

The Renaissance in the East - On the Success Reasons of the Film Creation of the Gods I

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Abstract:

As the first mythological epic blockbuster in China, the birth of the “Creation of the Gods” has attracted much attention. After the release of “Creation of the Gods I: Zhao Ge Fengyun”, there has been a serious polarization in public evaluation of it. In fact, this controversy fully reflects the progressiveness of the film, and also proves that the film has achieved unprecedented success. In addition to the story itself being rooted in Chinese traditional culture, it has also been irrigated by excellent Western culture and perfectly integrated, making it a milestone in the industrialization of Chinese films. It can be called the Renaissance of the Eastern world. The following article will briefly discuss the reasons for the success of the film from multiple aspects.

Keywords:

Creation of the Gods, Mythological Epic, Progressiveness, Chinese Traditional Culture, Integration of China and The West, Industrialization of Chinese Films

1. Introduction

China has a history of over 5,000 years, and the movie Creation of the Gods is based on mythological stories from the ancient Shang and Zhou dynasties over 3000 years ago. The production team has researched a large number of historical classics, visited cultural relics, and invested 3 billion yuan to create a mythological world unique to the Chinese people. This movie not only carries the common value pursuit of 1.4 billion Chinese people, but also continues the emotional bloodline of countless Chinese people.

2. Sincerity and Craftsmanship

In fact, from the broadcast of Five Thousand Years of China: Little Tai Chi in 1999 to the emergence of the well-known NE ZHA in the 21st century, the Chinese cultural industry has been striving to tell Chinese mythological stories well. [1] But in reality, it did not cause much response. However, as soon as the release of Creation of the Gods I, sparked heated discussions. I believe the fundamental reason is that the director and production team's sincerity and diligent attitude toward research have

infected the audience.

2.1. Preliminary Preparation

2.1.1. Casting work

The actors of the *Creation of the Gods* were selected from global auditions, with over 15,000 cast members and over 20 ordinary actors selected to enter the “Training Camp”. And this training camp is an unprecedented attempt in the Chinese film market: a gathering of 20 protagonists with zero foundation and zero experience, taught in a 24-hour closed teaching system with a high-intensity system of 12 hours per day, systematically and professionally learning all courses such as equestrian, dance, archery, instrumental music, ancient Chinese court etiquette, etc. [2] The intention is to truly reproduce the culture of the Shang and Zhou dynasties without the need for doubles, dubbing, and all fake things. As shown in Figure 1, all actors gallop across the grassland on horseback, making efforts to fulfill their desired roles.



Figure 1. Daily courses of the Training Camp.

Source: Behind the Scenes Documentary of iQiyi's “Creation of the Gods I” Film “The Road to the Gods”

2.1.2. Research on Historical Materials and Script Architecture

The director and his team visited almost all museums and historical sites in China that could explore the culture of Shang and Zhou dynasties, read a large amount of historical literature, and combined the original work and the Southern Song Dynasty script *The Legend of King Wu's Destruction of Zhou* with minor modifications made by the screenwriters based on practical significance, in order to create a script structure that could “seal the gods”. As shown in Figure 2, the script creation has undergone rigorous review and multiple revisions.



Figure 2. The production team of the “Creation of the Gods” is currently holding a script discussion meeting.

Source: Behind the Scenes Documentary of iQiyi's “Creation of the Gods I” Film “The Road to the Gods”

2.2. Mid term shooting and production

The team has incurred unimaginable time and labor costs. It took ten years from filming to release, with a total of ten thousand staff members participating. At the end of the film, the staff list scrolled through for five minutes. How many ten years does a person's life have? How many directors dare to make such a big bet? I remember in an interview, Director Wuershan once said that if the first film fails, there may be a risk of ten years of filming and ten years of debt repayment. Although it was a joke, it also reflected the director's determination and ambition, and the three consecutive films are indeed the first bold attempt in Chinese film history.

It is said that "sincerity is a necessary skill", which is the most appropriate way to describe the success of *Creation of the Gods I*.

3. Laying the Foundation of Profound Chinese Cultural Heritage

3.1. Design of Clothing and Apparel

All the clothing, costumes, props, and accessories in the film have a historical basis, almost 100% restoring history. Art director Ye Jintian mentioned in an interview the Eastern aesthetic design concept of "emphasizing both tradition and innovation and integrating history and modernity". This is a unique idea rooted in the paintings of the Yuan and Ming dynasties in China, combined with the elegant charm of the Northern Song Dynasty landscape paintings and the Yongle Palace murals (as shown in Figure 3). [3]



Figure 4. Partial murals of Yongle Palace.

