

## Original Research Article

**The application and transmission of regional intangible cultural heritage in contemporary animation IP: A case study of the Jingyan IP character***Xinyi Ning**Qingdao University of Science and Technology, College of Communication, Qingdao, Shandong, MA 266061, China*

**Abstract:** Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is a cultural treasure of the Chinese nation, carrying unique artistic value and spiritual connotation. Under the background of globalisation, the inheritance and innovation of intangible heritage has become an important issue for cultural development. Animation, as a cultural medium with both artistry and communication power, provides a new path for the modern expression of non-heritage. Incorporating non-heritage into animation IP design can not only activate the vitality of traditional culture, but also inject unique cultural genes into animation and enhance its artistic value and commercial potential. This study takes Jingyan IP image design as a practical case, focuses on the regional cultural characteristics of Beijing and Zhejiang, and explores the innovative transformation paths of non-legacy elements such as Beijing Opera and paper kites, aiming to provide a set of cultural inheritance and innovation methodology for animation IP design, and to create an animation style that belongs to China.

**Keywords:** Regional culture; Modern animation; Innovative communication; Intangible cultural heritage preservation

**1. Introduction**

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) carries the unique genes of regional culture, yet faces challenges in heritage preservation amidst the wave of globalization. Exploring how traditional skills can be integrated into modern aesthetic contexts has become a key proposition for cultural innovation. With its visual expressive power and advantages in cross-media communication, animated Intellectual Property (IP) design offers a new avenue for revitalizing intangible cultural heritage. While some works have attempted to incorporate elements of ICH, they often exhibit issues such as superficial symbolism and lack of in-depth exploration of regional cultural traits. This study takes “Beijing-Swallow IP” as a practical vessel, focusing on two major elements of ICH: Beijing Opera and Zhejiang Kite, extracting the rhythmic patterns of Beijing Opera costumes and the aesthetic structures of kites to construct a visual symbol system that combines traditional connotations with modern aesthetics. By incorporating metaphors of the blending of North and South cultures into the narrative, it forms the story core of “cultural roots exploration.” Utilizing various media such as shorts derivative products, it enables the transition ICH elements from static displays to storytelling, providing reusable innovative paradigm for the inheritance of regional culture the Chinese animation.

**2. The challenges and opportunities faced by intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in animated IP design****2.1. The core challenges of intangible cultural heritage animated IP design**

The process of integrating intangible cultural heritage into animated IP design essentially involves the

collision and reconstruction of traditional genes with modern media. Taking the “Yan Ling er” IP as an example, its design needs to address three primary challenges: Firstly, the dilemma of cultural symbol transformation. Yan Ling’er’s attire combines the bamboo structure of the Beijing-Swallow kite with auspicious cloud patterns, but the static craft features of traditional kites need to be transformed into dynamic character design - the lightweight feeling of the wings must be through animation frame rates and material rendering. Inadequate technical handling can easily lead to the flattening of cultural imagery. Secondly, the logical coherence of cross-regional narratives. Yan Ling er’s journey from Beijing to Hangzhou requires balancing the architectural styles of both places in the animated scenes (such as the regularity of the quadrangle yards and the elegance of West Lake gardens), and establishing cultural identity through dialect lines and food details (such as the contrast between Beijing’s mung bean juice and West Lake’s vinegar fish). This poses higher demands on historical research and artistic refinement of the script. Thirdly, the balancing of commercial value and cultural depth. For example, in the development of cultural and creative derivative products, if the “kite wings of Yan Ling er are merely used as visual selling points for product development, and the traditional auspicious meaning of “blessings and good fortune” is overlooked, it may result in the heritage being reduced to a consumption symbol, weakening the cultural carrying capacity of the IP.

