

Original Paper

The International Dissemination and Cultural Confidence of Cultural Symbols in ‘Black Myth: Wukong’

Aoling Deng¹, Yingrong Zhong¹ & Guohui Rao^{*}

¹ School of Foreign Languages, Chengdu University of Information Technology, Chengdu, Sichuan, China

^{*} Corresponding author, Guohui Rao, Chengdu University of Information Technology, Chengdu, Sichuan, China

Received: July 25, 2025

Accepted: August 28, 2025

Online Published: September 1, 2025

doi:10.22158/jecs.v9n3p107

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/jecs.v9n3p107>

Abstract

Against the backdrop of digital network technology reshaping the path of cultural dissemination, ‘Black Myth: Wukong’, as a milestone of domestic 3A games, has become a new carrier for the international dissemination of Chinese traditional culture through the digital display and innovative expression of multi-dimensional cultural symbols. This article explores the dissemination paths and construction methods of traditional Chinese culture in games from the perspectives of cultural symbol expression, international cultural dissemination, and the construction of cultural confidence. The path of cultural dissemination is to digitally reconstruct classic cultural symbols, utilize its own cognitive mechanism to promote the cultural understanding process in interactive experiences, and adopt a hierarchical dissemination strategy to lower the understanding threshold for international users. The cultural construction approach involves penetrating narrative expression of traditional philosophical thoughts, achieving modern translation of traditional symbols, and building a three-dimensional communication ecosystem of ‘professional output+folk performance’.

Keywords

‘Black Myth: Wukong’, Cultural symbols, International dissemination, Cultural confidence

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of technology and the Internet, the connotation of online games has been continuously optimized and they have gradually become an important carrier for carrying and disseminating traditional Chinese culture. Games have shed the stereotype of ‘electronic heroin’ and transformed into a cultural calling card of ‘Created in China’. They not only present the unknown

dimensions of traditional culture to domestic audiences, but also convey the spiritual core of Chinese culture to overseas groups. For instance, Genshin Impact's scene design of the 'Teyvat' aligns with the ancient Chinese geographical and urban planning concepts. Its 'Lantern Rite' originated from the tradition of the Lantern Festival, while *'Black Myth: Wukong'*, as the first domestic 3A-level game, it sold over 10 million copies within four days. Its success is inseparable from its in-depth exploration of cultural symbols and innovative dissemination strategies. This article will analyze the cultural connotation and communication effect of games from dimensions such as the construction of cultural symbols, international dissemination paths, and the empowerment of cultural confidence.

2. Cultural Symbols in *'Black Myth: Wukong'*

Cultural symbols refer to carriers with specific cultural connotations, which can be widely recognized by groups and carry cultural significance. They include both material forms (such as objects and scenes) and spiritual forms (such as values and philosophical thoughts). *'Black Myth: Wukong'* has constructed a cultural text that combines traditional depth with modern expression through multi-dimensional symbol design.

2.1 Embedded Presentation of Classic Chinese Culture

2.1.1 Music and Sound Effect Symbols

Music and sound effect symbols, as an important component of musical language, serve as a bridge for communication between composers, performers and audiences. Also precisely conveying key information such as pitch, rhythm, dynamics, timbre and expression of musical works. *'Black Myth: Wukong'* has made particularly meticulous efforts in its soundtrack and sound effects. The integration of classic melodies such as 'Yun Gong Xun Yin' has broken through regional and cultural barriers, becoming an important window for overseas players to perceive Chinese classical rhythms. It has even attracted YouTube blogger Daddyphatsnaps to create a theme Rap. In its introduction, it directly stated, 'This game is amazing! I must do something for the great Sun Wukong! Let's have fun', which reflects the cross-cultural appeal of musical symbols.

2.1.2 Symbols of Martial Arts and Objects

Unlike most action games, *'Black Myth: Wukong'* takes the 'cudgel' as its core weapon. This design is not merely a simple selection of objects, but rather a deep exploration and creative transformation of Chinese cultural resources. Outstanding cultural works need to endow traditional symbols with new era connotations, and the 'cudgel' in games is exactly like this. From the cultural memory of 'defeating the devil and guarding justice' carried by Sun Wukong's golden-hooped rod in 'Journey to the West' to the moves designed in the game such as splitting the cudgel, standing the cudgel and poking the cudgel, every movement contains the refinement and reconstruction of traditional cudgel techniques. During the process of upgrading weapons, players not only enhance their combat power but also have a deep interaction with the cultural symbol 'cudgel', transforming it from a cold object into a carrier of Chinese cultural spirit. It is not only a symbol of strength but also represents the Chinese people's wisdom of

‘couple hardness with softness’ in handling affairs.

