

# CHINESE REFERENCES IN JAPANESE ANIMATION

by

JINGYI ZHANG

(Under the Direction of Nathaniel H. Kohn)

## ABSTRACT

Japanese animation, also known as anime, is very popular in Japan, and it is also exported to many countries. Anime can be considered as a hybrid text. It incorporates diverse pre-texts. The pre-texts may be from the Japanese cultures and also include cultural references to other countries. This paper will explore the pre-texts of Chinese cultures in anime. More specifically, I will examine the popular Chinese cultural symbols used in anime and analyze their possible references.

INDEX WORDS: Anime, Japanese animation, Chinese culture, Intertextuality

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vi
CHAPTER	
1 Introduction.....	1
2 Anime and the Studies of Anime .....	2
Anime: A Brief Introduction.....	2
The Studies of Anime .....	4
3 Research Design.....	6
Theoretical Framework .....	6
Research Approach .....	8
Objective and Significance of the Study.....	9
Research Questions .....	10
4 Chinese Cultural References in Anime.....	11
Historical References and Anime .....	11
The Four Classical Novels and Anime .....	39
Symbols of China in Japanese People's Eyes.....	50
5 Discussion and Findings .....	59
6 Limitations .....	65
7 Conclusion .....	66

REFERENCES .....67

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Ryuki in the formal costume .....	19
Figure 2: Mianfu in Jin Dynasty .....	20
Figure 3: Zhijupao of the Han Dynasty .....	20
Figure 4: Qujupao of the Han Dynasty .....	21
Figure 5: Shurei in the concubine costume.....	22
Figure 6: Two traditional forms of ruqun .....	22
Figure 7: Kuzhe of the Hu people.....	23
Figure 8: Seiran (the left) in the common costume similar to Kuzhe.....	24
Figure 9: Armor of the Ming Dynasty .....	25
Figure 10: Seiran (the right) in the armor .....	25
Figure 11: Ran Shuen in a Zhijupao style of uniform .....	26
Figure 12: An official in the uniform of the Ming Dynasty .....	27
Figure 13: Li Kouyu in the official uniform .....	28
Figure 14: The Forbidden City as depicted in the Ming Dynasty.....	29
Figure 15: The imperial palace of the Empire of Saiun.....	30
Figure 16: The traditional architecture of China.....	30
Figure 17: An architecture in the Empire of Saiun .....	31
Figure 18: An emperor in a Duijin-style armor of the Qing Dynasty.....	36
Figure 19: A Dajin-style of festival robe .....	36

Figure 20: The monkey king in <i>Journey to the West</i> .....	40
Figure 21: Son Goku on a <i>Weekly Shonen Jump</i> cover .....	42
Figure 22: Jackie Chun in <i>Dragon Ball</i> .....	45
Figure 23: Two Chinese dragons on the wall .....	46
Figure 24: Lau (the right) in <i>Black Butler</i> .....	51
Figure 25: Two women wear Qipao .....	52
Figure 26: Kagura in a short-sleeve qipao .....	52
Figure 27: A pair of black cloth shoes .....	53
Figure 28: Kagura (the girl) is dueling with Sadaharu .....	54
Figure 29: Shyoran in the green costume .....	55
Figure 30: Rock Lee is using Drunk Fist .....	58
Figure 31: A statue of Bruce Lee .....	58

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Japanese animation, also known as anime, is very popular in Japan, and it is also exported to many countries. As a result, there are many studies about anime. Topics of these studies vary from exploring technologies used in anime, the cultural symbols of anime, to the situation of the anime industry in Japan. Though many studies have discussed the cultural symbols in anime, most of these studies explored the use of Japanese cultural references and the influence of Western technology and culture on the creation of anime.

Historically, Japan and China once had close communication, starting with the Tang Dynasty (618-907). From then, Japan and China had various and constant cultural communications. After the World War II, the form of communication changed. However, no matter what experiences the two countries have shared, the fact is that they both were and are influenced by each other regarding politics and culture.

This paper discusses the cultural relationship between Japan and China in the production of anime. Anime can be considered as a hybrid text that incorporates diverse pre-texts. These pre-texts may be from the Japanese cultures and also include cultural references to other countries. In this paper, the pre-texts are Chinese cultural references.

I chose this as my thesis topic because I am an anime fan, and as a Chinese student, I am interested in the Chinese cultural references used in anime. In conclusion, this paper explores the pre-texts of Chinese cultures and their presence in anime. More specifically, I examine the popular Chinese cultural symbols used in anime and analyze their possible references.

## CHAPTER 2

### ANIME AND THE STUDIES OF ANIME

#### **Anime: A Brief Introduction**

Anime is a term that the Japanese borrowed from the French, and they used it to refer to the entire medium of animation; however, it was then adopted by the Western countries to refer only to animation from Japan (Price, 2000). Some people consider the anime as cartoons whose audiences are mainly kids and whose themes are mostly fairy tales. In fact, the boundary of the anime is much wider than cartoons. As Price (2000) states, “the only thing that really classifies anime as, well, anime, is the fact that it is made in Japan by Japanese artists within a Japanese context” (p. 154). There are diverse genres of anime, including fantasy, crime, detective, science fiction, war, romance, etc. The audiences include various age groups: kids, adolescents, young adults, and older people. In other words, the anime industry is just like the film industry except the characters and backgrounds are animated images.

A lot of anime is adapted from manga, the graphic novels in Japan. In fact, the popularity of anime among different age groups and between both sexes in Japan is also related to manga culture. Basically, an animation studio chooses a manga series and buys the copyright. Then the studio modifies the images and storyboards to make them suitable for animation. The animated images are edited to become a complete anime. Finally, it is bought and played by television stations.

According to Clements (2006), the earliest anime was created in 1921. It was undated and private, and unfortunately, the author is unknown. In the 1930s, the anime industry gradually

developed. Before the 1960s, the foreign animations had a strong influence on the anime industry. At that time, Disney and other foreign animations were imported, and audiences, producers, and even animators were especially influenced by the Walt Disney Company's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Later, influenced by the Chinese animation *Princess Iron Fan* (1941), Japan's first feature-length animated film was directed by Mitsuyo Seo in 1944.

In the early 1960s, Osamu Tezuka started his own studio, which opened a new era of anime. Osamu Tezuka was first a manga artist. He composed many famous manga series, including *Astro Boy* (1952-1968), *Kimba the White Lion* (1950-1954), and *Black Jack* (1973-1983). He worked for the Toei Animation, and after the contract expired, he founded his own studio, Mushi Production, in 1961. In his own company, Tezuka produced the first anime series, *Astro Boy*, in 1963. He learned many production techniques from Disney's animations, but he was famous for adapting the techniques into a much cheaper way, which helped build the workflow of today's anime. Even though the studio produced some good anime, it bankrupted in 1972. Many former employees left the studio and founded some other studios, such as Madhouse and Sunrise, which are still part of the Japanese anime industry.

In the 1980s, anime in Japan gradually became more accepted by the mainstream. The anime industry experienced a boom in production. It was also when the anime was gradually being known by the overseas market. The most famous examples are the first series of the TV anime *Pokemon* (also known as *Pocket Monster*, 1997) and Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* (2001). *Spirited Away* won the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2002 and the Academy Award for Best Animated Film at the 75<sup>th</sup> Academy Award in 2003. These awards made Miyazaki and anime more famous.



Nowadays, anime has become part of popular culture not only in Japan but also in other countries, like America and China. Japanese corporations also cooperate with overseas companies, which makes the export of anime convenient, and the influence of anime has also increased.

### **The Studies of Anime**

There are many researchers doing the studies of anime. Several scholars focused on analyzing the anime industry domestically and globally. Morisawa (2015) did fieldwork on the anime industry and revealed the hierarchy of creativity and multidimensional structure in commercial management. The popularity of anime has prompted scholars to explore the working atmosphere in Japan, and they discovered the heavy workload and poor conditions of young animators (Okeda & Koire, 2011). Clements (2006, 2013) also wrote an encyclopedia and chronicled anime.

Moreover, many researchers analyzed anime from the perspectives of culture and art. Because of the Miyazaki's reputation, many researchers have chosen his masterpieces as the research subjects, including McCarthy (1999), Wright (2005), and Napier (2016). Napier (2016) examined the general identity of anime on a local and global scale and analyzed the connections between feminism and the creation of main characters. She also explored the relationship between fantasy and the reality. Scholars have also studied other famous directors and works. For example, scholars have studied Satoshi Kon's *Perfect Blue* (1997) and *Millennial Actress* (2001) from the perspective of the relationship between cinema language and narrative approaches (Ortabasi, 2008; Villot, 2014). Gangnes (2014) analyzes the images and cinema language used in *Akira* (1989). Notaro (2007) examines the contemporary "real" fears to the post-human body and cloning technologies in *Ghost in the Shell* (1995, 2004).

Many works have focused on the smaller theme of studying the pre-text in animation. Researchers have dug out the religions and myths referred to in Miyazaki's animations (Reider, 2005; Plumb, 2010; Garza, 2014; Wu, 2016), and they found that the nostalgia in his works as well as the characters and images referred to the Japanese religions Shinto and some myths and folklore. For example, Yubaba in *Spirited Away* is referred to as the mountain witch Yamauba because of the commonalities between them, which includes being endowed with supernatural powers and the nurturing character of the motherhood (Reider, 2005). Some scholars have also noticed the references to other animations. Plumb (2010) not only explains Shinto in Miyazaki's works but also the miko, who are female shrine attendants, in the graphic novels and animations *Sailor Moon*, and revealed the worship of gods in Japanese traditions. Minguez-Lopez (2014) analyzes Chinese and Japanese folktales adapted in *Dragon Ball* (1986-1989), a popular animation inspired by the classic novel *The Journey to the West*.

However, most of the studies on anime focus on the pre-texts of original Japanese culture. Levi (1996) points out that some Japanese anime refers to foreign cultures in the creation. Based on her opinion, my objective of the study will be to explore the possible Chinese references that are used in Japanese anime.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is mainly built on the theory of intertextuality. The word “intertextuality” was coined by Julia Kristeva, but the intertextual practices are “at least as old as recorded human society” (Still and Worton, 1990, p. 2). Intertextuality holds that a text cannot exist as a hermetic whole. Both the writers and the readers bring some pre-texts into it. First, the writer is a reader of texts before the creation of his/her texts, which are inevitably intertwined with other references. Second, a reader reads a text based on not only what is in the text but also his/her own experiences and references.

