



Analyzation of Geography Landscapes and Cultural Elements in Typical Scenes of "Chang An"

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Abstract. The construction of geographical landscapes and the description of cultural elements serve as a crucial means for visual communication and cinematic expression of meaning in animated films. This paper describes the spatial trajectories of the protagonists Li Bai and Gao Shi in the recently popular 3D animated film "Chang An". It particularly focuses on detailed descriptions of typical scenes of Chang'an City, including the topography and landforms, geographical landscapes, city planning and layout, architectural styles, as well as the interpretation of cultural elements such as the clothing, makeup, and ethnic musical instruments of different characters, including court ladies, "Hu" people, commoners, and scholars during the Tang Dynasty. From these perspectives, this paper describes the landscape aesthetics and humanistic artistic expressions in the animation, aiming to provide the audience with a deeper experience of the multidimensional and multi-perspective integration of cultural philosophy and aesthetic thinking in "Chang An".

Keywords: Chang An, Geography Landscape, Cultural Elements, Scene

1 Introduction

The construction of geographical landscapes is a crucial method for conveying visual effects and communicating the intrinsic meanings within a film. The dissemination and expression of details concerning human and cultural elements within these landscapes serve as important avenues for animated films to promote social values, reflect humanistic content, and embody philosophical thought, bear profound significance.

Geographical landscapes embody both natural and human dimensions, possessing both surface and depth, enriched with semantics. The theory, presentation, deconstruction, dimensions, and expressions of geographical landscapes reflect the diverse perspectives and thoughts of film creators. Many excellent animated films, both domestically and internationally, place great emphasis on expressing geographical landscapes and their human elements. For example, in Hayao Miyazaki's animated films, cultural landscapes are a vital element, drawing from Japan's rich culture and folk beliefs. In works such as "Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind," "Castle in the Sky,"

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and "My Neighbor Totoro," rich elements of traditional Japanese culture are applied to natural landscapes, creating distinct cultural landscapes [1]. "Spirited Away" is especially rich in traditional Japanese culture, including spirit culture, dragon culture, pantheism, frog culture, and the belief in the power of words [2].

In domestic animated films, the real and imagined geographical landscapes intertwine, creating a visual spectacle. For example, the domestic animated film "Jiang Ziya" transforms content related to Geography of Media into reality, enhancing the effect of communication and expanding the cultural extension of real geography [3]. Domestic animated films draw aesthetic inspiration from classical artifacts and seek modern transformation paths from the spirit of Chinese art, integrating the concepts of freehand brushwork, artistic conception, and the spirit of music and dance into animation creation [4]. At the same time, these films inherit traditional cultural elements from various angles, such as sourcing from traditional literature, adapting traditional music, and borrowing traditional symbols, and so on. Furthermore, they extract the essence of traditional culture, reform the presentation of elements, and innovate in visual expression [5]. For instance, the mythical creatures, ancient Hakka earthen buildings, and ocarinas in the animated film "The Classic of Mountains and Seas". Moreover, distinct national costume symbols, like the traditional bellyband, appear in "Monkey King: Hero Is Back," "White Snake" and "Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child."

The recent animated film "Chang An" is gaining widespread attention. With the footsteps and chanting verses of the poets, magnificent poems gush forth, delineating even more splendid scenes and picturesque landscapes, infused with the essence of Tang poetry. By combining reality and imagination, the narrative transcends the constraints of time and space. Through delicate and authentic depictions, as well as meticulously crafted details, the film vividly recreates the splendid landscapes of the Tang Dynasty, spanning from the prosperity of the Kaiyuan era to the turbulent period of the An Lushan Rebellion. This article delves into the poetic splendor and majestic beauty of these landscapes, exploring the landscape patterns of typical regions depicted in the film and the cultural elements highlighted. It analyzes the portrayal of regional cultural scenes and historical contexts constructed in the animated film.

2 Space migration path of Li Bai and Gao Shi

Fig. 1 shows the spatial migration path of Li Bai's life [6]. In the film "Chang An", narrated from the perspective of Gao Shi, Li Bai's journey is portrayed encompassing typical locations such as Liangyuan, Dongting Lake, Jiangxia, Yangzhou, Zhenjiang, Anlu, Chang'an, and Jiangling. Gao Shi, on the other hand, primarily traversed regions including Bohai, Dongting Lake, Liangyuan, Chang'an, Yangzhou, Tongguan, and Jibei. Historically, Li Bai and Gao Shi only crossed paths once at Liangyuan. However, in the movie, there are suitable adaptations where Li Bai and Gao Shi encounter each other multiple times, at Dongting Lake, Liangyuan, Chang'an, Yangzhou, and on the borderlands.