Meanwhile, the game incorporates traditional martial arts elements such as fist position, leg skills, and sword moves. It is not merely a simple accumulation of elements but a systematic presentation of the Chinese martial arts cultural system. These moves not only incorporate the vigor of Shaolin Kung Fu and the flexibility of Tai Chi, but also draw on the agility of swordsmanship and the heaviness of swordsmanship, thus forming a combat system with a unique Chinese flavor. What is more worthy of attention is that the rhythm design of ‘confrontation-fierce and battle- confrontation’ during the battle is in line with the philosophical connotation of ‘alternate tension with relaxation’ in Chinese martial arts. This rhythm is not only reflected in the alternation of fast and slow movements, but also reflects the Chinese people’s understanding of the cosmology of ‘balance of Yin and Yang’ and ‘motion and stillness coexist.’ The calmness like ‘Yin’ during confrontation is a process of accumulating strength and perceiving weaknesses. The outburst during a fierce battle is like ‘Yang’, the moment of power release and victory over the enemy. The two are interdependent and can transform into each other. *‘Black Myth: Wukong’* conveys the profound thinking of Chinese culture through the design of body movements. During the process of controlling the character to fight, players unconsciously understand the spiritual core of Chinese martial arts, which is ‘strengthening the muscles, bones and skin externally and the breath internally’, as well as the wisdom realm of ‘the supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.’ This design that integrates traditional martial arts elements with philosophical thoughts is a vivid demonstration of *‘Black Myth: Wukong’*, which transforming its cultural resource advantages into cultural development advantages, allowing the world to feel the profound heritage and unique charm of Chinese culture through this modern medium of games.

2.1.3 Color and Visual Symbols

In games, the application of color is by no means merely a simple visual presentation, but rather a crystallization of the integration and interweaving of aesthetics and profound cultural meanings. As Zhang Yan and Huang Zhichao pointed out in their related research, the integration of games and culture requires the highlighting of cultural heritage in every detail. The frequent interplay of deep blue and Dull-red in the game has a special meaning. Deep blue, like the vast and boundless sky in the night sky or the mysterious and unfathomable abyss in an ancient deep pool, symbolizes mystery, the unknown and depth, leading players into a mythological world full of suspense. Dull-red is like a burning flame or ancient blood that has been refined by the passage of time, representing passion, strength and the vitality of life. The integration of the two creates a mysterious and unknown atmosphere, which aligns with the psychological expectations of players in the game to explore the mysterious oriental mythological world. Every step is full of surprises and challenges.

From a cultural perspective, this color combination coincides with the traditional Chinese concept of ‘Yin and Yang generating each other’ in terms of color. In traditional Chinese culture, the concept of ‘Yin’ and ‘Yang’ runs through the entire process and is a highly condensed summary of the relationship of unity in opposites among all things in the world. Deep blue belongs to ‘Yin’. Its quiet and profound

qualities are like the serenity of the night and the stability of the earth. Dull-red represents Yang. Its passionate and unrestrained nature is just like the scorching heat of the sun and the vitality of flames. The two complement and blend with each other, just like all things in the world reach balance and harmony in the harmony of Yin and Yang, just like the interdependence and circulation of Yin and Yang fish in the Taiji diagram.

2.2 Permeative Expression of Philosophical Thought

The game integrates traditional Chinese philosophy into its narrative through text forms such as classical Chinese and doggerel. Unlike the core of ‘Struggle and passion’ in ‘Journey to the West’, *Black Myth: Wukong* places more emphasis on ‘self-redemption in disorder’. In the dialectical unity of ‘divinity’ and ‘humanity’, it showcases the Chinese view of heroes who ‘are not born a great sage, yet able to confront the will of heaven’, evoking spiritual resonance among players at home and abroad. Furthermore, the open narrative structure transforms players from passive receivers to active explorers, achieving ‘self-persuasion’ through the ‘programmed rhetoric’ mechanism (i.e., the permutation and combination of game logic), and deepening their understanding of cultural connotations.