The theories of intertextuality can be found as early as in the classical Greek and Roman theorists’ work. For instance, some of Plato’s insights are similar to some modern theories of intertextuality. His theory of imitation claims that “the ‘poet’ always copies an earlier act of creation, which itself is already a copy” (Still and Worton, 1990, p. 3). But some differences exist between the modern theories and the Roman theorists’ opinions. As Still and Worton point out (1990), copies without an original evokes the problems of the relationship between physical reality and semiotic reality, “but for our Roman theorists (for example, Cicero and Quintilian) imitation presupposes reference to a pre-existent reality which is concrete as well as textual” (p. 7).

Most Renaissance writers articulate their dependence on imitations of previous texts (Still and Worton, 1990). However, in *Essays*, Montaigne claims that “intertextual reading is grounded

in an almost boastful forgetfulness” (p. 8). What is interesting is that despite Montaigne’s insistence on forgetfulness, “he does quote extensively” (p.10).

Entering the twentieth century, several important theorists developed the theory of intertextuality. For example, Mikhail Bakhtin argues that when people communicate they are influenced by two things: the pre-existing meanings of the words and “the alien intentions a real interlocutor” (p. 15). Kristeva expands on Bakhtin’s opinions. Her intertextuality also suggests that meaning “is not given nor produced by a transcendental ego” (p.17). Roland Barthes cites Kristeva’s work and explains the term “intertext”: it is not necessarily “a field of influences” but “the signifier as siren” (Barthes, p. 145). In *Writing Degree Zero* (1977), he expresses that intertextuality exists in a sense that “a text may appear to be the spontaneous and transparent expression of a writer’s intentions, but must necessarily contain elements of other texts (Still and Worton, 1990, p. 23).

The theory of intertextuality can be used in the context of my study. The text is Japanese animation, and the specific pre-text I want to explore is Chinese cultural references. The creators of the animations bring their experiences and references of Chinese culture into the works. I, as a reader, also bring my own understandings and experiences of Chinese culture when I personally communicate with the texts, which are the animations. My objective of the study is to discover the possible Chinese references used in anime.

What might be interesting in this study is the differences between my identity and the anime creators’ identity. As a Chinese person, my understandings of Chinese cultures are different from the Japanese; that is to say, there could be differences between my understanding and the animators’ understandings when it comes to the same references.

Additionally, Levi's viewpoints of anime support the feasibility of the objective. In the book *Samurai from Outer Space* (1996), she states:

*Japan has been a borrower of other cultures for centuries, and sometimes what looks like a garbled anime version of someone else's culture may actually be a reflection of how that culture has been Japanized centuries before anime was even a gleam in Osamu Tezuka's eye. (p. 63)*

This statement means that it is possible to find the original Chinese references of some specific symbols used in anime. Moreover, it is possible to find the various intertextual approaches that the references are used.

### **Research Approach**

In this study, I will adopt the qualitative approach. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer to the world" (p. 3). It consists of a series of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible and transform the world. These practices turn the world into field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, and recordings to the self. Qualitative researchers attempt to understand or interpret phenomena "in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). I chose to do a qualitative research because I am attempting to interpret the images and narrative symbols and the references of the elements in anime.

As a process, qualitative research consists of three activities: theory, method, and analysis. What is important to the three activities is, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), is "the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gendered, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective" (p. 11). In other words, who the researcher of a

qualitative study is, matters. Different researchers with various backgrounds may produce multiple interpretations even when they research the same thing.

The methods that are used in qualitative research include, but are not limited to, participant observations, interviews, focus groups, fieldwork, textual analyses, ethnography, and autoethnography. In my study, I will use the method of textual analysis.

McKee (2003) defines textual analysis as a data-gathering process: “When we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text” (p. 1).

Textual analysis is a method for those researchers who want to examine the cultures and subcultures. By doing textual analysis, we are interpreting text and the cultures hidden in the text. Based on my objective to explore the Chinese references in anime, I am going to interpret the symbols and elements used in the texts, especially the elements that have possible connections with Chinese cultures.

### **Objective and Significance of the Study**

The objective of the study is to find out the possible Chinese references used in anime. Because of my personal interest, I chose anime as the object of my study. As a Chinese and an international student in the major of mass communication, I am also interested in cross-cultural communication. Based on my interest and identity, I defined the objective of the study. I believe that this study will provide with a possible connection between Chinese cultures and Japanese anime. This connection might help readers to increase their understanding of anime as part of popular culture.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the theoretical framework of intertextuality, the research approach of textual analysis, and my research objectives stated above, I address my research questions from the perspective of exploring the specific texts of anime and connecting the texts with possible Chinese cultural pre-texts.

To be more specific, I state my research questions as below:

- What are the symbols and elements of Chinese culture used in anime?
- What possible sources do the symbols refer to?
- What kind of intertextual approaches are used in anime?

## CHAPTER 4

### CHINESE CULTURAL REFERENCES IN ANIME

#### **Historical References and Anime**

The history of China covers a long time. According to Boltz (1986), the first dynasty with written records is the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 BC), as early as 1500 BC. The history of the Xia Dynasty (2070-1600 BC), the first known dynasty of China, was mostly recorded by later historians based on word-of-mouth. Until the last dynasty of Imperial China, the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), talents, all kinds of cultures, and works of art developed during the long history before the modern society was founded. The abundant historical materials offer writers and creators numerous chances to compose various works, including but not limited to novels, films, TV shows, and animations. The influence of Chinese history even intrigues foreigners to produce works of art and literature. Japan is one of the country that is interested in Chinese culture and history. In this section, I discuss the historical references used in anime. Some anime creates fictional places but refers to political and cultural materials of ancient China, like *The Story of Saiunkoku*, *The Twelve Kingdoms*, and *Mysterious Play*. To analyze the possible Chinese references used in anime, I will explore these three anime series.

#### **The Empire of Saiun: A China-like Empire**

The Empire of Saiun is a fictional empire in the anime *The Story of Saiunkoku* (2006-2008). It was originally a series of Japanese light novels written by Sai Yukino. The literal meaning of the title is a tale of the Kingdom of Colored Clouds. There are 18 total volumes of



the series, and it was originally published from 2003 to 2011. From 2005 to 2012, the novel was adapted into a series of graphic novels, illustrated by Kairi Yura. From 2006 to 2008, the graphic novel was adapted to a two-season TV anime, produced by the Madhouse Studio. The anime tells a story of a girl taking a post in government, which was forbidden to women in the Empire of Saiun, and assists the emperor to build a prosperous history. The first season of the TV anime, which is the text I will analyze, covers the plots of the first eight volumes of the novel. In the anime, the animators referred to historical materials and traditional elements of China, which makes the empire look similar to Imperial China. The references include the administrative structure of the empire and the design of the clothes. Moreover, the architecture, as well as specific objects, like characters' favorite foods, the musical instrument, and the swords used in the anime, are also from China. All these elements make the empire very China-like.

Based on the story, the Empire of Saiun was built by Sou Gen, a brave man who wanted to save the people from suffering. Impressed by Sou Gen's sincerity and bravery, the Eight Gods of Color, who were named after colors, helped him defeat the demons and ghosts and create the empire. To memorialize the gods, Sou Gen built a beautiful shrine for them, which still stands in the Imperial City. After he died, the eight gods disappeared, but the legends say they still exist among the people. The empire was divided into eight provinces, which were named after the eight colors of the gods: Shi (purple), Kou (red), Ran (blue), Ko (yellow), Heki (green), Haku (white), Koku (black), and Sa (brown). Among them, Shi was the imperial family. Six hundred years ago, the emperor commanded each ruling clan of the seven provinces to change its name to match its province. Common people were not allowed to use the same family names as nobles. Nowadays, the head of the provinces are usually nominated by the emperor, but the noble families still have a lot of power in the local even the national economy.

The story of the first season begins in the eighth year of Shi Ryuki becoming the emperor. Ryuki is the sixth and youngest son of the previous emperor. He and his five brothers have different mothers. When he is young, he is treated terribly by his brothers. Only the second prince Seien, shows kindness to him. However, Seien is exiled from the capital city years later after being framed. When Ryuki is eleven, he rises to the throne at the wish of his father, after Seien is exiled and the other princes kill each other over the succession. To wait for Seien to come back and become the emperor, Ryuki pretends to be lazy and silly and does not care about the government or the empire. In order to push Ryuki to be a good emperor, the Grand Preceptor, one of the emperor's tutors, invites Kou Shurei to enter the imperial palace. The three tutors of Ryuki hope that Shurei can persuade Ryuki to be a good emperor.

Kou Shurei is a descendent of the noble family, family Kou (red). Even though her family has high social status, she grew up in an impoverished circumstance because her father left the family. Shurei's dream is to pass the imperial examinations and take a post in the government. However, it is forbidden to women. When she enters the palace, she gradually becomes friends with Ryuki. She tells Ryuki that her dream is to make the empire prosperous so the people can live a good life. Moved by her dream, Ryuki decides to take responsibility and be a respectable emperor. Ryuki also convinces the officials to change the law and approves women to take imperial examinations. In the examination, Shurei gets the third highest score and becomes the first female who passes the examination. Later, because of Shurei's hard-working and talent in politics, she is nominated as the governor of the Province Sa. The Province Sa is infamous; the noble family Sa has more power than the local governor nominated by the emperor. Local people live terrible lives. After Shurei becomes the governor, she and her workmates take many steps and finally seize power.

In *The Story of Saiunkoku*, the Empire of Saiun adopted the central and local administrative systems that are very similar to the system created in Imperial China, especially in the Tang Dynasty (618-907). With some changes to fit with the background of the story, the whole structure of the empire is complete.

**The Empire of Saiun and Imperial China.** In *The Story of Saiunkoku*, the Empire of Saiun adopts the centralization system of Imperial China. First of all, there is only one emperor of the empire, who comes from the Family Shi. The emperor Ryuki claims himself as “Yo” while others claim themselves as “Watashi,” though both of them mean “I.” One of the most important features of Imperial China is the centralization systems created in the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC). The Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BC), which preceded the Qin Dynasty, ruled the land under a semi-feudal system by distributing specific area lands (kingdoms) to some noble families. Consisting of the two periods of Spring and Autumn (771-476 BC) and Warring States (475-221 BC), the ruler of the Zhou Dynasty did not have much actual power. The kingdoms had their own rules and languages, and Qin was one of the kingdoms. During the periods, there were many masters who held different opinions, and they travelled around different kingdoms to sell their political opinions. For example, Master Kong (or Confucius) held the opinion of personal and governmental morality.

