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of Korean Dramas on Life Issues**

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Abstract

The development of Taiwanese games has stepped into a new level after the launch of "Detention" and "Devotion" by Red Candle Games in 2017 and 2019. In terms of content and creative thinking, it fully demonstrates the value of localization from the globalization. The game stories of aforesaid two pieces are based on the life-world and the historical context of Taiwan. The reason of having won wide response and attention is not only the localized visual design but also their perspectives on life issues in an Asian perspective, where the value of localization is actually implemented. This paper examines the differences and similarities of representative works of a Korean film and a TV series which is based on the criteria of an Asian philosophical approach in the "the cause and effect" and "life-difference".

Introduction

The development of Taiwanese games has stepped into a new level of aesthetics after the launch of "Detention" by Red Candle Games company in 2017. In terms of content and creative thinking, it demonstrates the value of localization from the globalization. After that they launch another successful but controversial game "Devotion" in 2019, however this production has been taken off the market because some segment of it has offended the Chinese government.¹

The narrative structure of aforesaid two pieces that are based on the life-world (contemporary society) and historical context of Taiwan. This is a topic worthy of attention in that a fashionable 21st century digital game designed with old and sorrowful past has won wide response and attention.²

Two games Based on Historical and Social Context

Most of the game industry's production and setting are based on transnational and international markets. However, these two Taiwanese games appear to be contrary to this mainstream. This can be considered as a successful attempt to implement a cultural awakening in the culture and creative industries in Asia. In fact, they show a possible new direction of game productions.

Red Candle Games was founded on 2015 by a team of young people from Taiwan who have solid training in humanities and artistic knowledge. In contrast to the trend of global marketing strategy, the content of these two are designed according to Taiwan local elements. Their historical settings are the Taiwan White Terror period under martial law and political oppression of 1960-1980s,

¹ Taiwan game 'Devotion' upsets China with Winnie the Pooh reference. (BBC, October 4, 2019). Retrievable from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-47361172>

² Devotion released in February 2019, in the popular video game review site- Review aggregator GameSpot's Richard Wakeling who gave 9/10 points credit to devotion. and the IGN (multimedia and review site) Japan branch, Imai gave a high credit of 9.8 points (out of 10), these evaluations in today's digital world is borderless, there are all international players, and this high evaluation of Japanese experts to a local content of an Asian game is certainly special. Retrievable from: <https://www.gamespot.com/reviews/devotion-review-house-of-horrors/1900-6417096> (August 13, 2019); <https://jp.ign.com/devotion/33334/review/devotion> (August 13, 2019)

while "Devotion" has taken a step furthermore towards the social values and religious superstitions.³ Applying the political persecution and folk religious mysteries as the structure of story and as the elements of thrill, and through the digital interactive media, reflects the national sorrow and social value defects. This could be one of the reasons that acquire wide attentions among game experts and players to "Devotion".

The Brief Story of "Detention"

The scene of "Detention" is set in a wrecked high school campus according to the real situation after the severe earthquake in Taiwan in 1999 the gives the impression that infrastructure was not valued at the time. The story was that teachers and students were executed or imprisoned for reading banned books, as happened during Taiwan White Terror period. The main role is a girl-student who committed suicide, her soul is repeatedly stumbled upon at the scenes on the campus without being freed because she caused the political persecution of her teachers and classmates, though not on purpose.

The Brief Story of "Devotion"

The story of "Devotion" is about Taiwan's first economic growth and modernization during the 1970-1980s, where the religion became a tool for pursuing fame and fortune under a kind of speculative social atmosphere. A family of a talented girl was killed in the end by the sorcery due to the parent's greed and wrong conception. The structure of the game is designed to be in parallel with the time and space in order to demonstrate the social change and transformation between 1960-1970-1980s. Same as "Detention", this is also an immersive exploration game.