3. International Dissemination of Cultural Symbols in *Black Myth: Wukong*

3.1 Current Situation of International Communication

According to sales data, as of September 4, 2024, the global total sales of *Black Myth: Wukong* have exceeded 17.8 million copies, with total revenue surpassing 852 million US dollars (approximately 6 billion RMB). This achievement not only surpassed other AAA titles released at the same time, but even surpassed Elden Ring, becoming one of the fastest-selling games in history. In addition, it was reported that its sales reached the tens of millions level within just a few days, further demonstrating its strong performance in overseas markets. In terms of game reviews, the game has achieved excellent scores of over 80 on both metacritic and Openritic. Well-known media outlets such as IGN and GameSpot respectively gave it high scores of 8/10. PC GAMER even gave it a high score of 87/100 and praised its acrobatic spell combat and dynamic character lineup. In addition, on Douyin overseas, the opening of a single video about *Black Myth: Wukong* has received nearly 8 million views.

3.2 The Predicament of International Communication

3.2.1 Cultural Background Differences Lead to Barriers of Understanding

Due to the differences in deep cultural structures among different cultural groups, there are often significant distinctions in their ritual behaviors and cognitive habits. Tang Daxing pointed out that the generation of cultural identity relies on a shared meaning system. However, overseas players’ interpretations of the ‘Wukong’ character often deviate from the cultural genes of the integration of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism carried by ‘Journey to the West’, and thus fail to touch upon the spiritual core of concepts such as the ethical order contained in ‘Destiny’ and the philosophy of cultivation behind ‘redemption’. Young players’ identification with cultural symbols needs to go through the process of ‘cognition to acceptance to internalization’. When cultural symbols in games (such as

‘destiny’ and ‘redemption’) serve as a bridge connecting the core and the experience, if their interpretations deviate due to cultural barriers, it will hinder the formation of this chain of identity. Overseas players may simplify ‘destiny’ to ‘fatalism’ and equate ‘redemption’ with ‘atonement’ in the Western context. Such misinterpretations will directly weaken the penetration of cultural dissemination. It is difficult to make the leap from cultural display to cultural identity.

3.2.2 Differences in Cultural Background Lead to a Gap in Comprehension

The profoundness of traditional Chinese culture has led to the predicament of ‘vocabulary gap’ for some core concepts in cross-cultural communication. Concepts like ‘Dao’ and ‘qi’, which embody the wisdom of Eastern philosophy, are hard to find precise corresponding terms in existing foreign vocabulary. The term ‘Tao’ encompasses both the fundamental meaning of the laws of the universe and the path of personal cultivation. Simply translating it as ‘Tao’ or ‘The Way’ can only convey the literal form but cannot carry its dialectical connotation in the context of the integration of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. The limitations of this translation directly lead to differences in the depth of overseas players’ understanding of the core spirit of the game. Some players may only understand ‘qi’ as the energy value of the character, but fail to appreciate its deep connection with the concept of ‘harmony between man and nature’, thereby affecting their complete understanding of the cultural logic in the game. It has become a language barrier that urgently needs to be broken through in the process of culture and games ‘sailing on the same ship’.

3.2.3 Cultural and Educational Differences Affect the Cognitive Foundation

There exists a phenomenon of ‘symbolic suspension’ in the traditional Chinese culture covered in the current overseas education system. This is specifically manifested as follows: In the learning of their educational systems, overseas learners’ understanding of cultural symbols from ‘Journey to the West’ such as the ‘Golden Hoop Rod’ and ‘Seventy-Two Transformations’ still mostly remains at the level of objects, such as the functions of weapons and the effects of spells, which are common and basic understandings. Therefore, it will be more difficult to establish a deep connection with historical origins and collective memory such as ‘the magic needle that helped Yu prevent floods destroying the village’ and ‘the philosophy of Yin-Yang transformation in Taoism’.

3.3 Optimization of Dissemination Path

3.3.1 Adopt a Strategy of Hierarchical Advancement

In the international dissemination of traditional Chinese culture, a strategy of step-by-step advancement in layers can be adopted, thereby lowering the understanding threshold for international users and facilitating their understanding layer by layer. First, a multi-language annotation system will be adopted, such as floating cultural term pop-up Windows and bilingual plot subtitles, and then combined with 3-5 minute micro-science popularization videos to deconstruct the evolution process of symbols like the ‘24 Solar Terms’ and ‘Opera Facial Makeup’ in the form of animations. Secondly, it is necessary to collaborate with overseas institutions such as the British Museum and the Berlin Museum of Ethnology to create immersive experience halls. AR technology will be utilized to enable visitors to trigger scene

performances by scanning with their mobile phones. For instance, learning the ‘Bird Tail’ move of Tai Chi through body-sensing devices. More importantly, a UGC incubation mechanism should be established, and a ‘Cultural Decoder’ creation fund should be set up. For high-quality secondary creative content, such as the Terracotta Army clay animation made by foreign players, traffic support and offline exhibition opportunities should be provided to form a three-dimensional dissemination form of ‘professional output+folk performance’.