Source: Wenbo Shanxi

Even develop special clothing based on each character's life background and personality traits. For example, the colors of the clothes of the four great marquises in the east, west, north and south are determined based on the characteristics of their hometown. Queen Jiang is from the east, near the seaside, so she mainly uses blue, supplemented by pearls, shellfish, and even a cloud shoulder that has been personally sewn by Chinese intangible cultural heritage inheritors. [4] Shen Gongbao's clothing features human skin and a skeleton, representing his stance. The red tulle worn by Daji while dancing (as shown in Figure 4) represents both the sex appeal of this character's fox demon and his inner ambition and desire.

At the same time, it is not difficult to notice that Daji's clothing, from the initial light purple to pink and then to this bright red, also symbolizes the change of Yin Shou's power ambition. In addition, the people of the Shang Dynasty revered white,

so the clothing of Yin Shou when he ascended the throne or during battles had already been made with a white base. It must be admitted that every detail reflects the profound Chinese culture and the director's reverence for culture.

The most impressive scene is also the "Hostage Battle Dance" segment, where many young girls loudly exclaim, "These are the lover of my dream." In fact, these shirtless scenes restore the wild and primitive beauty of China's historical dynasties at that time, and are an important component of traditional Chinese aesthetic elements.



Figure 4. Red tulle worn by Daji.

Source: Official stills of "Creation of the Gods I"

3.2. Ultimate Display of Picture Space

All scenes in *Creation of the Gods I* are handmade. As is well known, China is a major country in handicrafts, so the director gathered all Chinese folk artists to create a world that only belongs to ancient mythology, organically unifying the three realms of demons, humans, and immortals. Such an aesthetic system is truly captivating. [5]

A movie has almost traveled all over China just by filming, including the most beautiful wheat fields and the turbulent Hukou Waterfall in China. It not only effectively enhances the artistic level of the movie, but also showcases the vast expanse of China to domestic and foreign audiences.

The director even built a 30,000-square-meter outdoor live scene base, with professional technical personnel personally creating every detail. [6] It is no exaggeration to say that a vivid history can be seen from every corner, revealing China's cultural confidence everywhere.

The most shocking thing is that the art department has handmade every candle lamp in the Longde Hall based on historical documents, and each one is completely different. The majestic Kunlun Mountains we see also strictly refer to the "Thousand Li River and Mountain Map" by the Northern Song painter Wang Ximeng, and even the unstable structure of the Lutai, with its bigger top and smaller bottom parts, has its metaphorical significance: the unstable foundation of Shang Wang Yinshou's rule is bound to fail to please the world.



Figure 5. Handmade scene models.

Source: Behind the Scenes Documentary of iQiyi's "Creation of the Gods I" Film "The Road to the Gods"

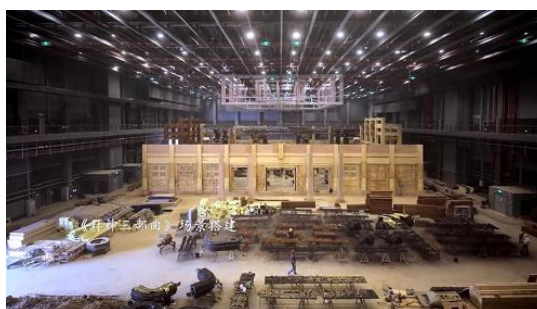


Figure 6. Pure manual scene construction.

Source: Behind the Scenes Documentary of iQiyi's "Creation of the Gods I" Film "The Road to the Gods"

3.3. Application of Sound

The director has an extreme pursuit of professionalism, hiring eight national bass players. The phrase "Heavenly Destiny Mysterious Bird, Descending to Business" is undoubtedly a punchline of this film and the most immersive part for the audience.

There is also the most inconspicuous sound of Lei Zhenzi, in fact, even a whimper is the team's hard work. For example, when Lei Zhenzi descended from the sky to rescue the besieged Jichang, he made a very angry high-frequency moose sound; The anxious and sad feeling when taking away Jichang was the low-frequency sound, which they referred to the voice of Koalas during the production. Under normal circumstances, mid-frequency sound is the human voice.

The director also requested to showcase the atmospheric style of the film with the writing style of the Wagner Symphony Band, and to shape delicate emotions with the romantic writing style of classical music. Therefore, Gordy Haab was also invited by the director. That's right, he's the music teacher for the Star Wars game. So whenever brave and brave soldiers appear, the atmosphere of music rendering also reaches a climax.

4. The Blessing and Assistance of Excellent Western Culture

4.1. Special effects

The special effects team of this film is fortunate to have invited many special effects teachers from Western blockbusters to serve as senior special effects guides. In fact, in the Lord of the Rings series, it is not difficult to find that the special effects production inside can be described as exquisite and unparalleled. Moreover, the

production time of the first installment was actually at the end of the last century. During that period, China did not have the advanced production technology that Western countries have. Therefore, in the current 21st century, the team of Creation of the Gods humbly took leave and spared no effort to invite excellent Western teams to escort the special effects production of this movie. How could such sincerity not impress the audience?