## **2.2. The era opportunity of intangible cultural animated IP**

Taking the “Yan Ling er” IP as an example, by combining intangible cultural heritage elements such as Jing yan kites and Peking Opera makeup with 2D animation design, it shows the new vitality of traditional culture in the contemporary context. In terms of technological innovation, the progress of ink painting, the two-dimensional animation technology of the national tide and Chinese style has provided a new way of expression for the IP of non-heritage paintings. Taking “Yan Ling er” as an example, its design perfectly presents the lightness and elegance of the Jing yan kite and the exquisite beauty of Peking Opera makeup through a delicate hand-painted style and smooth dynamic expression. For example, Yan Ling er’s “kite wings” are drawn frame by frame to show the dynamic details of the kite swinging with the wind, which not only retains the aesthetic characteristics of traditional craftsmanship, but also gives the character a smart vitality. In addition, the layering technology of 2D animation (such as the separation of background and character) enables intangible cultural heritage elements to be better integrated into the scene design. For example, the brick texture of Beijing’s hutong and the landscape of Hangzhou’s West Lake are intertwined in the animation, creating a unique visual style. This kind of technical innovation not only enhances the artistic expression of animation, but also allows intangible cultural heritage to be accepted by the audience in a more intuitive and vivid way.

## **3. The challenges and opportunities faced by intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in animated IP design**

### **3.1. The core challenges of intangible cultural heritage animated IP design**

In today’s digital age, the competition in the animation industry is becoming increasingly fierce, and the audience’s aesthetic demands continue to evolve. The key challenge in animation IP design is how to achieve innovation and integration while preserving the core spirit of intangible cultural heritage. It is essential to deeply explore the unique charm of intangible cultural heritage, combine modern technological means with aesthetic

trends, and create animation works that possess cultural depth and contemporary characteristics. This involves achieving a seamless fusion of tradition and modernity. Intangible cultural heritage not only serves as the inspiration for animation IP design but also as the important basis for character development. The characterization of animated IP characters relies on the design elements of clothing, appearance, language, behavior, etc. Drawing from intangible cultural heritage to find the unique design style for animated IP can create culturally distinctive and personalized animated IP, attracting a wider audience of animation and film consumers. Taking “Swallow Spirit” as an example, character design is centered around Beijing swallow kites and Peking Opera culture: she embodies the freedom and elegance of a kite while also possessing the grace and resilience of a Peking Opera actress. This character development not only enhances the character’s recognizability but also allows the natural transmission of intangible cultural heritage through the character’s growth and interactions. Intangible cultural heritage provides a unique foundation for character traits. The “kite wings” of Swallow Spirit symbolize her yearning for freedom and exploratory spirit, while her Peking Opera makeup reflects the elegance and dignity of traditional culture. This dual character design that combines internal and external traits ensures that the character appeals to modern audience aesthetic preferences while preserving the core spirit of intangible cultural heritage. Through the character’s action

### **3.2. Enriching animated IP story content with intangible cultural elements**

When animation filmmakers depict intangible cultural heritage, they infuse their unique interpretation of the story text, combined with modern cultural elements, to innovatively portray intangible cultural heritage, thus breaking the audience’s inherent perception of traditional culture. Through the medium of animated films, showcasing intangible cultural heritage not only effectively preserves and disseminates these cultural heritages, but also adds entertainment value and cultural depth to the films. Artists inject new artistic vitality into animated IP by drawing inspiration from intangible cultural heritage, offering audiences a fresh audiovisual experience. The application of intangible heritage elements in animated IP stories not only provides cultural depth to the narrative but also enhances the emotional appeal and resonance of the story through detailed design. Taking the “Beijing Swallow IP Character” as an example, intangible heritage elements enrich the story content of the animated IP through character actions, plot conflicts, and cultural contrasts.