These two games are particularly vivid and touching, in addition to the local cultural elements and the social situation, they actually touch the human rights and life issue. This is really the outstanding part and the reason they have earned a wide response. Since the 21st century, life issue have become important subjects, and many works about the subject have received much attention. For example, there are two works of Korean film and television that have done very well in the ratings, they are "Along with the Gods: The Two Worlds" in 2017 and the TV series "Guardian: The Lonely and Great God" on tvN in 2016.⁴We will compare these four works about their perspectives through two criteria which are "life - difference" and "the cause and the effect".

The Nature of Life -"being" is a Phenomenon of differ"ance⁵

³ The history of Taiwan in the 20th century was a 50-year Japanese colonial period (1895-1945) and 38 years of Martial Law (1949-1987) which is from the regime of Kuomintang(political party of Chiang Kai-Shek) that retreated to Taiwan when Communist forces took over mainland China(just after World War II) .

⁴ Along with the 'Gods: The Two World' , is a film launched by South Korean team and distributed by Lotte Entertainment in 2017. 'The Lonely and Great God' is a South Korean television series on the cable network tvN from December 2016 to January 2017. These two works have received a very high rating in the history of South Korean film and cable television. (Guardian, October6,2019) Retrievable from: <http://www.kobis.or.kr/kobis/business/stat/offc/findFormerBoxOfficeList.do> http://www.nielsenkorea.co.kr/tv_terrestrial_day.asp?menu=Tit_1&sub_menu=3_1&area=00&begin_date=20170121

⁵ L'écriture et la différence, pp40-42.

In the Asian way, the cognition of existence is not the same with today's common sense. The Asian way of being is more like that the existence itself does not have a fixed state or boundary, that is a "trace" in which all kinds of transformation are possible and can be alternated infinitely (Chen, 2017:13-14). This is what the contemporary French thinker Jacques Derrida (1967) called "différance", which the "e" can be replaced by "a", a diffusion of this word but also keep his originality. Simply put, the "différance" philosophy means the existence of the world and things are sustainable continual extension and variation in different time and space.

Buddhism and Taoism's observation and understanding of "being" can be considered as a kind of "différance". Being a "human" may not be the "native state" of our present existence. Many people were originally from the "heaven" as angels before, and then come to the "secular (mundane) world" to be a human being. They may have experienced a bad transmigration of "animals" or as "ghosts", and with enough accumulation of merit and wisdom, be reincarnated into a human again one day.

This conception of "différance" is flourishing in Taiwan's folklore beliefs. We worship the goddess or gods who are originally a great person with important contribution or virtue. For example, the most powerful and popular goddess in Taiwan is Matsu. She reincarnated from a young coastal village girl in the 11th century to become the goddess for rescuing peoples with shipwreck, even after her death, the legends of rescuing people are still happening. Matsu has been rewarded with titles from Chinese emperors over 40 times during thousand years until the last dynasty Chin.⁶ This kind of conception of being is implicit and sustainable and might not be expressed by the people, but they actually live with it in their ordinary everyday life as a culture system. This is a characteristic of Taiwan's culture that the humanity-the altruistic love for others - is still praised. There is another example the Wild Fox case which is based on Zen Buddhism.⁷

This is a story that a head monk who was asked by his apprentices about a life issue question: are people with enlightened experience also affected by the cause and effect? His answer was "no". This wrong answer caused him to rebirth in the animal path as a fox for 500 years. Until one day he transfigured himself as an old man to attend a lecture of Zen master for proposing the same question. After having the right answer, he died and emancipated from the fox life.

For the general Asian conception, one's life is not only in this current life, but the continuation of mind that cause the rebirth or transformation of different types of existences.⁸ *"To Buddhism, however, death is not the end of life, it is merely the end of the body we inhabit in this life, but our spirit will still remain and seek out through the need of attachment, attachment to a new body and new life. Where they will be born is a result of the past and the accumulation of positive and negative action, and the resultant karma (cause and effect) is a result of ones' past actions"* (Tang, 2002).

⁶ See Mazu: Legendary Guardian of the Chinese Seas and Social Media Marvel, Ancient Origins.