There was one famous opinion of the Legalists, held by Master Hanfei, which states that the empire should be ruled by one central government and laws. He believed that there is one and only one noble person can have the power. The governor of Kingdom Qin, Yingzheng, adopted the opinion of the Legalists. He terminated the feudal system of Zhou and started the centralization system by creating the central administrative system of Three Lords and Nine Ministers and the local administrative system of the County System. He also adopted Master

Hanfei's point of only one emperor by using the title Huangdi (meaning emperor or king). He even created a Chinese character, 朕 (pronunciation: Chen), to replace the "I" to call himself. No one else could call him/herself that. This rule lasted until the last dynasty of Imperial China. By adopting those rules, the Qin Dynasty became the first dynasty that united the multiple kingdoms that existed since the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties, the three dynasties before Qin.

Second, the anime keeps the whole administrative system of Three Departments and Six Ministries and their duties, which was developed in the Han Dynasty and modified in the Sui and Tang dynasties. According to the Chinese historian Lu (2010), the changes and development of the central administrative systems of Imperial China's can be divided into five stages. The first stage starts from the Qin Dynasty to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), basically took on the system Three Lords and Nine Ministers. Under the emperor, the first level of the system consists of the three lords: the Chancellor, the Imperial Secretary, and the Grand Commandant. The Chancellor was in charge of political affairs, and the Imperial Secretary assisted the Chancellor. The Grand Commandant's duty was to manage the military. Under the Three Lords, there are nine ministers in control of specific affairs, including ritual, crime, security in the palace, and so on.

However, the Chancellor seized too much power during the development of the system and gradually threatened the emperors' power. Because of that, from the middle years of the Han Dynasty to the middle age of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the emperors made many changes to the central administrative system, which goes into the second stage of the development: the establishment and evolution of the system of Three Departments and Six Ministries (Lu, 2010). The Department of State Affairs was established during the end years of the Han Dynasty. After the Han Dynasty, there was a period of wars and the empire was divided into three kingdoms.

One of the kings of the Three Kingdoms (220-280) established the Central Secretariat and the Chancellery. Some changes were made to the system during the Jin Dynasty (265-420) and the Southern and Northern dynasties (420-589), the dynasties after the Three Kingdoms. The emperors of the Sui Dynasty (581-618) developed the system to five departments and established the six ministries. Finally during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the system was improved by the Emperor Li Shimin and became the Three Departments and Six Ministries.

The three departments are respectively the Chancellery, the Department of State Affairs, and the Central Secretariat. The three heads together serve as the prime ministers. The function of the Chancellery is to criticize the policies created by the Department of State Affairs. The head of the Chancellery also gives advice to the emperor. The central secretariat helps the Emperor complete some paperwork, like writing the orders based on the emperor's requirements. The function of the Department of State Affairs is to manage various specific affairs of the empire. Under the Department of State Affairs, there are six ministries. The heads of the six ministries are supervisors, who follow the orders of the Department of State Affairs and assign specific works to different people. There are three additional people in the central government: the tutors of the emperor. Their titles are grand preceptor (Taifu in Chinese), grand tutor (Taishi in Chinese) and grand protector (Taibao in Chinese). They do not have actual power, but they give advice to the emperor.

The six ministries are in charge of specific works. The main responsibility of the Ministry of Civil Administration is to appoint people to different jobs. It is in charge of rating the performances of the officials. Based on the performances, it rewards the good officials and ruins the irresponsible ones. The duty of the Ministry of Revenue is to manage the revenue of the empire. It also collects the taxes from the provinces. The Ministry of Rites manages the imperial

examinations. The Ministry of Defense's duties are the appointment and demotion of the military officers. In times of war, the officers serve as commanders for the military. The Ministry of Justice is in charge of punishing criminals. The Ministry of Works manages the medical and architectural affairs. During the Sui Dynasty, the emperors created the imperial examination, which was improved by the emperors of the Tang Dynasty. Before the Sui Dynasty, the officials usually were from noble families or were people the emperors trusted. With the imperial examination, some outstanding talents were selected to assist the government. It is also one of the reasons that makes the Tang Dynasty one of the most prosperous dynasties in the history of Imperial China. However, females were not allowed to take the examination.

The system of Three Department and Six Ministries is very famous in the history of Imperial China. It not only divides the central power into three parts but also limits the power of the emperor. The system helps avoid one person seizing too much power. It also to some degree improves the working efficiency.

At the end of the Tang Dynasty, the empire was divided by wars again and entered the period of Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960). Since the Song Dynasty (960-1279), Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), and Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the emperors gradually enhanced their own power by dividing the power of the three departments. Even though some departments and ministries still existed until the Ming Dynasty, their power was controlled directly by the emperor. This leads to a more and more centralized but stagnant central administrative system. During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the emperor Yongzheng even founded the Grand Council, which is in charge of military and policy-making. The emperor attends all the meetings and makes the decisions. The founding of Grand Council is the sign of the peak of centralization

in the history of Imperial China. The history of Imperial China ended after the fall of the Qing Dynasty.

The anime also keeps the three tutors of the emperor. However, unlike the three grands in the Tang Dynasty, the three tutors have stronger influence in the Empire of Saiun. The Grand Preceptor Shyo Yosen is actually the purple god of the eight cloud gods. He and the other two tutors often help the emperor Ryuki without him knowing. In the Empire of Saiun, there is also a Department of Celestial Chamber. This fits with the story and mostly is in charge of the research of the history of the Eight Gods of Colors and the Empire of Saiun. Third, the animation adopts the imperial examination as well. To support the plot of the story, the examination is opened to both sexes in the animation. That is the precondition that Shurei later becomes the most famous female politician in the history of the Empire of Saiun.

**The design of costume.** One of the most important connections between *The Story of Saiunkoku* and historical Chinese culture is the costume used in the animation. In history, the costumes in different dynasties of Imperial China have different features. Without adopting the specific costume of one dynasty, the costumes in *The Story of Saiunkoku* combines different features of traditional Chinese costumes in history.

First, the emperor Ryuki's costume (see Figure 1) on formal occasions mainly refers to Mianfu of Imperial China (see Figure 2). The style of Mianfu comes from Zhijupao (see Figure 3), whose design includes wide sleeves, a belt around waist, and a straight hem at the bottom. Because Ryuki represents the noble family Shi (the color purple in English), the color of his costume is usually purple. The yellow color and decorations on the belt and edges show his noble identity as an emperor. The typical costume of the Han Dynasty includes Zhijupao and Qujupao (a gown with curved hem, see Figure 4). Qujupao's gowns often come with wide

sleeves cinched at the wrist. There is also an embroidered dark band at the collar, the wrists, and the hem. Those two kinds of gowns were popular with aristocracy and common people, but common people's gowns did not have as many decorations as the aristocracy's gowns. In the anime, we can also see the common officials wear the clothes with the style Zhijupao without much decorations. Starting from the Han Dynasty, all the gowns and robes of different styles were categorized into Paofu (long robes), and it became the most common costume worn by the Han people, the ethnic group of people who mainly lived in the central plains of the Imperial China. Usually, scholars and officials wore the long robes that reached down to the ankles, while warriors and laborers wore short robes that only reached the knees.



*Figure 1.* Ryuki in the formal costume (Source: screenshot, ep. 38.)





*Figure 2. Mianfu in Jin Dynasty (Source: Wikipedia. Image by Yan.)*



*Figure 3. Zhijupao of the Han Dynasty (Source: Wikipedia. Image by Hanfulove.)*



*Figure 4. Qujupao of the Han Dynasty (Source: Wikipedia. Image by Huangdan2060.)*

Women's costume in the animation basically adopted the style of Ruqun, a dress style developed from Zhijupao. Most women's garments in the animation do not have many decorations. What must be mentioned is the costume that Shurei wears when she enters the palace as a concubine (see Figure 5). The costume refers more to the garments worn by people of the Wei and Jin dynasties because it has several overlaps and wide sleeves. During the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern dynasties, styles of Ruqun evolved into loose-fitting garments with open sleeves. According to Hua (2010, p. 16), men's long robes became increasingly casual while women's became more elaborate and complex. The dresses were designed with many decorations and more overlapping hems than before (see Figure 6). The development of the costume has a strong relationship with the social situation at that time. Because of the wars, the central power was distributed, and the emperors did not have much energy to regulate society,

which leads to a prosperous development of culture, including literature and costume. The piece of wrapping brocade that Shurei wears is usually considered to be a sign of costume in the Tang Dynasty. Some noble ladies, like Yang Yuhuan, a concubine loved by the seventh emperor of Tang, liked the wrapping brocade to display their beauty. Other women's costumes in the animation, like palace maids Kouren and Shusui, are a similar style to Shurei's garments. Shurei's clothes are mostly red because she comes from the noble family Kou (red in English).



Figure 5. Shurei in the concubine costume (Source: Screenshot, ep. 4.)

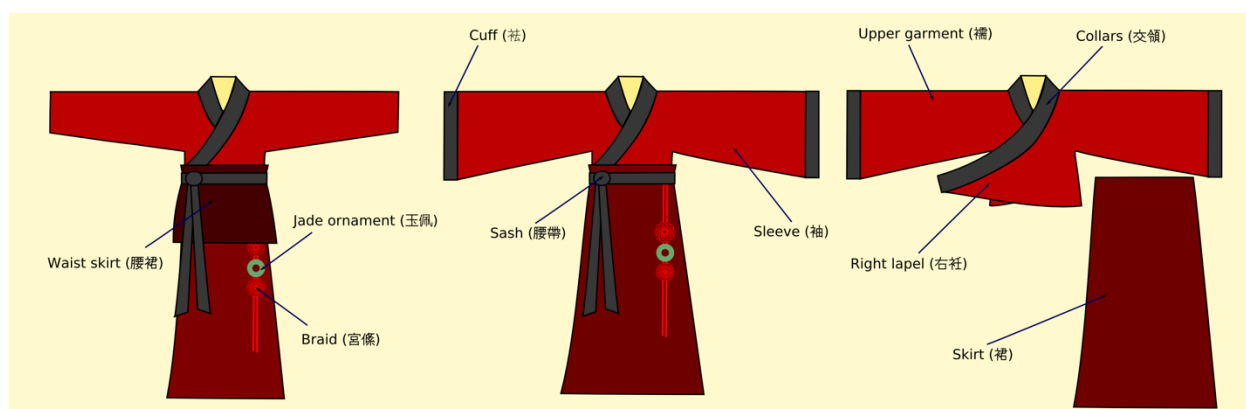


Figure 6. Two traditional forms of ruqun (Source: Wikipedia. Image by unknown.)

Another development of costume is that Kuzhe became popular in the Wei and Jin periods. Kuzhe (see Figure 7) is one clothing style of the Hu people, an ethnic group of nomadic riders who lived in the northwestern part of Imperial China. It is a style with separate top and bottom garments. The top is a short robe with wide sleeves, and the bottom part is a pair of trousers with a closed crotch. In the anime, Seiran and the common people mainly wear this kind of costume (see Figure 8). Kuzhe is more convenient for riding and moving than Paofu. Because of the constant wars during the Wei and Jin dynasties, people preferred the flexible garment style.