## **4. The innovative path of intangible cultural heritage in animated IP**

### **4.1. The core challenges of intangible cultural heritage animated IP design**

The “stylistic” breakthrough of Chinese animation requires a strong foundation in intangible cultural heritage. The creative practices of the “Beijing-Swallow IP” demonstrate that intangible heritage elements are not simply a collection of symbols but rather a systematic reinterpretation that reconstructs the Eastern aesthetic system. The hand-drawn characteristics of 2D animation naturally align with the craft genes of intangible heritage. In the character design of the “Beijing Swallow IP,” the fabric folds draw inspiration from the bamboo wicker lines of kite structures, while the gradient blue hues of the skirt hem simulate the traditional kite paper’s translucency effect, complemented by exquisite enamel patterns, forming a fusion of the meticulous and colorful aesthetics of traditional Chinese painting and the folk art of New Year paintings. The facial makeup breaks through the Sally technique, where on the foundation of the Peking Opera’s “Three White Makeup,” the rouge

smudges are processed into semi-transparent watercolor layers, allowing the character's emotions to naturally flow through color transparency, achieving a visual balance between the theatrical and dynamic in animation. In the visual narrative of 2D animation, the "Beijing Swallow Girl" transforms into a kite spirit floating above the city of Beijing. Her blue silk swallow-tail skirt is inspired by the hexagonal frame structure of Beijing swallow kites, ingeniously transforming traditional adhesive techniques into movable clothing folds, imbuing each frame of movement with the mechanical beauty of intangible heritage craftsmanship. The Peking Opera makeup simplifies the levels of rouge smudging, allowing the charm of the opera style to be conveyed through animation sequences and facial expressions. In the story setting, the Swallow Spirit collects scattered memories of the old city during seasonal transitions - these fragments are presented in dynamic paper-cut form, integrating the joint breakdown technique of Beijing shadow puppetry, continuing the aesthetic genes of the Chinese school of animation since "Havoc in Heaven." By constructing a kite personified narrative system, the animated IP successfully transforms static intangible heritage into evolving cultural symbols, establishing a bridge to traditional aesthetics among young audiences.

#### **4.2. The core challenges of intangible cultural heritage animated IP design**

In the field of digital communication and new media applications, the dissemination strategy of the Beijing-Swallow IP image reflects the deep integration of intangible cultural heritage with modern technology. Through social media platforms such as Weibo, Tiktok, short video content, and interactive animated shorts, it aims to attract the attention of young audiences. This mode of dissemination not only overcomes the temporal and spatial constraints of traditional intangible cultural heritage transmission but also enhances audience engagement and cultural identity through user-generated content and interactive experiences. Furthermore, digital technology provides more possibilities for the visual expression of intangible cultural heritage, such as reproducing Beijing Opera movements through motion capture technology or showcasing kite-making craftsmanship using virtual reality (VR) technology. The practical application of the Beijing-Swallow IP image exemplifies that the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage requires not only the protection of its core values but also innovative transformation and digital distribution to revitalize it in modern society, thereby shaping Chinese-style animated IP and promoting the sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage.

### **5. Summary**

The design and implementation of the Jingyan IP character not only represent a contemporary interpretation of Beijing's intangible cultural heritage (ICH) elements such as traditional kite craftsmanship and Peking opera art, but also exemplify an innovative exploration of regional cultural symbols in modern animation creation. By integrating two-dimensional animation techniques with digital communication technologies, the Jingyan IP successfully transforms traditional ICH components into a Chinese-style animated figure, revitalizing its cultural vitality within globalized contexts. This practice demonstrates that the transmission of ICH requires not only the preservation of its core values, but more crucially, the creative transformation and modern reinterpretation that resonate with contemporary society. As digital technologies continue to advance, the dissemination and inheritance of ICH will gain broader possibilities. The case of Jingyan IP provides significant insights for the sustainable development of ICH, while charting new pathways for Chinese-style animation production. Through

persistent excavation of ICH's profound cultural values and their synthesis with modern technologies and artistic forms, we can further amplify the distinctive charm of Chinese culture in global discourse, propelling the inheritance and innovation of ICH in the new era.

## References

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