

The Characteristics and Harm of Militarism Thoughts in Japanese Animation

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Abstract—The Japanese animation, which has developed over the past 100 years, has achieved world-renowned achievements due to its unique narrative way and fine point of view, and has great influence in China. But some Japanese animations have hidden militarism thoughts, and some even with strong rhetoric. They deeply packaged themselves and infect their audiences in a subtle way. We must draw high attention and vigilance. What are the characteristics of militaristic thoughts in Japanese animation? What is the form of its expression? What is the cause behind it? What impact has it produced in China? This article will make a corresponding analysis and research to these questions.

Index Terms—Japanese animation, Militarism thoughts, Vigilance

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the birth of the first Japanese animation in 1916, after a hundred years of development, Japanese animation has achieved remarkable achievements: not only created a huge animation empire, but also created a strong animation culture while generating huge economic benefits. Many famous Japanese directors such as Tezuka Osamu, Hayao Miyazaki, Tomino Yuki, Oshii Shou, etc., have made a huge impact on the history of animation in the world. Japanese animation is hailed as the most important cultural invention of the twentieth century and is also known as Japan's major contribution to global culture. Professor Nobuyuki Tsugata of Kyoto Essence University defines Japanese animation as a cultural exchange platform across national borders and ages [1]. Because of similar cultural backgrounds, unique perspectives, and delicate narrative methods, Japanese animations have a very high popularity in China for many years: in 2013, in the animation list of Baidu's search of the list of statistics: the top 25, the top 50, the top 100 and the top 200 Japanese animations accounted for 81.58%, 78.48%, 77.54%, and 74.66% respectively [2]. In the overseas market of Japanese animation, especially in the Chinese market, Japanese animations has seen a spurt of growth in recent years: sales in 2015 surged to 34.9 billion yen, increase at an alarming 79%, and more and more Chinese companies tend to introduce Japanese animation originals [3] In Dr. Chen Qijia's statistics: in

the current Chinese animation audience, Japanese animators are the majority. In the top 50 most popular animated works: Japanese works occupy 33 seats, and even occupy 9 seats in the top 10 animation works. [4] The above cases show that Japanese animation has an unshakable status and powerful influence in China.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF JAPANESE MILITARISTIC ANIMATION

The expressions of Japanese militaristic animations are not the same. And the spread strength of different animation to militarism thoughts is not the same. Some animations are even with strong rhetoric, and they make themselves in depth packaging and impact on the audience thought by osmosis. [5] On the whole, Japanese militaristic animation can be divided into the following four categories:

A. *Unilateral Rendering of War Damage in Japan*

In 1988, Takada Hyun's animated animation film *Grave of the Fireflies*, which was highly successful with its heavy plot design and delicate emotional description. It won many awards such as the Chicago International Children's Film Festival Children's Rights Award, the Blue Ribbon Special Award, and the Straight Wood Award. The animation tells in the Japanese Kanto in the late World War II, the 14-year-old junior high school student Seita and the 4-year-old sister Setsuko were in a rich family. After their father (the captain of the IJN Grand Fleet) died in the Pacific Ocean and their mother died in the US airstrike, the two children was helpless, eventually starved to death in the cave. Based on the most pristine emotions of human beings, this film uses plenty of space to describe Japanese society in the war of the drying and the tragic fate of the Japanese civilians. At the end of the film, with the fireflies flying in the sky, Seita's painful buried his dead sister. This beautiful and desperate scene poked the tears of many kind Chinese audiences. In the past 30 years, countless fans have been crying for the *Grave of the Fireflies*. The film has even won the title of anti-war animation. But when we removed its layers of camouflage, *Grave of the Fireflies* is a militaristic animation that has not faced up to history and excused the war of aggression.