*Figure 7.* Kuzhe of the Hu people (Source: Wikipedia. Image by Jacquet.)





*Figure 8.* Seiran (the left) in the common costume similar to Kuzhe (Source: Screenshot, ep. 1.)

The army's costume imitates the style of armor in the Ming Dynasty (see Figure 9). For example, when Seiran, Ryuki's exiled brother, works in the military, he wears the armor (see Figure 10). He was saved and adopted by Shurei's father when he was young, and now he follows Shurei and becomes a commander in the military. Usually he wears a short robe and trousers, like common people. Sometimes when he works in the military, he wears armor and brings a sword. The inside part of the armor is a short robe on the top side and trousers on the bottom. The outside part is made of metal that covers the shoulders, chest, and thighs.

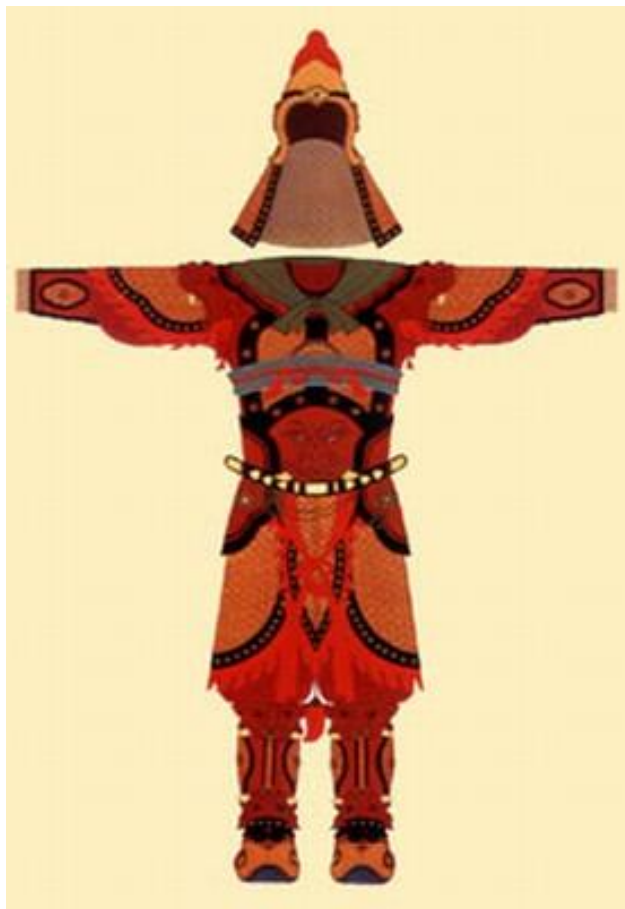


Figure 9. Armor of the Ming Dynasty (Source: *Chinese Clothing*. Image by Gao.)



Figure 10. Seiran (the right) in the armor (Source: Screenshot, ep. 4.)

The official's uniform in the animation has two styles. One mainly refers to Zhijupao in the Han Dynasty, as I mentioned before. It is similar to Ryuki's costume but without much decoration. For example, Ran Shuen, Kou Shouka, and Tei Youshun, who take posts in the government, wear the costume of this style (see Figure 11). The other refers to the Ming Dynasty's official's uniform (see Figure 12). The features include a round-neck and a square pattern on the chest. This kind of uniform was originally created during the Tang Dynasty. It mainly followed the rules made by Wu Zetian, the female emperor of the Tang Dynasty, that all officials must wear robes embroidered with birds and beasts, the signs showing identity of officials. During the Ming Dynasty, the official uniform developed. The Ming emperors regulated that all the officials must embroider Buzi in front of the chest of the robe. Buzi is an embroidered square with different patterns. The patterns, like different birds, represent different levels of the officials. In the anime, Li Kouyu, who works in one of the six ministries, usually wears the garment similar to the uniform in Ming Dynasty (see Figure 13).



*Figure 11.* Ran Shuen in a Zhijupao style of uniform (Source: Screenshot, ep. 4.)



*Figure 12.* An official in the uniform of the Ming Dynasty (Source: Wikipedia. Image by unknown.)





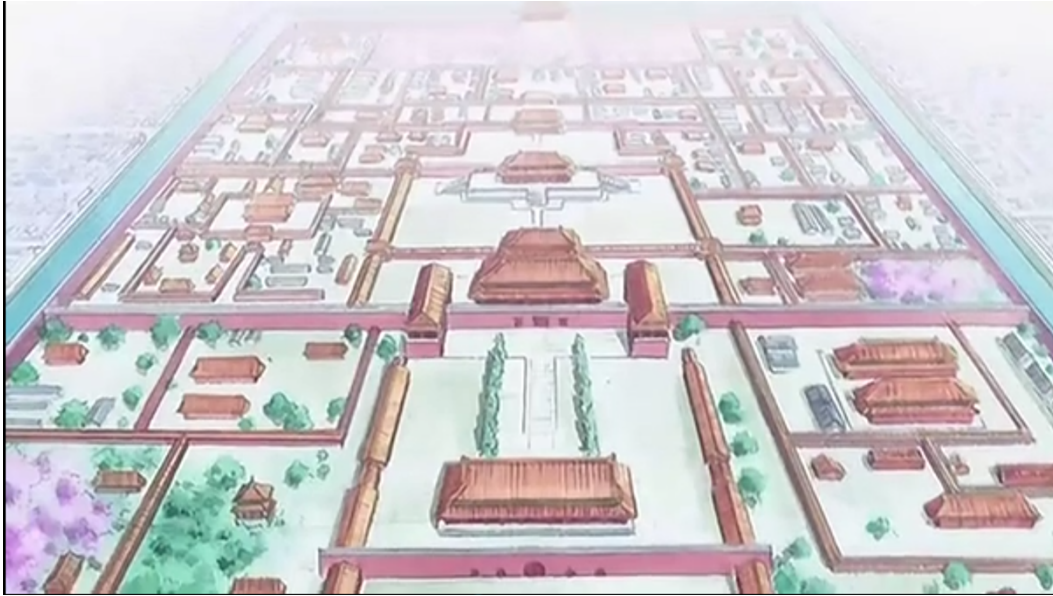
*Figure 13.* Li Kouyu in the official uniform (Source: Screenshot, ep. 38.)

**Other references to Chinese culture.** Apart from the administrative system and costume, there are other objects in the animation that can be connected with Chinese culture. For example, the design of buildings and the imperial city refers to some features of traditional Chinese architecture. One of the features it refers to is the axial symmetry of palace and layout (see Figure 14 and 15). Symmetry has represented balance and harmony since the Spring and Autumn period. The famous example might be the Forbidden City, whose palaces and the layout were both designed symmetrically. In the animation, the layout of the Imperial City looks similar to the Forbidden City, which was the sign of power. Another feature is the roof of the palace. Many ancient buildings had double hips on the roof with smooth lines and eaves between the hips (see Figure 16 and 17).



*Figure 14.* The Forbidden City as depicted in the Ming Dynasty (Source: Wikipedia. Image by unknown.)

*Figure 15.* The imperial palace of the Empire of Saiun (Source: Screenshot, ep. 2.)



*Figure 16.* The traditional architecture of China (Source: Wikipedia. Image by Case.)





*Figure 17. An architecture in the Empire of Saiun (Source: Screenshot, ep. 2.)*

Additionally, it adopts some kanji that is not commonly used in Japanese as names but is commonly used for Chinese names. The animation also uses Onyomi, which is the Chinese-style reading for kanji, to pronounce characters' names. Some meanings of the names also fit with characters' personalities and background. For example, the character Ki (Hui in Chinese) in Ryuki means shining brightly, which represents that Ryuki makes great effort in politics and makes the empire prosperous. Another example could be the protagonist's name, Shurei. Shu (written as 秀, Xiu in Chinese) means outstanding. Rei, (written as 麗, Li in Chinese) means beautiful. Those meanings in the name represent Shurei's beauty and talent in politics. I personally think the best name of the characters' is Li Kouyu. He is an official in one of the six ministries and also a good friend of Shurei's. When he was young, he was adopted by Shurei's uncle, who is the head of the noble family Kou (the red clan). The uncle did not abandon Kouyu's original family name but gave him a new given name: Kouyu. Li (also Li in Chinese) is a common family name in China. Kou (written as 绛, Jiang in Chinese) is the color crimson in Chinese. Yu (written as 攸, You in Chinese) can be used to describe water flowing. By giving

him this name, Shurei's uncle considers Kouyu as an important member in the family Kou. But he also wants him to live a free life he likes, just like the flowing water.

Another interesting connection between the Chinese culture and *The Story of Saiunkoku* is the setting of the Eight Gods of Color. In Chinese myth, there are eight gods as well. The eight gods, who respectively represent eight kinds of people: men, women, the old, the young, the rich, the poor, the lowly, and the aristocratic. Each of them has a power tool that can destroy evil. In the animation, the Eight Gods of Color helped the first emperor unify the empire. Even though not all the gods appear in the animation, there are some clues about them. The Purple God is actually the Grand Preceptor Shyo. His human look is of an old man. But when he shows his god form he is a handsome middle-aged man. The Red God is Shurei's mother, who is sleeping in Shurei's body to save Shurei's life. When Shurei was young, she had a terrible disease. To make sure she would be healthy, the Red God decided to sleep in Shurei's body. Only after Shurei dies can the Red God be aroused again. Another god is the White God, who looks like a young man in his god form. He sleeps in To Eigetsu's body. Eigetsu is the youngest number one scholar in the imperial examination. He also is co-governor of Province Sa, and helps Shurei a lot when they administer the province together. There are two connections between the myth and the animation. One is that only one of the gods is female: the woman god He Xiang and the Red God. The other connection is, like the Eight Gods having some type of power tool, each Gods of Color has his/her specific power. For example, the Red God can save lives.

In addition to the references mentioned above, there are some Chinese objects used in the animation. For instance, Shurei's favorite musical instrument is erhu, a traditional Chinese instrument with two strings. The tone of erhu is high and bright. Apart from erhu, Shurei's and her father's favorite food is a traditional wheat food in China called manjio (written as 馒头, Man

Tou in Chinese). In the animation, manjo is made with wheat with some red filling inside. But in China, manjo is a common food in northern China without filling inside. In China, the wheat food with red-bean filling is called dou sha bao (written as 豆沙包), which literally means a bun with red-bean filling.