Figure 7. Western Special Effects Teacher.

Source: Behind the Scenes Documentary of iQiyi's "Creation of the Gods I" Film "The Road to the Gods"

Another example is the Lei Zhenzi of special effects packaging, which adopts high-end dynamic capture technology and is played by a real person. With technical bonuses, it reaches the height of shaping an inanimate object into a flesh-and-blood "little monster". (As shown in Figure 8)

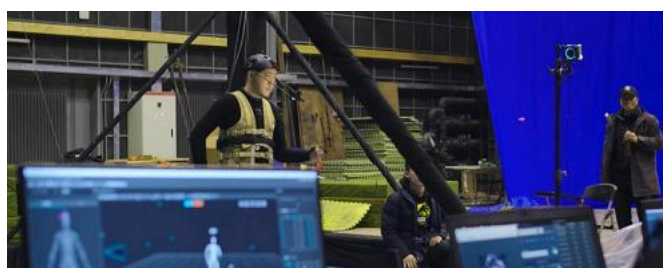


Figure 8. Lei Zhenzi's Character Shaping.

Source: Behind the Scenes Documentary of iQiyi's "Creation of the Gods I" Film "The Road to the Gods"

4.2. Crew Management

Although this film has received the indoctrination of excellent Western culture, it also adheres to the absolute Chinese style. As the saying goes, "Don't be the Marvel universe of China, but the Fengshen universe of the world." [7]

A large crew of tens of thousands of people, each department is independent of each other, but there is close and orderly cooperation between each department. Strictly adhere to the industrialization process, steadily advance step by step, and achieve reasonable implementation of each link. [8] That's why we were able to create such a magnificent project perfectly and gain a good reputation.

4.3. Narrative mode

Reasonably drawing on the trilogy of ancient Greek tragedies in the West, utilizing its concept of fate and narrative mode. Make the three films independent and put them together to create a complete and magnificent epic. It is not boring to make the audience understand, and there is still interest to continue watching, which is

undoubtedly a challenge, but director Wuershan did achieve it.

The most typical plot is in the scene where the four hostages kill their fathers. Some people believe that it is similar to an Oedipus style adaptation, where the “Oedipus complex” refers to the choice of actively completing individualistic heroism, but the four hostages are not completely proactive, so from this perspective, it is slightly biased, but it cannot be denied that it is a reference in narrative.

5. Further Promotion of Film Industrialization

Director Wuershan has fully achieved industrialization at three levels: creation, management, and technological application. He stated in an interview that only by mentioning these three dimensions simultaneously can he know where his work is lacking, what has been achieved, and where it is not yet mature enough. [9]

In fact, from a practical perspective, the emergence of *Creation of the Gods* only indicates that China has directors and teams willing to promote the industrialization of Chinese cinema. Compared to the Western film industry, such as Hollywood blockbusters, our technology is slightly immature. The industrialization of Chinese films still requires time to settle, and more importantly, it requires continuous progressive thinking as an arm. Obviously, this is not an overnight career. The trilogy of *Creation of the Gods* should work together with other domestic blockbusters, pay attention to international exchanges and cooperation, and bring new opportunities to the Chinese film market.

6. Progressiveness of Art Form

Another reason why a good literary and artistic work is sought after is that its artistic form is progressive and correct. As an epic blockbuster that tells the mythological stories of the Chinese nation, *Creation of the Gods* not only reproduces the history of the Shang and Zhou dynasties but also tells the story of China entering a new era.

This movie, from a certain perspective, awakens the ideological return movement of the Chinese nation. Boyi Kao led Xue Longju and said “go home” to Jifa, not only to his younger brother who had been working as a hostage in another country for many years but also to summon all Chinese compatriots who had been away from home for too long. This is the reconstruction of the spiritual home and the enrichment of the spiritual world, bringing people the most simple and authentic emotions, not relying on sensationalism, but relying on what the public can most empathize with.

The screenwriter of this movie has also said that the story of *Creation of the Gods* is a Chinese story, and can even be said to be a modern and contemporary story. Although the story of FengShen has been passed down for thousands of years, the good and evil of human nature have not changed at all to this day. Perhaps only after watching this movie can we understand what the screenwriter is trying to convey.

7. Conclusions

The Trilogy of the Gods has broken the monopoly of the Western film industry on “blockbusters”, spreading freedom and equality, and accusing it of brutality.

The reason why *Creation of the Gods* can be called the Renaissance of the East is because it not only shows the hope of the Chinese film industry and the indomitable

spirit of Chinese filmmakers but also shapes the concept of family and country isomorphism and a community with a shared future for mankind, which can be described as magnificent and wonderful.

Myths have warmth, movies have attitudes. It is undeniable that Creation of the Gods has taught the audience an unparalleled lesson in human nature.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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