 1980 to 2024; the document type includes academic papers, journal articles, conference papers, etc.; the language of the literature is Chinese.

1.2 Exclusion Criteria: The research topic is unrelated to historical dramas or only involves other art forms; the content of the literature is repetitive or lacks substantial analysis; non-academic articles or commentary articles.

2. Literature Retrieval and Organization

Based on the above criteria, this study systematically organizes the retrieved literature, focusing on research content, perspectives, methods, and theoretical contributions, summarizing the current state, issues, and future trends in the study of the cultural meaning and social values communication of Chinese historical dramas.

3. Analytical Framework

This study adopts an interdisciplinary analytical framework, combining theories from fields such as drama studies, cultural communication, and sociology to build a comprehensive theoretical model.

The framework includes:

Cultural Meaning Analysis: exploring how historical dramas convey cultural meaning through scripts, performances, direction, etc..

Social Values Communication Analysis: analyzing the role of historical dramas in transmitting social values and their interaction with the historical context.

Communication Strategy Analysis: summarizing the communication channels, audience feedback, and effects of historical dramas.

Through this framework, the study aims to provide theoretical support for the research on the cultural meaning and social values communication of Chinese historical dramas, laying a foundation for future research.

Research Results

Current Status and Problems of Chinese Historical Drama Research

1. Diverse Perspectives in Creative Research

1.1 Script Structure and Narrative Research

The script is the soul of a drama, and its structure and narrative strategies directly influence the presentation of historical stories and emotional communication. Xiong Guoping (2017) revealed the application of traditional Chinese opera aesthetics in historical drama

through the study of *Cai Wenji*, emphasizing the integration of traditional arts and modern drama creation. Yu Qiangwei (2011) pointed out that while everyday narratives enhance realism, they may also weaken dramatic conflict, offering a reflection on the balance between authenticity and dramatic tension in historical drama creation.

1.2 Historical Character Creation and Role Shaping

Research Historical figures are at the core of historical dramas. How to create authentic, rich, and compelling portrayals of these figures has been a focus for creators and researchers. Lu Jun and Xiao Liu (2020) analyzed the creation of *Dong Qichang* and emphasized the balance between historical authenticity and artistic adaptation in shaping historical characters. Scholars such as Zhong Ying (1980) and Bian Guoli (1992) also believe that historical records provide a framework for character creation, while literary creation adds vitality and emotional color to these figures.

1.3 Performance and Directorial

Research Stage performance and directorial artistry are crucial to transforming the script into a stunning stage presentation. Li Dongyao (2022) used *Zhao Yiman* as an example, proposing the innovative use of multimedia technology to create a "virtual-real combination" on stage, enhancing the dramatic effect. Jiang Yiping (2013) also analyzed the directorial innovations in *Life Like Summer Flowers*, highlighting how unique stage blocking and lighting effects can effectively enhance emotional expression and audience immersion.

1.4 Creative Theory Research

Creative theory provides systematic guidance and methodological support for historical drama creation. Yan Yumo (2015) proposed practical questions in creating *Autumn's White Flowers*, including how to grasp historical accuracy, fill in historical gaps, and transform abstract historical concepts into dramatic plots. Zhuo Guangping (2016) analyzed the creation of *Qin Wang Zheng*, demonstrating how the deep exploration of historical materials and bold imagination can shape complex historical characters.

2. Lack of Research on Drama Communication

A comprehensive search on "CNKI" reveals that research on the communication of Chinese historical drama is extremely limited. The only relevant study is by Ke Zunke (2005), who explored the scientific communication in *The Life of Galileo*, revealing the interaction between science, politics, culture, and the public in drama communication. However, this study is an isolated case, lacking a complete theoretical framework, which highlights the scarcity of research in this field.

3. Limited Research on "Cultural Meaning"

Although there is abundant research in various disciplines on "cultural meaning," studies focused on the cultural meaning of Chinese historical dramas are rare. Existing literature primarily examines the cultural meaning from the perspectives of the author, the work, or the creative techniques, but there is a lack of systematic research on the cultural meaning and communication strategies from the viewpoint of historical drama creation.

4. Research on "Social Values" Provides Reference for Historical Drama Studies

Domestic research on social values is rich, with scholars exploring the evolution of values across different historical periods and disciplines. Foreign research provides an international perspective but mainly focuses on macro-level issues, with less emphasis on the relationship between historical dramas and the communication of social values.

Discussion

1. Academic Development Delayed, Results Accumulation Insufficient

A search for relevant keywords on "CNKI" from 1980 to 2024 yielded only 27 articles. Among them, studies on "cultural meaning of drama" began in 2000 with only 5 articles; studies on "social values in drama" began in 2014 with 3 articles; "historical drama communication" research began in 2005 with only 1 article. This shows that research on the cultural meaning and communication of social values in Chinese historical drama started late, with limited results and no systematic framework.

2. Rich and Diverse Perspectives, Key Areas Still Lacking

While existing research discusses cultural meaning and values from multiple perspectives, research on the cultural meaning of Chinese historical dramas and the communication of social values remains scarce. As a result, it is difficult to deeply understand their contemporary communication models. Future research should focus on filling this key gap by exploring the communication mechanisms from both macro and micro levels.

3. Weak Theoretical Foundation, Methodological Limitations

The existing research is mostly limited to a single disciplinary perspective, lacking cross-disciplinary theoretical integration. The research methods are mainly text analysis and case studies, with little empirical research or multimodal analysis. Future research should expand into multiple disciplines, build a cross-disciplinary theoretical system, and introduce diverse research methods to explore the formation and communication patterns of historical drama in depth.