The two swords in *The Story of Saiunkoku* also come from a Chinese folktale. In the animation, the two swords, Kanshou (gan jiang in Chinese) and Bokuya (mo ye in Chinese) belong to the emperor's family. Bokuya is kept by Ryuki. Kanshou is bestowed on Seiran, Ryuki's brother, to show Ryuki's admiration and respect for Seiran. In Chinese folktale, these swords were forged by Gan Jiang, a famous swordsmith in the Spring and Autumn period. Mo Ye was his wife. According to *In Search of the Supernatural: the Written Record* (1996), the king of Kingdom Wu, who was very brutal, ordered a pair of swords in three months. However, the swords took Gan Jiang three years to finish. Gan Jiang kept the male sword that was named after himself and gave the female sword, named after his wife, Mo Ye, to the king. The king was very mad and killed him. Several months later, Mo Ye gave birth to their son, Chi, and told him where the sword was kept. When Chi grew up, he wanted to kill the king to revenge. An assassin heard of his story and tried to help him. The assassin cut off Chi's head and gave it to the king. The king was very pleased and ordered his servants to boil the head. Then the assassin asked the king to look at the big pot. When the king looked down at the pot, the assassin used Gan Jiang to cut off his head. Finally, the brutal king was killed. After that, Gan Jiang and Mo Ye became the famous swords in the history.

### Space travel and Chinese references

Apart from *The Story of Saiunkoku*, there are additional series of anime that refer to some historical Chinese elements. They are *Mysterious Play* (1995) and *The Twelve Kingdoms* (2002). Unlike in the Empire of Saiun, in which all the stories directly happen in the fictional world, the protagonists in *Mysterious Play* and *The Twelves Kingdoms* are traveling from Japan to another China-like space and world, which obviously are fictional as well.

***Mysterious Play and ancient China.*** *Mysterious Play* (1995-1996, 52 episodes) is a series of TV anime that was adapted from Yuu Watase's graphic novels. The graphic novels were published from 1992 to 1996. Produced by the Studio Pierrot, the anime was run originally on TV Tokyo. The story begins with two girls, Miaka and Yui, who accidentally fall into an ancient Chinese novel called *The Universe of the Four Gods* and arrive in ancient China, where they are caught by robbers. The robbers plan to sell them, but a young man, Tamahome, who is a celestial warrior and later becomes Miaka's lover, saves their lives. After Tamahome leaves, Yui drops out of the space, while Miaka stays in the book. She unfortunately encounters another group of robbers and is saved by Tamahome again. However, they accidentally break into the imperial palace and are caught by the army. After meeting with the king, Miaka learns that she is actually the Priestess of Suzaku, who is destined to stay in the world and gather seven celestial warriors in order to summon the god of Suzaku and obtain three wishes. According to the king, there are four kingdoms in this world. Each of them is protected by a god and seven warriors. To achieve her wish to go back to the real world, Miaka starts her journey to look for the other six warriors.

Even though the story claims to take place in ancient China, the world is actually fictional. The plots of the anime have no connection with the history of China. However, there are some historical references used to make the world China-like. The first connection is the

gods in the world. Except Suzaku, the other three gods are Seiryu, Genbo and Byakko. In the ancient and Imperial China, Suzaku (Zhuque in Chinese), Seiryu (Qinglong in Chinese), Genbo (Xuanwu in Chinese), and Byakko (Baihu in Chinese) are four mythological creatures. They are respectively the Vermilion Bird, Azure Dragon, Black Turtle, and White Tiger. Each of them represents a direction and a season. The ancient people believed that when the four creatures appeared in the sky, something huge was going to happen.

Another reference used in the anime is the characters' costume. Based on the images of the clothing, the costume of the male characters mainly refers to the garments of Qing Dynasty. According to Hua (2010), the common clothing of people in the Qing Dynasty has two styles, Duijin and Dajin (see Figure 18 and 19). They both are robes without a collar. The buttons of Duijin are in the middle, while the buttons of Dajin are on the left side. They can be designed for shirts, coats, and long robes with a belt around the waist. Besides, most of the men in the anime have a hairstyle of queue. It is a style in which the hair on the front of the head is shaved off, and what is left is braided into a long braid. In the Qing Dynasty, every man was forced to wear that hairstyle. The female characters' costume in the anime, compared to the male's, contains more originality. But Miaka's dress that she wears after she stays in the ancient world might refer to Qupao in Wei and Jin dynasties. With delicate decorations on it, the dress is designed with curved hem at the bottom and several layers.





*Figure 18.* An emperor in a Duijin-style armor of the Qing Dynasty (Source: Wikipedia. Image by Castiglione.)



*Figure 19.* A Dajin-style of festival robe (Source: Wikipedia. Image by unknown.)

The last relatively obvious symbol of ancient China is the architecture in the anime. In the kingdoms, the design of dwellings and palaces refers to traditional Chinese architecture. The buildings in the anime, like *The Story of Saiunkoku*, are designed with the double hips on the roof with smooth lines and eaves between the hips.

**The Twelve Kingdoms and the Rite of Zhou.** In 2002, the TV station NHK published a series of anime called *The Twelve Kingdoms*, which was adapted from the novel with the same name written by Fuyumi Ono. The novel is still serializing, and eight volumes in total have been published since 1991. The anime covers the first four volumes of the plot. The story starts with a high school student, Yuuko, being transported to another world consisting of twelve kingdoms. Youko is a girl with red hair, who in the real world is always cares about others' judgment. One day, she is transported by Keiki to the world of twelve kingdoms, including Kei, En, Kou, Hou, Sai, Tai, Kyou, Ren, Ryuu, Han, and Sou. However, Keiki disappears once she arrives. It turns out that he is kidnapped by the sister of the former king of Kingdom Kei. After many obstacles, Youko knows that she has been chosen to become the king of the Kingdom Kei, and Keiki is a Kirin, a creature who represents the God to choose and assist the kings to manage the kingdoms. With the assistance of the King of Kingdom En, Youko finally saves Keiki and becomes the new king of Kingdom Kei. During the whole journey, Youko eventually becomes a confident girl and an admirable king.

In the story, Ono created a world with a complete administrative structure and various compelling settings. The twelve kingdoms were created by the God. In the middle of the world, there is a kingdom called Yellow Sea and a group of mountains surrounds it. That kingdom is managed by one of the gods. Kirin are also born and grow up there. The God also created the other twelve kingdoms. Kirin's duty is to look for the appropriate person to become a king. Once

someone becomes king, he/she has to be in charge of the kingdom and develop it. If the king can do it, he/she will become a god and live forever, or the Kirin will die and the king loses his/her chance to go heaven. The administrative structure used in the story refers to the ancient China's. In the world of twelve kingdoms, every kingdom has a prime minister, which is the Kirin. Under the Kirin, there are three ministers: grand preceptor, grand tutor, and grand protector. The duty of the three ministers is to assist Kirin and tutor the king. This setting refers to the structure used in the Zhou Dynasty of the Ancient China, which was developed later in the Qin and Han dynasty of Imperial China.

*The Twelve Kingdoms* also refers to *The Rites of Zhou*, setting six offices to manage various works. According to *Records of the Grand Historian* (94 BC), *The Rites of Zhou* is a record of the ideal administrative organizations created by the Master Zhou. The book has six chapters, named after the six offices. The Office of the Heaven controls the general administrative affairs, and the Office of the Earth manages taxation and economy. The Office of Spring is in charge of education and also social and religious affairs. The Office of Summer is in charge of the army. The Office of Autumn mainly manages the justice and law, and the Office of Winter manages population and agriculture. In the anime, every kingdom has the same structure in the organizations. Apart from the six offices, there is one general official who is in charge of the offices, and that official is also the one who has the greatest power in the kingdom except the king.

Apart from the historical references mentioned above, some mythical creatures are also related to Chinese mythology and folktales. For instance, Kirin, the creature that represents the God and is in charge of assisting the king, is from traditional Chinese culture. Kirin, Qilin in Chinese, stands for fortune and merriness. Qi and Lin are respectively male and female. Its head

looks like a dragon but the body is similar to a deer. It has an ox tail and it can spew fire from its mouth. Based on the classical *Book of Rites* in the Warring State period, Qilin, phoenix, turtle, and dragon are four spiritual creatures. Additionally, in the anime, there are other creatures referring to the Chinese mythology. Totetsu (Taotie in Chinese) is a vicious and violent creature. Mafu is a monster with a human face and tiger body. Kyoki (Qiongqi in Chinese) looks like a tiger with wings on the back. Those creatures all can be found in the book *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, a Chinese classic book containing mythic geography and myths.

### **The Four Great Classical Novels and Anime**

Literature of Imperial China has some influences on the countries in East Asia. One of the important examples is the four great classical novels, which are commonly considered to be the best fiction created during Imperial China. The four novels are respectively *Water Margin*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Journey to the West*, and *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Among them, the first two were written in the fourteenth century. *Journey to the West* was written in the sixteenth century. And *Dream of the Red Chamber* was written in eighteenth century during the Qing Dynasty. These novels are famous in China and have been adapted to operas, films, TV shows, animations, and other popular media. The stories have influenced not only Chinese people but also foreigners, especially people of East Asian. In this section, I will explore the influence of *Journey to the West* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* on anime.

#### ***Journey to the West* and Anime**

*Journey to the West* is a novel written by Cheng'en Wu in the sixteenth century during the Ming Dynasty. It tells a story that Xuanzang, the Tang Dynasty Buddhist monk, travelled to the Western regions (Central Asia and India) with his three apprentices, Sun Wukong or the monkey king (see Figure 20), Zhu Bajie or the pig god, and Sha Wujing, a former god of war.

After fighting with various demons and experiencing 81 trials and tough difficulties, they eventually obtained the precious Buddhist texts and each one was conferred as a god. The story referred to the outline of Xuanzang's journal of *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions*. But the author added some myths, folktales, and his own imagination, which built many famous and interesting characters like Sun Wukong, Princess Iron Fan, and Bull Demon King. Some Chinese films and animations were adapted from the plots and the novel. For example, the Brother Wan's animated film, *Princess Iron Fan* (1941), was liberally adapted from some chapters in the novel. The animation focuses on the duel between Monkey King and Princess Iron Fan, who can use her fan to blow out the fire on a mountain.



Figure 20. The monkey king in *Journey to the West* (Source: Illustrations for the Original Gist of *Journey to the West*. Image by unknown.)

The story of Xuanzang and Monkey King is not only well known in China but also in Japan. Some anime refers to the plots and characters in the novel, including *Dragon Ball* and *Saiyuki*, which I will discuss below.