Retrievable from <https://www.ancient-origins.net/myths-legends-asia/mazu-legendary-guardian-chinese-seas-003094>

⁷ From Song Dynasty History of Zen Buddhism in China (1252), scroll 3, Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association, CBETA. (April 2, 2019) retrievable from: http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/X1565_003 (available in Chinese only)

⁸ In Desire realm, that is Six Ornaments of the world which are god, demi-god, human, hungry ghost, hell-dwellers and animals.

The South Korean cinema and drama as a part of Asian perspective which is combined with Shamanism, Buddhism and Confucianism has been well developed in recent years, and their character settings are quite diverse. In the 'Guardian: The Lonely and Great God', the main role is a meritorious general in ancient time who has been accused unjustly by political suppression, and because of his strong will and hatred, he became immortal demi-god which is similar to a vampire that is lonely and sad for centuries. The second role is the king who was responsible for the disaster of the general and the death of his wife(queen) and was sentenced to become a death messenger after this life. This is a kind of senior ghost that always needs to witness the sorrow-dead situation repeatedly. In the game "Detention", the character setting is a ghost.

This kind of god/ghost/human/animal/immortal are parts of status of existences that belongs to the world and the nature. This is not about which state is native or secondary of this person, in fact, this is the nature of beings that can be in various existences. This conception of being is flowable and sustainable which is currently in the eastern religious culture. But for the "variation", it is not at all by random or arbitrary, it is according to the implicit but dynamic force-the rule of the cause and effect.

The Cause and Effect

The cause and effect, or we call the rule of cause, or the causal law are the same term which derive from the "six causes and five fruits" in the Buddhist classical scripture "Jnana-prashana".⁹ It is intended to summarize the causes of all things corresponding to five kinds of results, and this is the basic concept of Buddhism's worldview which forms the status of our current life.

The inducement of the cause and effect is not only on behavior but also on the motivation from the consciousness level. Any small malicious (or good) idea which is not yet or never taken into action will be also right under the cause and effect. And the cause and effect is not only emphasized on the post-mortem trial which is misunderstood by the people nowadays, in fact, it is active with our current life. For example, there was not a king of the Hell-Jamaraja (Yama Raja, the god of hell, Hindu god of death and lord of the underworld) who specially charges the after-life trial in the Chinese culture originally. It was transmitted by Hinduism and Buddhism, and then combined within folk religion as the "Ten Temple" trial of the hell.

In the film "Along with the Gods", the rule of cause and effect is executed by the judge of the hell after death, the trial of the seven gates (which are murder, indolence, respect parents, lying, betrayal, violence and injustice). Although all the settings are designed with oriental style, but the real ideal is the Christian post-mortem trial and more similar with the seven sins of Christianity (arrogance, greed, lust, jealousy, gluttony, anger and indolence).¹⁰ The only difference is "respect parents" because this ethical concept is specially emphasized in South Korea. Moreover, the way of self-salvation shows the worldview of this film is a more Catholic way and treated as the main conception throughout the film: as long as you ask for the forgiveness and obtain the forgiveness of the victim, then you can pass through the trial and go to the next gate. This is actually an incomprehensive conception of the cause and effect. For more understanding of it, it is necessary to refer to the Wild Fox story of Zen Buddhism. Because of one wrong answer which misguided people, the head monk experienced a bad

⁹ One of the seven sarvastivada abhidharma, Buddhist scriptures. Janaprashana means establishment of knowledge.

¹⁰ Catechism of the Catholic Church(October6,2019) Retrieval from: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c1a8.htm#1866

transmigration for 500 years. It is not as simple as in this film that the cause and effect can be liberated by just "asking for the forgiveness of the victims". We should look into the nature of the causal and effect as the Surangama Sutra has said:

They(the five aggregates) all vanish the moment one is instantaneously awakened, but in practice, they are wiped gradually due to the force of habit.¹¹

Here are three indications: firstly, we have to look into the truth that the source of the cause and effect is from the level of deep mind - the five aggregates.¹² If we want to face up our sin, it is not only effective in apparent or in gesture, it should be undertaken as the purification of the mind. Secondly, the purification of the mind can't be achieved at once, it need to be in effort constantly because the force of habit is so solid which has been established from many rebirth lives.