3.3.2 Achieve Modern Translation of Traditional Symbols in Games

The modern translation of traditional symbols in games is particularly evident in the cross-cultural dissemination of character names. Just as when *‘Black Myth: Wukong’* was released overseas, the fixed label ‘Monkey King’ in the Western context was deliberately replaced with the real name ‘Wu Kong’ for output. This adjustment is not merely a name change, but a commitment to cultural authenticity: the two characters ‘Wukong’ carry the Buddhist meaning of ‘comprehending Bodhi and clarifying the original mind’ and the wisdom of Eastern philosophy, which is far beyond what the label ‘Monkey King’, which points to biological attributes, can encompass. This translation strategy has effectively promoted a profound transformation in the cognition of overseas players: gradually transitioning from the exotic imagination of a ‘monkey that can play sticks’ to an understanding of the cultural core behind the character, such as ‘cultivation and enlightenment’, and has built a bridge from superficial cognition to spiritual resonance for the cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese cultural symbols.

4. The Promoting Effect of Cultural Symbols on Cultural Confidence

Cultural confidence stems not only from the material and spiritual cultures accumulated by a nation but also from the recognition of one’s own uniqueness and superiority in cultural comparisons. *‘Black Myth: Wukong’* has strengthened cultural confidence from multiple dimensions through the dissemination of cultural symbols.

4.1 Stimulate Domestic Youth to Actively Explore Traditional Culture

The cultural symbols in the game have activated the genes of traditional Chinese culture through digital reconstruction, driving players to actively explore the relevant historical connotations and reflecting the transformation of cultural resource advantages into cultural development advantages. For instance, the integration of cultural sites such as the Yungang Grottoes in Shanxi Province into the game, and the reference of some shooting locations to classic scenes from the TV series ‘Journey to the West’, have also driven the explosive growth of local digital cultural tourism. During the National Day holiday, the number of tourists significantly increased, and tourism consumption doubled, highlighting the empowering value of the integration of culture and technology to the regional economy. In the feedback from players, it was mentioned: ‘After encountering the stone carving culture in the game, they will actively search for related knowledge.’ It has verified the reverse push effect of this game on the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture.

4.2 Promote In-depth Perception of Chinese Culture among Overseas Players

The digital reconstruction of traditional architecture and rituals by games, such as: The ‘Sea Lantern Festival’ of Liyue is a modern interpretation of the Lantern Festival customs, as well as a proportional restoration of ancient buildings such as the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda in the game scene. Through the embodiment cognitive mechanism, it enables overseas players to understand the oriental aesthetic paradigm in an interactive experience, and also allows players to complete a progressive learning process of ‘body perception, cognitive construction, and cultural identity’ during virtual roaming. This leap from gaming experience to cultural cognition validates the obvious advantages of interactive media in the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture.

4.3 Awaken the National Cultural Memory and Identity of the People

The cross-media dissemination of cultural symbols such as ‘Wukong’ and ‘Journey to the West’ in ‘*Black Myth: Wukong*’: On the one hand, it directly triggers a progressive psychological mechanism of ‘cultural awareness, cultural judgment, cultural consensus, and cultural confidence’ based on players’ familiarity with classic IPs. On the other hand, through digital media, traditional Chinese cultural elements are transformed into globally understandable interactive language, achieving a leap from cultural output to value resonance. Just as players have reported: ‘Seeing familiar characters from domestic games go global, I feel a strong sense of pride.’ The particularity of this identification mechanism lies in that the game medium accelerates the cognitive process through embodied interactivity, compressing the international communication cycle that took several years to complete in the traditional publishing era into an immediate cultural shock experience in digital interaction.