***Dragon Ball and the monkey king.*** *Dragon Ball* was originally a series of manga created and illustrated by Akira Toriyama. It was first serialized in *Weekly Shonen Jump*, a famous manga magazine in Japan, from 1984 to 1995. Then the 519 individual chapters were published into 42 volumes of graphic novels. Based on Toriyama's manga, Toei Animation produced two series of TV animation, *Dragon Ball* (1986-1989, 153 episodes) and *Dragon Ball Z* (1989-1996, 291 episodes). *Dragon Ball* is based on the first 194 chapters of the graphic novel while *Dragon Ball Z* is based on the final 325 chapters. From 1996 until now, Toei Animation has produced three more series of animation, *Dragon Ball GT* (1996-1997, 64 episodes), *Dragon Ball Kai* (2009-2010, 98 episodes and 2014-2015, 61 episodes), and *Dragon Ball Super* (2015-present). *Dragon Ball GT* is a series of animation created by Toei Animation, which is called by Toriyama a grand side story of the original *Dragon Ball*. *Dragon Ball Kai* is a revised version of *Dragon Ball Z*. It fixed some image damages of the original *Dragon Ball Z*. It also re-edited some plots, which makes the content more closely follow the manga series. *Dragon Ball Super* is a brand-new series of anime, whose character designer and screenwriter are Toriyama.

In the analysis, I will only focus on the first series of the anime, *Dragon Ball* (1986-1989). This series basically tells a story about the growth of Son Goku (Sun Wukong in Chinese, see Figure 21), a naïve but strong boy who becomes the best martial artist. The whole story can be roughly divided into six stages. What refers to the Chinese cultures is mainly in the first two stages, that is, the first 30 episodes of the animation.



Figure 21. Son Goku on a *Weekly Shonen Jump* cover (Source: Wikipedia. Image by Toriyama.)

The first connection between *Journey to the West* and *Dragon Ball* is the setting of some characters. As mentioned before, in *Journey to the West*, one of the protagonists is Sun Wukong (Son Goku in Japanese), a monkey king in the mountains. Five hundred years ago, he was a stone monkey who took in the power from the sun and moon and finally turned alive. To live forever, he learned martial arts and the magic of transforming into seventy-two objects from a master. He also had a cloud called Jin Dou Yun (Kinto Un in Japanese) that can help him go far away and a weapon he can extend as his will, which was taken from a dragon king in the sea. In Toriyama's animation, Son Goku, same as the monkey king in the novel, also lives in the mountains. Though he looks like a human, he has a monkey tail. He also has a weapon that can extend at his will. Goku can transform as well, though not like the monkey king who can



transform into so many things. At the beginning, Goku meets Bulma, a young girl who is looking for dragon balls. She tells Goku that anyone who collects the seven dragon balls can summon the dragon (Shenlong in Chinese) and achieve a wish. To collect the dragon balls and revive his grandfather, Goku joins Bulma with his own dragon ball that is left from his grandfather. In the third episode, Goku meets Kame-Sennin (or Turtle Hermit), who is a martial artist and later teaches Goku martial arts. Because Goku saves a turtle from a monster, the turtle asks Kame-Sennin to give Goku a gift, which is the cloud that can help him fly far away.

On their way, Goku and Bulma meet Oolong, a pig-like human who wants to steal their dragon balls but later gives up the thought. Oolong shares some characteristics with the character of Pig God in *Journey to the West*. For example, they both look like a pig and they are all very lustful when they see beautiful women. At first, Oolong does not want to go with Goku and Bulma to find dragon balls, but once he hears Bulma saying that she might sleep only in underwear, he changes his mind immediately. Moreover, like the Pig God, Oolong can transform into different objects. That is also the reason why Bulma wants to bring him on their way.

To find the sixth dragon ball, Bulma decides to go to the Mountain Frypan. Mountain Frypan is used to be Chilly Mountain. Ten years ago a fire spirit came down and set a fire on the mountain. It is also where they meet Gyomao. Gyomao (Niu Mo Wang in Chinese) is a big guy who has two ox horns. His castle is on the Mountain Frypan and he is surrounded by a huge fire. To blow out the fire, Gyomao proposes to borrow the basho fan (Ba Jiao Shan in Chinese) from Kame-Sennin. Unfortunately, there is no aasho fan, so Kame-Sennin blows out the fire using his Turtle Devastation Wave. In the Chinese novel, Gyomao was a monster of bull. He married Princess Iron Fan who had a basho fan, which was the only thing that can blow out the fire on the Mountain Fire. During the trip to the west, the monk and apprentices wanted to go through



the Mountain Fire. But Princess Iron Fan refused to use the fan to blow out the fire for them because she wanted to revenge the monkey king. Because of the monkey king, her son left her and became an apprentice of a god. According to the similarity, Toriyama may have been inspired by the novel when he created the plots of *Dragon Ball*.

In episode 79, while Goku is on a martial training, he encounters a litter girl, Chao, who is almost eaten by a tiger monster. Chao is from a village occupied by two bad guys, Kinkaku (literally meaning golden horn) and Ginkaku (literally meaning silver horn). Kinkaku and Ginkaku have a special gourd. When they call someone's name and the person does not respond immediately, he/she will be sucked into the gourd. Goku promises Chao to save her village. But Goku is accidentally sucked into the gourd later. Just as Ginkaku thinks Goku has died in the gourd, he opens the gourd and Goku comes out. So Goku fights with them and snatches the gourd. Finally Goku uses the gourd to suck Kinkaku and Ginkaku into the gourd and saves the village. In *Journey to the West*, there is a chapter telling a similar story. In the novel, there are also two monsters called Kinkaku (Jin Jiao in Chinese) and Ginkaku (Yin Jiao in Chinese). They also had a gourd that can suck people into it. But the plot is when they call someone and the person responds, he/she will be sucked into it. The connection shows that Toriyama does refer to the Chinese novel when he created the story.

Apart from the references to *Journey to the West*, *Dragon Ball* has some other designs related to Chinese culture. For instance, Goku's tutor, Kame-Sennin, is actually referred to the image of Chinese martial artists. Kame-Sennin is also called Muten-Roshi (literally meaning Tutor Muten). Roshi, or Laoshi in Chinese, is what people usually call teacher or someone they respect. In episode 26, Goku attends a martial competition. In that competition, Muten-Roshi disguises as Jackie Chun (see Figure 22) by wearing a wig and a traditional Chinese costume,

which is usually worn by martial artists in China. Jackie Chun is a parody of Jackie Chan, a famous Chinese martial artist and movie star.



*Figure 22. Jackie Chun in Dragon Ball (Source: Screenshot, ep. 26.)*

Additionally, Shenron (Shenlong in Chinese), literally meaning dragon god, is also a Chinese cultural symbol. In the anime, when someone collects seven dragon balls, he/she can summon the dragon and he will achieve a wish for him/her. In Imperial China, dragon represented imperial power. Only the emperor can wear or bring dragon-related patterns and objects. According to *Records of the Grand Historian* (94 BC), the day when the first emperor of the Han Dynasty, Liu Bang, was born, his father saw a dragon showing in the sky. That example shows that the ancient people considered the dragon as the symbol of god's son who was granted power. In the myths and folktales, the form of dragon is a mix of nine animals (Shizhen Li, 1596): rabbit eyes, deer horn, bull mouth, camel head, clam belly, tiger palms, eagle paws, fish

scale, and snake body (see Figure 23). Apart from representing power, the dragon in Chinese also may represent good luck. In the anime, the dragon can achieve a wish for people. This connects the traditional representation of the dragon and the design of Shenron in the anime.



Figure 23. Two Chinese dragons on the wall (Source: Wikipedia. Image by Splitbrain.)

***Saiyuki and Journey to the West.*** *Saiyuki* (1997-2002) is a manga series created by Kazuya Minekura, which was later adapted to a 50-episode anime, originally ran from 2000 to 2001. Apart from *Saiyuki*, Minekura later created two manga series, using the same protagonists as *Saiyuki* but with new stories. They were later adapted to anime as well. In this analysis, I will only focus on the first series of the anime.

The story of *Saiyuki* starts from Chang'an, the capital city of the Tang Dynasty of Imperial China. It is a period when humans and demons live together in harmony. However, the gods find that there is someone who wants to resurrect Gyomao, a vicious demon who refused to

live with humans peacefully and was sealed. Sanzo, a monk whose destiny is to be a life saver, is appointed to stop the catastrophe. To keep the balance of the world, he must go west with his apprentices, Goku, Hakkai and Gojyo, and find out the mastermind behind the whole thing.

Even though the whole story is not related to *Journey to the West*, we can still find some connections between the novel and the anime. First of all, the four protagonists come directly from the Chinese novel. The design of the characters also refers to the novel: Goku is the monkey king with the weapon that can extend; Hakkai and Gojyo used to be gods, but they did something wrong so they were exiled. Additionally, in the anime, Goku wears a golden ring on his head, which is used to control his power in case he hurts someone else. What is referred to is the magic ring used by Xuanzang in the novel to control the monkey king. The monkey king is forced to wear it. Once he does not follow Xuanzang's order, Xuanzang will say some magic words and the ring will contract and hurt the head. Gyomao also appears in the anime. As discussed before, in the novel he is a monster who fights with Goku. However, in the anime, he is only an outcome of revenge and a symbol of violence, who is made by combining black magic and science.

### ***Romance of the Three Kingdoms and Anime***

The period of Three Kingdoms is one of the most interesting times in Imperial China. Many TV shows, films, and animations in China are created based on the history books and novels about this period. They even have some influence on Japanese. Eiji Yoshikawa, a Japanese historical novelist, wrote a novel based on the period. Some manga artists, like Mitsuteru Yokoyama, also created manga series according to the history. In this section, I will explore two series of anime that refer to the novel and history: *Koihime Muso* (2008) and *Kotetsu Sangokushi* (2007).

Historians have argued about when the period started. According to Chinese historian Lu (2010), the period started from the year 189, when the last emperor of the Han Dynasty, Emperor Ling, died. During the final years of the Han Dynasty, the whole empire fell into chaos because many local commanders occupied different areas with the intention to be the emperor.

Experiencing years of wars, Liu, Cao, and Sun, the three kings, separately controlled three main areas of the empire and claimed themselves to be the only legal emperor. Cao Pi founded the first kingdom, Wei, in the year 220. In 221, Liu Bei claimed himself as the descendent and emperor of the aristocracy of the Han Dynasty and founded the Kingdom Shu. But later the kingdom was destroyed in the year 263 by Sima Zhao, a commander of Kingdom Wei who later seized the power of Wei. In the year 229, the last kingdom, Wu, was founded by Sun Quan. But in 280, the son of Sima Zhao ruined Wu and created Jin, which is the later dynasty.