The example of the Wild Fox story has taken the head monk for 500 years for going through his resultant karma. Thus, asking for forgiveness can only be considered as the first step of self-salvation and we need time and effort to accomplish. Thirdly, the cause and effect is not ignorant and is never miscalculated. The source of the cause and effect is from the inner self-consciousness, therefore the purification should be executed by oneself, the self-awaking, it is not possible to be replaced or substituted by others. The karmic power is irreplaceable that even a monk who has taken the vow of devotion is still under the cause and effect precisely. This was the right answer that the fox/old man had got from the Zen master. The misunderstanding of the conception which can misguide the people and become malicious social values, the game "Devotion" is exactly about the point.

About the cause and effect, The Southern Song Dynasty Confucian Zhu Xi once said that the Buddhism is a kind of only-two-end theory at that time in China-¹³only emphasize on birth and death end, and lack of indications about current life. There is also an opinion from Confucius: "One can't know how to live properly yet, how can one pursuit the death theory".¹⁴This doesn't mean not to understand the death, in fact, it is to emphasize the importance of the current life that people should make efforts to be a real human being-the humanity and the altruistic love for each other. In the game "Devotion", the daughter is killed because of the parent's superstition. The religion has become the tool for pursuing desires for fame and fortune. They intent to drive away the bad karma and avoid the cause and effect by some method or substitution: witchery or donation. This problem still exists nowadays, and it come from the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the cause and effect which meets Zhu Xi's point of view.

In the example of "Guardian ", they try to break the curse and keep the main female cast alive because she will be destined to die as soon as she become the General-ghost bride. It seems like a certain success under the efforts of everybody's superpower. But one day this girl faced a deadly danger, she decided to sacrifice herself in order to save a group of children. At that moment, instead of

¹¹ The Surangama Sutra, pp. 329.(August 13, 2019) Retrieval from: ///C:/Users/Admin_USER/Desktop/surangama.pdf.

¹² The five aggregates are form, sensation, perception, mental formation and consciousness.

¹³ *Selections from Classified Conversation of ZHU XI*, Chinese Text Project. (April 3, 2019) Retrieval from:<https://ctext.org/zhuzi-yulei/126/zh>.

¹⁴*The Analects of Confucius*, the 11th Chapter(October 4, 2019) Retrieval from: <http://www.chineseclassic.com/content/2>

easily driving away from the fatal death, she has chosen her fate herself. This is a good example of the cause and effect also the free will that she faced up her destination by carry out the humanity-altruistic love for others.

In game "Detention", there are situation choices for players, if you choose the negative way, the soul will be once again broken into pieces and meet death again. If you choose to face the situation, you will reunite with your shadow and emancipate from being as a ghost. This is also a practice of self-awaking.

What kind of thoughts are you holding when you are with him?

Follow the fate

Follow the situation

Try your best

There is disaster coming, you have chosen

Face it calmly

Turn a blind eye

Escape and hiding

What choice do you make for the reality of losing your support?

Indifferent

Strive for recover

Accept without any effort

The more we understand the truth of life, the more we can develop free will which make us to face the current life with new perspectives. Although these interactive games can do free will practice only a preliminary level, but this is an implementation of an Asian-Buddhism ideas in games which is different from the mainstream of the world.

3. Conclusion

Through aforesaid "Guardian "and "Detention", the application of locale element and historical context design in a new media indicate a trend of localization in globalization. The reason of having won wide response and attention is not only the localized visual design but also their perspectives on life issues—an Asian perspective, the value of localization is actually implemented. These two games involve the situation of people's life and social values which make the people re-examine and understand themselves and it is this that makes the work charming and welcoming. They also show that the new media is not only for entertainment but also for the cultural heritage which is not only follow or reinstall the old but "interpret"- interpretations of the past for the new generations, and intercultural understanding will be effected through the borderless new media.

This actually meet the point of former European Commission President José Manuel Barroso's (1956): *"Culture and creativity are important drivers for personal development, social cohesion and economic growth. Today's strategy, promoting intercultural understanding, confirms culture's place at the heart of our policies"* (European Commission, 2007:3) .

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