Although the *Grave of the Fireflies* has recorded the cruel World War II at some specific angles, but the most important problem is that the film fundamentally evaded

Japan's war crimes of launching World War II and focused only on rendering Japan's injuries during in the war. However, he did not apply a little bit of ink to the war crimes committed by the Japanese themselves. So the theme of this animation is only "we are defeated", the message conveyed to the audience is "the suffering we suffered was because we were defeated." Obviously this film is not advertised because the Japanese realized that the criminal war they launched had caused great damage to the aggressed country, but only express the Allies in the war on its own. So no matter the starving of the Seita and the festival, the father and the Japanese who died in the Pacific War, the mother and the civilian who were burned to death in the Tokyo bombing, the soul of Hiroshima Nagasaki was created by the atomic bomb, this animation is want to express the cause of these disasters is not Japan launched the war of aggression, but "Japan was defeated". This animation repeatedly expressing the war disaster in Japan, for the young Japanese who did not experience the war years, passing them is a distorted historical view: "In this war, Japan is not an aggressor, but in its own homeland, Japanese became to the victims of the 'invaders' bombing, they still have to bear the restrictions of the Peace Constitution." Meanwhile, the deeper logic of the film is "if Japan is not defeated, and then this militaristic aggression is just." Then the war crimes committed by the Japanese army can be written off. This is so ridiculous. Such a *Grave of the Fireflies* is not an anti-war animation, but a civilian perspective to render the "innocent" suffering of the Japanese people, thus shirking the reactionary war responsibility and the reactionary film of the militarism. These highly deceptive expression techniques are also widely used in the works of *The Eternal Zero* and *Yamato*, which can be described as the general narrative mode of "new militaristic films".

B. Beautify the Weapons and War with Cute Characters Design

The category of *Grave of the Fireflies* can describe some of the damage caused by the war relatively objectively. Another kind of reactionary animation represented by *Kantai Collection* and *GIRLS und PANZER* have kept quiet about the cruelty of war. Instead, lovely girl animation image to beautify the weapon. And these animations use of teenagers on the images of natural affection, in the name of popularizing military knowledge to carry out the spread of war history and militarism thoughts. For example, in *Kantai Collection*, the iron ore of the IJN Grand Fleet: the aircraft carriers, battleships, cruisers, destroyers, etc., which owe countless blood debts during the war of aggression, are personified as looks lovely beautiful girl, to be the protagonist of this film. Through these sweet girls' poor performance in the play, for the sake of the so-called "resistance" of the "mysterious fleet" from the deep sea and the "protection of humanity", the history of the old Japanese Imperial Navy's factional struggle and foreign aggression war beautified as a group of girls sell cute, bickering and fighting. Another popular animation *Girls und Panzer* in

China, known as the "World War II tank teaching film", set up the story about a group of cute girls to study the tank sports skills, and determined to win the national competition. The six participating women's colleges in the play symbolize the six war-torn countries of the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, Germany, Italy and Japan. In the "mini-World War II" which was repeated in the animation, the Oshirashi College symbolizing the Imperial Japanese Army, relied on team's miscellaneous tanks repelled the tanks of all other colleges with the enthusiasm of militarism thoughts and finally won the championship. This story completely denies the historical facts of the defeat of Japanese armored units in World War II.

Kantai Collection and *GIRLS und PANZER* are also beautify the Bushido spirit and repeatedly promoted it. In the *Kantai Collection* throughout the so-called "the Soul of Mine", emphasizing a large number of traditional Bushido spirits such as "respecting the emperor", "brave war", "the honor death" and other concepts. *GIRLS und PANZER* through the "Senshadow" to repeatedly preach the "tough" and "honor" of Bushido, the chariot competition presentation was designed to be like war mobilization, in order to stimulate the fighting spirit of the audience. Similar works include "GATE The SDF in his place, so fighting", etc., they use the cartoon girl image to create a so-called "Kantai Collection culture" to beautify the war, but under the cute appearance is the militaristic undead ugly face.

C. In Pursuit of Freedom to Whitewash the Idea of Foreign Aggression

The *Attack on Titan* released in 2013 caused great heat in China. It was only by playing three seasons of TV animation that it could continue this heat for up to five years: in July 2018, the number of Japanese online animation broadcasts in China, *Attack on Titan - the third season*, topped the list with an astonishing 1,337,196 times. This animation's world view is: human beings are completely defeated by the sudden emergence of a Titan race, in order to protect themselves from being swallowed up, human built three giant walls, and spend themselves in the narrow territory like "livestock" during hundred years of calm time. But some of the human beings headed by the protagonist are not satisfied with the status quo. They think this is a "shame in the cage", and they yearn for the vast world outside the wall and "free" life until the high wall is once again broken by the monster giant. However, it is not difficult to find out that the narrow territory with scarce resources which surrounded by the three walls is like a Japanese archipelago surrounded by the ocean and bound by the peace constitution. The powerful giants outside the wall are a metaphor for China and Russia. The protagonist insists on his own justice. The declaration of pursuing freedom and carrying out the so-called expansion of living space is highly similar to the official reasons for Japanese imperialist wars of aggression. At the same time, "The Attacking Giant" has a lot of reactionary details: the name of the heroine (the only Japanese character in the play), "Mikasa", is the