5. Conclusion

‘*Black Myth: Wukong*’ is rooted in profound Chinese traditional culture and uses digital games as an innovative carrier. Through creative transformation and innovative development, it deeply integrates traditional philosophical concepts and cultural symbols with modern technology and interactive experiences. This game vividly recreates cultural essences such as ‘staff Zen’ and ‘balance of Yin and Yang’, making it tangible and touchable. At the international communication level. This game, relying on the innovative expression methods of digital technology, has established a cross-cultural dialogue mechanism that combines professional content output with public interaction and participation, significantly enhancing the global acceptance of traditional Chinese culture. When the cultural values carried by the game resonate widely, traditional cultural symbols can transcend the functional level and be elevated to spiritual symbols with universal significance. This not only deepens the understanding of Chinese civilization among overseas audiences but also enhances the cultural confidence of local players. This practice demonstrates that accelerating cultural identity through interactivity and activating traditional genes with digital carriers are the core driving forces for promoting the ‘going global’ of Chinese traditional culture, providing innovative paths and methodological inspirations for the mutual learning of civilizations in the era of globalization.

Acknowledgement

This research is funded by the project “World Expression and Confidence Manifestation of Chinese Traditional Culture: Taking ‘Black Myth: Wukong’ as an Example” (No.X202510621263) of Chengdu University of Information Technology.

References

- Bai Yang, & Zhang Xiaolin. (2025). The Characteristics, Value and Implications of 'Black Myth: Monkey' Promoting Chinese Excellent Traditional Sports Culture from the Perspective of Embodied Cognition. *Journal of Shenyang Sports University*, 44(1), 138-144.
- Chen Yixuan, & Qin Zongcai. (2024). Research on the Generation Mechanism of Youth Cultural Identity: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Young Players of 'Black Myth: Monkey' Game. *China Youth Studies*, (12), 91-100.
- Cheng Qian, & Wang Lei. (2025). Research on the International Dissemination Path of Domestic Games Based on Text Mining: Taking 'Black Myth: Wukong' and 'Genshin Impact' as Examples. *Media Forum*, 8(2), 4-8.
- He Wei, & Cao Shule. (2018). From 'Electronic Heroin' to 'China's Creation': Discourse Changes in Game Reports of People's Daily (1981-2017). *International Dissemination Quarterly*, 40(5), 57-81.
- Li Dazhuang. (2024). Exploring New Paths for the Transmission and Development of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture - Taking the Online Game 'Black Myth: Monkey King' as an Example [J]. *New Legend*, 2024(39), 47-49.
- Li Peixin. (2025). 'The Logic, Pathways and Implications of Empowering Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture for 'Two Creations' through 'Black Mythology: Monkey King' - Based on the Perspective of Cultural Symbols'. *United Front Studies*, 9(1), 63-76.
- Shen Xiyuan. (2025). A Study on the Symbolic Narrative of the Digital Game 'Black Myth: Goku'. *Jin Gu Culture & Creativity*, (2), 86-89.
- Tang Daixing. (2022). The Logic of Cultural Confidence Moving Towards Cultural Identification. *Shenzhen University Journal (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 39(4), 26-36.
- Tong Zecun. (2024). The Five Aggregates and Six Roots Are Hidden within the Body - 'Black Myth: Wukong' and the Expression of Form and Spirit in Chinese Culture. *China Arts News*, 2024-09-23 (3).
- Xie Huiqiang. (2024). From 'Black Mythology: Monkey': Exploring the Path of Introducing Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture to the World. *Journal of Hainan Open University*, 25(4), 43-49.
- Xue Han. (2024). The Logic, Challenges and Breakthroughs of Education for Consolidating the Sense of the Chinese Nation Community through Multi-ethnic Embedded Communities. *Journal of Northwest Normal University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 61(6), 37-46.
- Yang Tian, & Shi Xiaoxia. (2025). An Analysis of the Innovative Paths for the International Dissemination of Domestic Games - Taking 'Black Myth: Monkey' as an Example. *News World*, (1),

22-24.

Zhang Xinxin, Huang Xiaoyu, Li Zhifei, Yao Junfeng, & Pan Huang. (2025). From 'Journey to the West' to 'Black Myth: Monkey': The Phenomenon, Mechanism and Strategies of Transforming Cultural Resource Advantage into Cultural Development Advantage. *China Editor*, (3), 53-63.

Zhang Xinxin. (2023). Research on the High-Quality Development of Publishing Internationalization under the New Development Pattern. *China Editor*, (12), 41-49.

Zhang Yan, & Huang Zhichao. (2024). The Current Situation, Challenges, and Approaches of 'Cultural and Gaming Sharing the Same Boat' - Taking 'Black Mythology: Monkey' as an Example. *Media Forum*, 7(24), 20-23.