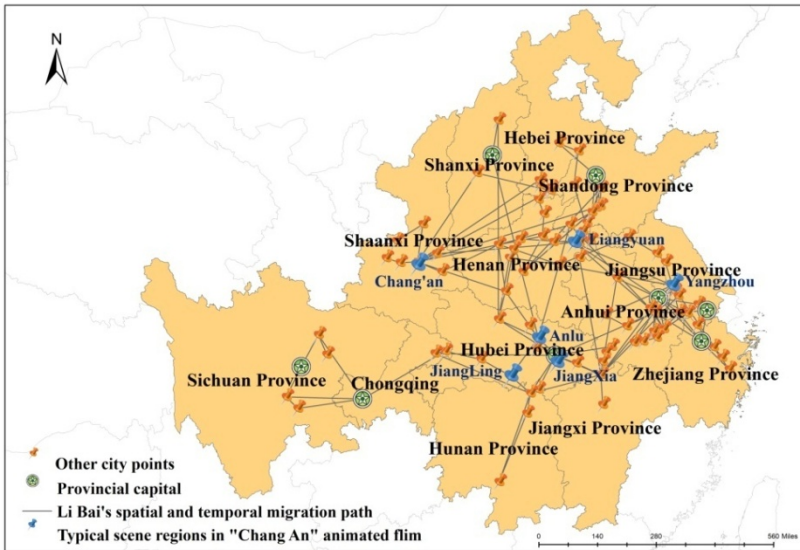


Fig. 1. Li Bai's spatial migration path (Author's own illustration)

3 Geography Landscape and humanistic elements of Chang'an city

Upon his arrival in Chang'an seeking official employment, Gao Shi found himself in the city during the spring season, where cherry blossoms fell in a splendid dance of petals. It was the time of the imperial examinations in the spring of Chang'an, a backdrop for numerous renowned poems in Tang poetry history. For instance, Chang Jian's "Return home a failure, birds and flowers jeer. Better to spend a spring in Chang'an". These verses, intimately tied to the imperial examinations, imbue the spring of Chang'an with the imagery of flowers and scholars, carrying the dreams of countless young souls. The film skillfully paints scenes inspired by poetry, seamlessly blending the vibrant aspirations of Gao Shi seeking a career in Chang'an with the splendid spring scenery. Within the walls of Tang Chang'an, where grand mansions and closed vermilion gates stand, the film also reveals the strict hierarchy of the capital, accentuating the challenges of seeking employment.

3.1 Landscape of Chang'an city

One prominent feature of the Tang-era Chang'an City was its distinctive LiFang system being the ancient Chinese government's system of urban planning and layout, which is faithfully depicted in the film. The buildings in Chang'an City are arranged in a square and orderly manner, exuding a beauty sense of symmetry. At the center lies the grand central axis, known as the renowned broad and majestic Rosefinch Street of ancient Chang'an, stretching from south to north, penetrating through the imperial city and

dividing the city into 108 districts namely LiFang distributed in two parts of east and west position, respectively, each under the jurisdiction of Wannian County and Chang'an County. Rosefinch Street was a must-pass route for officials of the Tang Dynasty attending morning court, as described by Bai Juyi in his poem: "Twin gates face and mutually reflect each other, thousands of officials move between the palaces in formations resembling a row of wild geese", describing the spectacular scene that the officials on the street holding lanterns, forming long queues. The central axis formed by Rosefinch Street can be considered as the soul of Chang'an City, vividly portraying the majestic aura, open-mindedness, and grand spectacle of the Great Tang Dynasty. Neatly arranged on the east and west sides are districts namely LiFang with same sizes and areas, streets and alleys aligning side by side, forming a grid-like intersection of east-west and north-south streets. The outer city is divided into grid-like zones, with each grid representing a district namely LiFang. The streets within the imperial city intersect in a crisscross pattern, dividing the imperial city into grid-like zones. The entire layout of Tang-era Chang'an is remarkably orderly and meticulously planned.



Fig. 2. Panoramic view of Chang'an city (Excerpt from the film "Chang An")

In Fig. 2, lush green trees adorn the space between the neatly arranged buildings, with glimpses of pink flowers in the distance, either standing alone or clustered together as vibrant and colorful tapestry of blooming clouds, creating a splendid and romantic atmosphere in Chang'an. To the east of Rosefinch Street, towards the right-middle section of the film scene, a towering pagoda rises into the clouds, resembling a colossal pillar standing majestically in the ancient city, being solemn, magnificent and conspicuous. It is inferred to be the famous Dayan Pagoda, estimated to have been built during the Chang'an period (701-704 AD) following Empress Wu Zetian's third reconstruction order, either as a ten-story tower or, according to some accounts, a seven-story brick tower. At the end of the scene, the indistinct distant Qin Mountains, gazes the Chang'an City from afar, and stands as a protective arch, therefore creates a sense of grandeur for the capital.

3.2 Traditional costume symbols

As the political, economic, and cultural hub of its time, Tang Chang'an City, depicted in the film, condensed the manifestation of its urban functions in the portrayal of pedestrians: the city was filled with various people, including merchants, residents, scholars, and envoys wearing exotic attire. The film accurately reproduced several typical types of clothing. Firstly, the attire of Tang Dynasty ladies was known as "ruqun", which consisted of an upper garment, such as "ru" (a type of blouse or shirt that can be worn under a robe or as part of a "ruqun" ensemble), "ao" (a short Chinese-style coat or jacket), and "shan" (unlined upper garment); and a long skirt fastened at the waist. The styles and colors of the "ruqun" are unprecedented rich in the film. The women's attire displayed in the film closely resembles the characteristics of the early Tang period, with some aspects of the costumes reminiscent of the Sui Dynasty. Ordinary civilian women typically wore long skirts with narrow sleeves, the skirt cinched over the blouse, with a high waistline reaching up to the bust or even the armpits. The skirts were generally made by combining two colors of fine silk, creating a pleated effect between the clothing layers. The description above pertains to the daily attire of women during the Tang Dynasty.