name of the Japanese Grand Fleet flagship in the Japanese-Russian War. The "positive role" in this animation: Dot Pixis, the supreme commander of the southern legislature, was the prototype of the Japanese army general, Akiyama Yoshifu, who had broken the Russian Cossack cavalry and made the Lushun massacre. Such as "to be above the monster, if necessary, even humanity should be abandoned, those who can do this, will finally win!", "Human survival at this moment, bravely offer the heart!" The chilling lines fully demonstrate that the film has a very serious militaristic tendency.

The same is true of another popular blood animation *Tengen Toppa Gurren-Lagann*. In this animation, human beings are imprisoned by the orcs in the dark underground city. The protagonist also relies on "Yearning for freedom" and "tough faith". Leading humans step by step on the earth and heading for the universe. But no matter how whitewashing, it is impossible to change the fact that such animations instill a sense of crisis by instilling a sense of crisis.

D. *Flagrant Evocation for Militarism*

The above three categories animations are still somewhat obscured by militarism thoughts. The *MS Igloo* is flagrant evocation for militarism. This OVA is a documentary animation of the 603 Technical Experimental Squadron of the Principality of Zeon in U.C.0079. The animation changed the design of the military uniforms of the Principality soldier in the traditional UC series, adding a lot of Nazi German uniforms elements: whether it is military uniforms, imperial eagle emblems, armband medals, and even soldier hair styles, it makes people feel the animation's era background from the future. U.C.0079 returned to reality in 1939. Not only about the costumes, but also the special organs of the Principality's internal structure, which are similar to the armed SS, directly obey to the agents of command troops. Captain Keadyrca's arrogant attitude towards the captain and the history of the Nazi SS's disdain for the IDF is completely the same. The film deliberately played down the anti-human war crimes and aggression of the Principality of the Principality of the Magna, but hyped the heroic fearlessness of the Jeanne soldiers in order to "expand the living space." In the mouth of Colonel Kuspen, he even said: "Fighting! Fighting! Fighting is the essence of Zeon!" This is a common statement used by Japanese military officers in World War II. The film can be described as from the inside out, completely reactionary and right-wing, borrowing the body of the Third Reich in the universe of the Principality of the Kingdom, flagrant evocation for the soul of Japanese militarism, venting its own resentment against the defeat and dissatisfaction with reality. Into the "successful defeat of the glory" spirit of victory, this is completely contrary to the profound anti-war thinking of the original *Mobile Suit Gundam U.C.0079*.

Now, Japanese animation like *Rurouni Kenshin* can be said that "no matter how good words are used to describe war, the essence of war is ugly!" is running out.

III. REASONS FOR THE CREATION OF MILITARISTIC ANIMATION

Animation is a cultural product, but the boundary between culture and politics is difficult to divide. Political struggle can be played in the cultural field, cultural symbols and cultural systems for a long time is also combined with political movements.^[6] The activity of Japanese militaristic animation is due to the fact that Japanese politics has gradually turned to the right in recent years, and militarism thoughts in Japanese society have gradually risen. Firstly, the roots of the above two points are the American tolerance of the Japanese militarism after the war: neither the war crimes of Emperor Hirohito as a symbol of militarism nor the abolition of the emperor system, only a small number of war criminals were sent to the military court and carried out thoroughly. Nobusuke Kishito as the Class A war criminal was released in 1948 and later became to the Japanese prime minister. His grandson is Abe Shinzo, who was deeply poisoned by his militarism thought. The remaining large number of war criminals had re-entered the political circles and become leaders of various circles in Japan through the abolition of various "capture of public power" laws, thereby regrouping new social right-wing forces. [7] After the war, Japanese militaristic cancer was not removed at all, so the Japanese cultural industry naturally buried the bane of militarism thoughts.