Even though there were endless wars, many talents of politicians, strategists, and writers came out during the period. That makes the period prosperous in the development of culture. The period also becomes one of the favorite objects of study in the subject of culture and literature. Chen Shou, who was a historian of Kingdom Shu, later became a historian of the Jin Dynasty and wrote the official history book of the period, *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (2006) that was originally published in the third century. Luo Guanzhong, a writer from the Ming Dynasty, wrote a novel, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (1986), and first published in the fourteenth century. The novel is based on the history and folktales that Luo collected. The content of *Records of the Three Kingdoms* is in a structure of writing one chapter for each person about his/her life, while *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* covers events chronologically. Moreover, the novel pays attention to the characters' personalities, which builds many famous character images, including Zhuge Liang, Cao Cao, Zhou Yu, etc. *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is one

of the Four Great Classical Novels. Based on the novel, various contents in different media were made, including TV shows, films, graphic novels, animations, and games.

The series of anime *Koihime Muso* (2008) that I discuss is a product adapted from a game series. *Koihime Muso* is a computer game produced by the Japanese company, NEXTON, in 2007. In 2008, the animation studio Doga Kobo adapted it to three seasons of TV anime and original video animation. The game and anime are based on several classic plots of the novel, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. For instance, in the first season, the story begins with the encounter of Kan'u (Guan Yu in Chinese) and Chou Hi (Zhang Fei in Chinese). Kan'u and Chou Hi were two famous warriors of the Kingdom Shu. They met Ryuubi (Liu Bei in Chinese), who was a later emperor of Shu. With the same goal of ending the wars and bringing people a peaceful life, they made an oath of unifying the empire and became siblings in a peach garden. This is the famous story of *Oath of the Peach Garden* in the novel. The animation keeps the names and the main characteristics of the characters. Kan'u still uses a huge sword as a weapon. But what is different from the novel is that all the warriors and politicians become beautiful girls in the animation. Kan'u is not a strong man with a long beard anymore. He becomes a slender girl with pink hair.

*Kotetsu Sangokushi* (2007) also loosely adapts some stories from the history and the novel. It is a 26-episode anime produced by the studio Picture Magic, originally aired by Tokyo TV. The anime refers to the basic chronological events of the period of Three Kingdoms, including the Battle of Red Cliff, the death of Shou Yu (Zhou Yu in Chinese) and Ryuubi. The Battle of Red Cliff was a significant battle in the period. It is best known for the cooperation of the two kingdoms, Wu and Shu, and won the Kingdom Wei with a smaller number of soldiers than Wei. Apart from the reference to the period of Three Kingdoms, *Kotetsu Sangokushi* also

uses Gyokuji (Yu Xi in Chinese) as an important prop. Gyokuji is a seal that represents the power of the emperor in Imperial China. When a paperwork was done, it had to be affixed by the seal to show its authenticity. In the anime, Gyokuji represents a strong magic power that can be used by warriors.

### **Symbols of China in Japanese People's Eyes**

Except for the historical and literary references mentioned above, some anime adopts several symbolic settings from China. In the anime, the creators may design some Chinese or Chinese-related characters. To make them Chinese-like, the creators usually design some features related to China. Once the audiences see the features, they connect them with China or Chinese. The features I will explore are Chinese costume, food, and Kongfu.

#### **Costume**

In many anime, when the creators want the audience to know a character is Chinese, the first feature they design for the character is the costume. In many anime, the male Chinese usually wear the traditional gown that comes from the robe style in the Qing Dynasty. The most important characteristics of the costume is the buttons. As discussed before, there are two styles of robes in the Qing Dynasty: Dajin and Duijin. The most obvious difference between the robes is the direction of the buttons. Dajin's buttons usually are on the left side under the collar, while Duijin's are in the middle. The buttons are called pankou, which is a classical style of buttons on traditional costume. It consists of two parts: one is a small bead-like part and the other is a small ring, which is used to place and attach with the bead-like part. For example, in the anime *Black Butler* (2008-2009), the Chinese guy Lau wears a gray robe with Pankou on the left side under the collar (see Figure 24). In *Black Butler*, Lau is Chinese and travels to Japan to sell opium.





Figure 24. Lau (the right) in *Black Butler* (Source: Screenshot, ep. 10.)

The most popular female costume in anime is Qipao (see Figure 25). Qi represents the ethnicity of Manchu people. Pao means robe. Qipao is a one-piece dress. It is a combination of the Dajin or Duijin style of the Qing Dynasty and the robe of the Han Dynasty. The creation and popularity of Qipao was in the early years of the Republic of China (1912-1949) in Shanghai. Qipao is famous for showing the figure of the female body. It usually is designed for one specific woman so it shows the advantages of her body and covers the weakness. In *Black Butler*, apart from Lau, the other Chinese character is Ran-mao (see Figure 24, the girl on the left). She is Lau's sister, though not by blood. She is Chinese as well and her costume is usually a short purple Qipao. In *Gintama* (2006-present), the protagonist Kagura is a girl from an alien star. She looks short but she is very good at martial arts. She sometimes wears a long pink Qipao without sleeves (see Figure 26). When she first meets with another protagonist, Gintoki, he calls her the "Chinese girl." This shows how Japanese consider Qipao as a classical female garment in China.





Figure 25. Two women wear Qipao (Source: Wikipedia. Image by unknown.)



Figure 26. Kagura in a short-sleeve qipao (Source: Screenshot, ep. 111.)

Another feature is the style of shoes. One of the traditional types of Chinese shoes are cloth shoes (see Figure 27). They are made of woven cloth with many layers of cotton cloth as the sole, usually called Qian Ceng Di in Chinese, literally meaning a thousand layers. The color is mostly dark, like black and brown. Because of their air permeability, the cloth shoes are popular in the group of martial artists. In *Gintama*, when Kagura is in a dual with enemies, she always wears a pink shirt with the Dajin buttons and pants, and her shoes are black cloth shoes (see Figure 28). Lau in *Black Butler* also wears a pair of black cloth shoes as well, and he is also good at Kongfu. This illustrates how Japanese consider the shirt with Duijin buttons and cloth shoes as classical Chinese costume.



Figure 27. A pair of black cloth shoes (Source: Wikipedia. Image by unknown.)



Figure 28. Kagura (the girl) is dueling with Sadaharu (Source: Screenshot, ep. 10).

Sometimes the costume may be designed with some Chinese religious elements, for example, the Taoist pattern of the yin-yang symbol. Yin represents shadow, female, and cold; while yang represents light, male, and warm. Taoism believes that in the world, everything consists of two faces, yin and yang. When the dark reaches the peak, the light comes out, and vice versa. In the anime of *Cardcaptor Sakura* (1998-2000), the protagonist Li Shyoran is a boy from Hong Kong. Like Sakura, the female protagonist, he has magic power and can collect magic cards. Every time he is in a formal occasion where he needs to use magic, he wears his green costume: a long robe with a round collar, Duijin buttons, loose sleeves, and belt around the waist (see Figure 29). He also wears a pair of green cloth shoes. Moreover, there is a yin-yang pattern at the bottom of his robe. His costume tells the audience that he is Chinese. Besides, the

magic prop that he uses to collect cards is a sword, which is a symbolic weapon that ancient Chinese used.



*Figure 29. Shyoran in the green costume (Source: Screenshot, ep. 8.)*

## **Food**

Food culture is significant in China. Because of the large territory, there are many categories of Chinese cuisine in various area. One famous method is categorizing Chinese food into eight regional cuisines, including Lu, Chuan, Yue, Hui, Min, Su, Xiang, and Zhe. The names come from the abbreviations of the eight provinces where the cuisines originated. Every regional cuisine has its famous dishes and styles. For example, Lu cuisine dishes, the important style in northern China, are known for their salty, fresh, and tender features. Famous dishes include fish with sugar and vinegar, Sixi meatballs (four meatballs made by ground pork and eggs), etc. Chuan cuisine dishes are usually very spicy, while Yue cuisine has a sweet flavor.



Many Chinese dishes are tasty and easy to make. Because of that, some dishes are even famous in other countries in East Asia. Their influence shows in a lot of anime. For instance, Mapo Tofu is a popular dish in many anime. It is a Chuan cuisine dish and made of red pepper, tofu, and ground pork or beef. The feature of Mapo Tofu is spicy and numbing. It shows in many series of anime, like *Angel Beats* (2010), *Food Wars!* (2015), and *Fate/Stay Night* (2014). In the episodes 307 and 308 of *Detective Conan* (1996-present), an anime about a high-school detective solving crime cases, the protagonist Conan and his friends have a meal on the Chinese street. In the plot, they order a dish of roast Peking duck, a famous dish in Beijing. Fire is used to roast the duck. With the special dip of sweet sauce, the duck meat tastes soft and tender. Other Chinese dishes shown in anime include meat slices with green pepper in *Love, Chunibyo & Other Delusions* (2011), fried rice in *Chuka Ichiban!* (1997) and *Food Wars!* (2015), etc. In *Dragon Ball* (1986-1989), Toriyama even named a character Chaozu or Dumpling (Jiaozi in Chinese).

What is interesting is the the anime *Chuka Ichiban!* (1997). Though it is a Japanese anime, the story occurs in China and all the characters are Chinese. It tells the story of a boy called Liu Maoxing who becomes the best chef. Liu's father was a reputed chef and former Greatest Chef but died young. To continue his father's career, Liu learns many Chinese dishes and eventually wins the title of Greatest Chef in the National Chef Competition. In this anime, almost all the dishes are from traditional Chinese cuisine, like steamed buns, spring rolls, fried noodles, and dumplings.

### **Chinese Kongfu**

In many anime, Kongfu is a symbol of Chinese people. No matter what background the anime is set in, the Chinese characters in it must be great martial artists or at least know Kongfu. Kongfu (Gongfu or Wushu in Chinese) has a long history that can be traced as early as the period

of Spring and Autumn (Wang, 2003). Based on regional culture, Kongfu can be divided into seven categories: Shaolin, Wudang, Emei, Taiji, Xingyi, Bagua (Eight Diagram), and Southern. They are all Quanfa, which means the martial art of the fist. It is similar to boxing in the Western countries, but Kongfu also pays attention to the style and forms. In traditional Kongfu, the artists focus on not only the movement but also the method of breathing, which also is called Qigong in Chinese (Qi means air and Gong means skill). In anime, a lot of Chinese characters or Chinese-related characters are martial artists. For example, in the anime of *Cardcaptor Sakura* (1998-2000), the characters Li Shyoran and Li Meirin, who are from Hong Kong, are very good at Kongfu. They often use it while capturing magic cards. Lau and Ran-mao in *Black Butler* also are martial artists.