Fig. 3. The various crowds and costumes in Chang'an City (Excerpt from the film "Chang An")

Secondly, the attire of foreigners, specifically the "Hu" people (the people of non-Han ethnic groups during the Tang Dynasty). Solely considering the Turkic ethnic group, Turkic nobles were appointed as generals, Imperial Crops Commander, and other positions of the fifth rank or higher, totaling more than a hundred individuals. "Hu-style attire and riding" is accustomed to the Han people of the Tang Dynasty. Fig. 3 showed individuals wearing tall felt hats, donning yellow and white collared robes, retaining sideburns and a beard, and playing what appeared to be a "pipa" instrument made of wood or bamboo with four strings. This instrument was prevalent during the Tang Dynasty, used from imperial court ensembles to folk performances. Another "Hu" person, somewhat shorter and stout, wore a rolled-brim round hat, a blue robe with a large red triangular collar, and also sported a dense beard. He played an instrument that, based on its shape, seemed to be a "bili" pipe, an instrument commonly used by the Turks. "Bili" pipe is a wind blowing instrument, primarily made of wood and featuring eight holes. The front end of the "bili" pipe is tube-shaped, unlike the trumpet shape of the "Hu jia" (reed flute used by northern tribes), and is shorter than the "Hu" flute (ancient Chinese single-reed aerophone) as well. Tang Dynasty's Duan Anjie recorded in "Miscellaneous Records of Music Bureau": "The 'bili', originally from the instrument of the kingdom of Kucha, is also known as the 'beili,' resembling the 'jia' flute".

In addition, the attire of common men in the Tang Dynasty: primarily featuring soft headwraps, especially the use of a turban during the flourishing Tang era, though other styles such as hats, wind caps, felt hats, and conical hats were also prevalent. They wore robes with round collars, narrow sleeves, without edging on collars or cuffs, with the length extending to the ankles or knees. A distinct clothing style with connected upper and lower garments namely "Shen yi" fashion (ancient Chinese robe, where the top and bottom are sewn together into a whole piece), often with round collars and rightward closure, featuring edges on collars, sleeves, and fronts of the garment. The front and back hems of the garments are each connected with horizontal pleats, signifying the demarcation line of upper and lower garments. There were also laborers, clad in round-necked or cross-collared narrow-sleeved shirts that extended to above the knee, with sashes or leather belts tied around their waists, and wearing trousers that were tight at the ankle. Those above styles were evident in the film.

Finally, the attire of scholars in the Tang Dynasty: primarily featuring the use of a turban, with robes having round or overlapping collars. Notably, scholars participating in the imperial examinations were characterized by the presence of a shoulder-carried box and cage namely "Xiang long" (ancient Chinese bamboo weaving utensils for loading clothes), also known as a satchel namely "Ji nang" or bamboo case namely "Qie si", often woven from bamboo or made from lacquered material. It served to carry books, clothing, and other items, with a canopy on top to protect against sun and rain. In the film, scholars aspiring for official positions through imperial examinations, each bearing a 'Xiang long', gathered together, creating a splendid and distinctive scene.

4 Conclusion

"Chang An" expresses many elements, poets, poems, history, landscapes, regions, cultures, and so on. There is both a humane life journey and a magnificent historical narrative. The typical scenes of Chang'an city elaborated in this paper are the combination of natural aesthetics and poetic aesthetics, and are the cognition of the oriental texture. It is the aesthetics expression of generalization, with white space, and weak perspective. In these typical scenes, the art of light and shadow and the technical special effects, etc. are used to deduce the details of different characteristics of regional landscapes and humanistic elements, which reflects the philosophy and beauty of the oriental culture.

Based on the spatial analysis of the life trajectories of Li Bai and Gao Shi in actual history and animated movies, this paper focuses on the majestic and magnificent landscape of Chang'an and the distribution pattern of the Chang'an Street's workshops and markets, the dress and cultural features of typical Tang Dynasty ladies, Han civilians, "Hu" people, and scholars in the city of Chang'an. By describing the landscape of typical scenes, and interpreting the details of humanistic elements such as characters' costumes, musical instruments, etc., this paper analyses the unique aesthetics of the scenes and humanistic artistic expressions in the animated film "Chang An", and also explores the characteristics of the Tang Dynasty's history, geography

and humanities from the perspective of seeing the whole through a part. It also serves as an opening gambit, aiming to stimulate further insights and provide the audience with a deeper experience by integrating the multi-dimensional and multi-perspectival fusion of the cultural philosophy and aesthetic thinking in the film "Chang An".

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