Secondly, the abnormal development of Japan's political and economy: Japan economy despite gets great development after the war, but its politics is seriously involuntary, and its international political status is extremely low. Because of US control, Japan even unable to safeguard its own economic security. And many national core science and technology programs in Japan cannot be promoted. When the Chinese people are immersed in the joys and pride of a series of remarkable achievements such as the service of the J-20, the docking of the space station, the launching of the domestic aircraft carrier, and the application of quantum satellites, the sorrow and grief of the Japanese people cannot be imagined. Although Japan has created a cosmic century U.C. era in which the space technology is extremely developed in the animation. In reality, it can only watch the gap between itself and China grow bigger and bigger. At the same time, along with the sustained economic recession, compared with the "great power status" and "prosperity" brought about by the aggression and expansion in the past, part of the right-wing temptation of the Japanese people to a certain extent has produced a mentality of accepting militarism thoughts. On the other hand, the decline of US hegemony led to a decline to Japan's control, and began to connive Japan to modify the peace constitution, which further strengthened the active reaction of Japan's reactionary forces. The

shackles to prevent the resurgence of Japanese militarism have been loosened. The Japanese government has further deliberately connived and even encouraged militarism and populism to seek the so-called "normalization" of the country under the clamour of Abe Shinzo's "recapture of a powerful Japan." These objectively expand the living space of Japanese militarism animation.

Moreover, Japan has presented a serious phenomenon of low desires and socialization in recent years. The DNA of Japanese young people has changed. They are constantly reducing their desires, not willing to take risks, not even willing to marry and have children. [8] The problem of Japan's population aging has led to a gradual decline in the number of Japan's working-age. Many of these Japanese young people are highly debilitated; they lose their ambitions and lose their desire for success. The future doesn't matter for them. As long as the income can satisfy the basic cost, as long as the convenience store can solve the basic needs of life, as long as there is animation, games, and the internet can comfort the spirit is enough. Even many young Japanese people have lost their desire to pursue the opposite sex because of their fear of marriage and family responsibilities. They are willing to choose to be lonely and old. The National Institute of Social Security and Population Studies predict that 39.3% of Japanese families will be living alone in 2040. Such a situation, even if the right-wing forces can completely control Japan, abolish the peace constitution, and remove the obstacles to the development of militarism, how can such a sluggish young man adhere to the "heavy duty" of "the soul of yamato" and "Bushido" to achieve external expansion? Therefore, the Japanese right-wing forces naturally choose to incorporate the cleverly wrapped militarism thoughts and the Bushido spirit in animations that young people like so much, and even embed recruitment advertisements in animations. They gradually cultivate their reactionary beliefs and inspire them through this subtle way for Fighting spirit, militant spirit and desire to win.

Based on the above factors, it is not surprising that the emergence of Japanese militaristic animations have occurred frequently in recent years.

IV. EPILOGUE

The research by the French film scientist Christian Matz shows that the immersive image brings the cognitive and emotional participation process to the audience, and it is easy to provoke the audience's identity. This is the director of Japanese animation. Japanese animation is more adept at creating a realistic sense of plot setting and delicate emotional portrayal, and coupled with the close of aesthetic and cultural backgrounds, so presented the Chinese youth group of Japanese animation craze phenomenon for nearly thirty years. Japanese animation and its many derivative products such as novels, comics, magazines, models and other related products have become one of the most mainstream entertainment consumption among Chinese youth.

However, a large number of Japanese animations have hidden militarism thoughts, which is a serious problem. These militaristic animations will inevitably change the way of understanding and ideas of young audiences who are not yet sound in terms of rational thinking ability. At present, these Japanese militaristic animations have already had a serious negative impact on some Chinese youths: in recent years, those "spirit-Japanese" people have repeatedly produced behavior to challenge the bottom line of the Chinese nation in China, which have been seriously tempted by these dangerous animations, and going on the road to national scum. What is more serious is that many Chinese people do not realize the danger of Japanese militaristic animation. Some people are confused by it and think of it as an "anti-war" animation. Even animation enthusiasts are preaching that "animation is animation, don't talk about the relationship between entertainment and politics". If we don't attach great importance to it and seriously deal with it, it will have extremely serious consequences in the long term.

In view of this, firstly we must effectively monitor and carefully screen to Japanese animations, and must remove the animations that lurk the war demons, block them outside our country, and strictly prohibit their play in China. On the other hand, it's the original source. When our domestic animation has sufficient influence and vitality, the Japanese animation's spoiled products naturally have no room for survival.

At a time when China is facing a golden period of strategic opportunities, we must make high vigilance and serious confrontation to this kind of cultural product which lurks in the devil.

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