Other famous characters are Rock Lee, Tenten and Neji in *Naruto* (2002-2007). *Naruto* tells a story about ninjas' battles. The protagonist, Naruto, is a boy who has a nine-tail fox sealed in his body. To become the greatest ninja, Naruto and his friends practice hard. Lee, Tenten and Neji are Naruto's friends and they are in the same group. Though they are not Chinese, they do use movements of Kongfu in dueling, especially Rock Lee (see Figure 30). In *Naruto*, almost every ninja can fight using Ninjatsu, a magic-like method to attack people. However, Lee can only fight physically by Kongfu. When he accidentally drinks alcohol, he can fight with Drunk Fist, a popular Chinese Kongfu in films. Moreover, the character's name and figure refer to the famous martial artist, Bruce Lee, with a tidy fringe of black hair and bushy eyebrows (see Figure 31).



*Figure 30. Rock Lee is using Drunk Fist (Source: Screenshot, ep. 124.)*



*Figure 31. A statue of Bruce Lee (Source: Wikipedia. Image by Lau.)*

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Based on the exploration, this section will first answer the research questions I presented before and then discuss other findings discovered from the analysis.

The first research question is what the symbols and elements of Chinese culture are used for in anime. First, the most common symbol that directly connects a character to Chinese culture is the costume. As discussed before, many Chinese characters in anime wear traditional costume. For example, some costumes are designed with traditional elements, like Duijin, the collarless style of coats and robes with buttons in the middle, and Qipao, the one-piece dress with the button style of Duijin or Dajin. Based on the background of the characters, the costume may have additional religious patterns, for example, the Yin-Yang pattern. Chinese Kongfu also is a popular feature of Chinese characters in a story. Additionally, Chinese food, like Mapo Tofu, is a favored object in anime. Apart from symbolic elements, some animators also refer to historical materials of China, especially Imperial China, to create a China-like world. The most obvious examples are the anime I analyzed, *The Story of Saiunkoku*, *Mysterious Play*, and *The Twelve Kingdoms*.

The second research question is about the possible sources to which the symbols and elements refer. There are two possible sources: historical materials and Chinese literature. The historical materials may be important events in Imperial China. For example, in *Kotetsu Sangokushi*, the Battle of Red Cliff is a very famous war in the history of China. Chinese literature may include not only classical novels but also myths and folktales. Popular novels



include *Journey to the West* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. As for myths and folktales, *Classic of Mountains and Seas* is a possible reference.

According to Fitzsimmons (2013), the three types of intertextuality are obligatory, optional, and accidental. The variations between the three types are the intention of the writer and the significance of the reference. Regarding the third research question, the intertextual approaches used in anime are mainly obligatory and accidental. The obligatory intertextuality requires a relatively detailed knowledge about the references a creator wants to use. The references used in *The Story of Saiunkoku* and *The Twelve Kingdoms* can be categorized as this type. The administrative system of Four Departments and Six Ministries used in *The Story of Saiunkoku* requires a relatively detailed knowledge of the political history of Imperial China, especially the development of the administrative systems. As for *The Twelve Kingdoms*, the animator must know the social system mentioned in *Rite of Zhou* in order to imitate and even adjust it to fit with the background of the anime. *Journey to the West* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* are obviously used as obligatory references. The first evidence is that the anime directly uses the names of the protagonists in the novels. Second, the animators intentionally kept the typical characteristics of some of the protagonists, for example, Son Goku in *Dragon Ball* and *Saiyuki*.

Accidental intertextuality, based on Fitzsimmons (2013) and Wohrle (2012), means the creators may not make an intertextual reference on purpose. In other words, the process of intertextuality can be completely unconscious. Accidental intertextuality is usually based on the creators' previous knowledge and social experience. The traditional Chinese costume and Chinese Kongfu adopted in anime may belong to this category. Because of the influence of Chinese Kongfu movies, some Japanese may consider Kongfu as a symbol of the Chinese

people. As mentioned before, the traditional costume Tangzhuang is the favorite costume of martial artists in China. That may be why the animators often adopt both features designed for Chinese characters. In *Dragon Ball*, Muten-Roshi pretends to be Jackie Chun and competes with Goku. Jackie Chun is a parody of Jackie Chan, the famous Chinese martial artist and movie star. According to a 2003 interview, Toriyama admitted that he is a fan of Jackie Chan and the story was inspired by Chan's movie, *Drunken Master* (1978).

Based on the three types of intertextuality, I further divide the references and pre-texts into two categories: explicit and implicit references. The explicit reference is defined as the relative element used when a Chinese character occurs in an anime. It can be but not necessarily is accidental intertextuality. The traditional costume, Chinese food, and Kongfu can be categorized as explicit references. The implicit reference is references that are related to some literature and cultural pre-texts. The most important difference between explicit and implicit references is whether the reference influences the settings and plots of the story. For example, the administrative system and imperial examination in *The Story of Saiunkoku* are implicit references because without the systems, the world of Saiunkoku cannot stand up. The social system in *The Twelve Kingdoms* is also considered an implicit reference because the system in the world of Twelve Kingdoms requires that Youko is transported to the world and becomes the king, which is how the story starts. In other words, the implicit reference significantly promotes the plots of the anime.

What needs to be clarified is that obligatory intertextuality often but not always leads to the use of implicit references. The administrative and social systems mentioned above are implicit references as well as examples of obligatory intertextuality. However, even though the use of mythical creatures is an instance of obligatory intertextuality, it is not necessarily an

implicit reference because it does not significantly promote the plot. The creatures can be replaced by some Japanese mythical creatures without changing the development of the story. That is to say, the implicit reference influences the explicit reference, but the explicit reference may not influence the implicit reference.

In addition to the discussion of the pre-text addressed above, I find another interesting feature when Chinese references are used in anime: the pronunciation of Chinese-related objects is usually Onyomi. In history, Japan adopted some Chinese characters to develop its own language. Even today, the Japanese still use some Chinese characters to communicate. In modern Japanese, Chinese characters usually have two pronunciations. One is called Onyomi (音読み), which is the Chinese-style reading for kanji, in other words, the Chinese characters. The other is called Kunyomi (訓読み), which means the Japanese-style reading for kanji. The Chinese-style reading comes from the pronunciation of Middle Chinese (formerly known as Ancient Chinese) used in the Tang Dynasty. Presently, in daily communication, people use both ways to read kanji. In anime, when it comes to some specific Chinese objects, like Chinese names and Chinese food, people usually use the Chinese-style reading. *The Story of Saiunkoku* adopts the Chinese-style reading of the names of the administrative system and the titles of the officials. Mapo Tofu is also the Onyomi pronunciation of the Chinese dish Mapo Doufu. The pronunciation helps connect the pre-text and the text.

The phenomenon that the Japanese adopt foreign references in their own art work shows their curiosity about foreign cultures. The references not only to Chinese culture but also Western culture are used in anime. For example, angels and vampires are popular figures used in anime. In *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1996), the animators named the seventeen angels (Shito in Japanese) after the angels in the Bible. The vampire as protagonist also appears in many anime

like *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust* (1999) and *Vampire Knight* (2008). The curiosity about foreign culture promotes many interesting and quality anime works that to some extent encourages cross-cultural communication.

However, the interesting fact is no matter how many foreign references are applied in anime, it is hard to disguise the “Japaneseness” of anime (Price, 2001, p. 156). Anime is grounded in all aspects of Japanese society: religions, folktales, history, legends, etc. One of the most popular Japanese cultural references that is often adopted in anime is Shinto. It can be seen in many directors’ works, like Miyazaki and Takahata. According to Price (2001), another characteristic of Japanese anime is that “anime often disguises contemporary struggles and theme in its entertaining medium” (p. 157). For example, many of Miyazaki’s works explore environmental issues and the nostalgia of traditional culture, including *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and *Spirited Away* (2001). Mamoru in *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) discusses existentialism and questions what makes a human being a human being, consciousness or body. *Galaxy Express 999* (1978-1981) questions how to retain humanity in a mechanical, futuristic world. Moreover, Price (2001) mentions a specific cultural meaning in Japanese context that whenever a cherry blossom tree appears in anime, it tells the audience two things: first, it is spring; second, someone is going to die. These things come true in *The Story of Saiunkoku*. The first meeting of Ryuki and Shurei is under a cherry blossom tree. According to the story, it is spring, and Shurei eventually dies young after she achieves her goal to be a politician.

Minguez-Lopez (2014) discusses another valuable feature of anime in his paper:

*In Japanese animation, it is not very common to see such an accurate recreation of a classic work, since what is most valued (in this kind of animation)*

*is the use of imagination to create fantastic new worlds, even if they are not coherent.* (p. 37)

*The Story of Saiunkoku*, *The Twelve Kingdoms*, *Saiyuki* and *Kotetsu Sangokushi* all create a world that is not restricted in the pre-texts they refer to. For example, *The Story of Saiunkoku* and *The Twelve Kingdoms* explore the influence of female politicians and the growth of the protagonists, while *Saiyuki* and *Kotetsu Sangokushi* use the topic of heroes saving the world. The themes have come from the formed background of the original references, but the references are used as stepping stones to move the stories along.

Japanese anime does contain many traceable references to Chinese culture and other foreign cultures, but the references in anime are used to support the story as a whole. Even the use of foreign culture can be considered a brand of Japanese animation.

## CHAPTER 6

### LIMITATIONS

From the perspective of methodology, in this research only the method of textual analysis was used. The limitation of using a single method is that I only discovered the phenomenon of intertextuality between Chinese references and Japanese animation. In future research, I will adopt more methods, like interview and ethnography, to explore the social and cultural reasons for this phenomenon.

In addition, even though I discussed several anime series in this paper, I did not cover all anime. Because of time restrictions, I only explored the anime based on my own experience, which are the works that I have seen. This means that I did not examine all anime that refers to Chinese culture. In addition, because of the limitation of my knowledge, I did not analyze every single detail in the anime that may have a connection to Chinese culture, which brings a new direction for future research as well.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

The relationship between anime and the pre-texts of Chinese cultural references is evident, especially in the case of historical materials, classical literature, and traditional culture. These pre-texts have made the themes of anime rich and colorful. No matter the obligatory and accidental intertextuality or explicit and implicit references, the result of the textual analysis shows the curiosity of the Japanese when it comes to foreign cultures.

Moreover, the practice of adopting foreign culture in one's own cultural products is valuable. It promotes cross-cultural communication between Japan and China. The anime includes various cultural references that may inspire Japanese people to explore the world. It is also interesting that Chinese audiences can learn how Japanese people understand Chinese culture. It is an approach to not only improve cross-cultural communication but also share international and national cultures in the same process.

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