Recommendations

After a comprehensive review and in-depth analysis of the existing literature, the current situation and shortcomings of the research on the cultural meaning and social values communication of China's historical dramas have been clarified. In view of its late start and limited achievements, it is necessary to take the initiative to fill the research gaps and strengthen the research in this key area. In view of the limitations of research perspectives, we should broaden our horizons and explore in depth the mechanism of cultural attraction and value communication of Chinese historical dramas from the dimensions of macro-cultural communication, social development, micro-audience psychology, and evaluation of communication effects.

In terms of theoretical construction, it is necessary to draw on the essence of multidisciplinary theories and build an interdisciplinary theoretical system to consolidate the theoretical foundation. At the same time, diversified research methods should be introduced, empirical research should be carried out to obtain reliable data, cross-cultural research should be conducted to broaden international horizons, and multimodal research should be used to analyse the elements of communication. By doing so, we will promote the in-depth development of this research, provide strong support and guidance for the inheritance and innovation of Chinese historical drama in contemporary times, and help the prosperity and rejuvenation of Chinese traditional culture. Looking ahead, we expect more high-quality innovative results to emerge, so that Chinese historical drama can play a greater role in cultural inheritance and value communication, and shine uniquely on the world stage.

References

- Chen, Y. (2005). Seeking real existence: On the cultural value connotation of Cao Yu's early drama. *Journal of Baoji College of Arts and Sciences (Social Science Edition)*, 1, 50-55+59. <https://doi.org/10.13467/j.cnki.jbuss.2005.01.011>

- Cui, X. J. (2004). A study of changes in the values of Russian youth in the age of transition. *Contemporary Youth Research*, 2, 42–46.
- Huang, J. S. (2008). Changes in China’s social values over the past 30 years as seen through theater. *Bibliography*, 8, 14–22.
- Jiang, A. R. (2013). A new breakthrough in the creation of revolutionary historical themes: Viewing the drama *Born as a Summer Flower*. *New Work in Film and Drama*, 3, 29–30+39.
- Ke, Z. K. (2005). A study of science communication in the historically controlled drama *Galileo’s Biography*. *Science and Culture Review*, 6, 41–54.
- Lee, D. Y. (2022). Using multimedia technology to present the “reality” and “emptiness” of the stage space: The creative practice of the revolutionary historical drama *Zhao Yiman* as an example. *Journal of Tianjin Conservatory of Music*, 3, 124–128. <https://doi.org/10.16274/j.cnki.cn12-1280/j.2022.03.004>
- Liu, Y. P. (2018). Historical evolution of values in traditional Chinese society: A review of research on historical changes and cultural development of traditional society. *News and Writing*, 4, 128.
- Pan, W., & Lian, S. (2008). Thirty years of changing values in Chinese society. *Reading*, 10, 27.
- Qiu, J., & Zhu, S. K. (2018). Causes of change and implications of core values in Chinese society. *Teaching and Research*, 2, 22–33.
- Shen, J. (2013). Changes in values in Western societies: Intergenerational turnover as a mechanism. *Journal of Jiangsu Administrative College*, 5, 60–65.
- Wang, J. (2021). On the path of mass communication of socialist core values. *Science and Education Guide*, 29, 72–74. <https://doi.org/10.16400/j.cnki.kjdk.2021.29.024>
- Wang, L. P., & Xia, S. (2015). Implications of the change of core values in Chinese society over the past century. *Social Sciences*, 2, 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.16745/j.cnki.cn62-1110/c.2015.02.023>
- Wang, M., & Wang, Y. (2021). The transmutation history and internal logic of social values since the founding of the PRC. *Journal of Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (Social Science Edition)*, 5, 14–18. <https://doi.org/10.13766/j.bhsk.1008-2204.2019.0369>
- Xiong, G. P. (2017). The beginning and end of script writing and revision of the drama *Cai Wenji*. *Guo Moruo Journal*, 2, 41–45+77. <https://doi.org/10.16142/j.cnki.gmrk.2017.02.010>
- Yan, Y. M. (2015). Three questions on the creation of historical drama: The creative practice of the drama *Autumn’s White China*. *Nanda Drama Series*, 1, 12–25.
- Yu, J., & Hou, M. (2021). On the poetic nature of Guo Moruo’s historical drama (1941–1960). *Journal of Ningxia University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 6, 114–118+139.
- Yu, Q. W. (2011). On Shen Hongguang’s exploration of war history theme drama. *Journal of Jiangnan University (Humanities)*, 2, 43–47. <https://doi.org/10.16388/j.cnki.cn42-1843/c.2011.02.011>
- Zhang, Y., & Wang, B. (2012). Changing the world through perceptions: A review of the World Values Survey. *Journal of Huazhong University of Science and Technology (Social Science Edition)*, 4, 101–107. <https://doi.org/10.19648/j.cnki.jhustss1980.2012.04.016>
- Zhao, J. H. (2002). The change of values in Western society from the change of characterization in 20th century Western novels. *Journal of Jiangxi Institute of Education (Social Science)*, 4, 61–66.

- Zhong, Y. (1980). The portrayal and development of historical characters in historical dramas: From the image of Wang Zhaojun in Han Palace Autumn. *Journal of Hangzhou Normal College (Social Science Edition)*, 2, 16–21.
- Zhou, Q. H. (2020). Analyzing the cultural connotation of The Fourth Generation. *Writers' World*, 19, 3+9.
- Zhuo, G. P. (2016). From Qin Shi Huang to Qin Wangzheng: The creation and revelation of the historical drama Qin Wangzheng. *Chang'an Academic*, 2, 76–80.