

Animation Design for Interpreting the Beijing Central Axis from a Cross-Cultural Communication Perspective

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Abstract—In 2024, "Beijing Central Axis—A Masterpiece of the Ideal Capital Order in China" was inscribed on the World Heritage List, and the documentary *Crafting Civilization: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS* aired on National Geographic, offering the first systematic interpretation of its cultural significance from the perspective of an international mainstream media outlet. To enhance global communication, the documentary incorporates more than twenty animated sequences. Using this production as a case study, this paper proposes an animation design method oriented toward cross-cultural communication. Drawing on cross-cultural communication models, it identifies the notion of "Shared Meaning Space" between creators and audiences and develops a dual-axis framework that coordinates visual and narrative strategies. The approach is validated through the production of *Crafting Civilization: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS*, demonstrating that the "dual-axis & "Shared Meaning Space"" method can foster cultural empathy and enhance the visibility and communicability of Chinese culture among international audiences.

Keywords—cross-cultural communication; *Beijing Central Axis*; animation design; "Shared Meaning Space"; *Crafting Civilization: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS*

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, with the continued advancement of media technologies and globalization, cultural exchange and mobility have intensified, making cross-cultural communication a central concern across society. On 31 May 2021, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized during the 30th collective study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee the need to "create new concepts, categories, and expressions that connect China and the world, and to more fully and vividly present Chinese stories and the intellectual and spiritual forces behind them" [1]. This statement provides a fundamental guiding framework for strengthening the cross-cultural communication of Chinese narratives.

In 2024, at its 46th Session, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee inscribed "Beijing Central Axis—A Masterpiece of the Ideal Capital Order in China" on the World Heritage List, creating new opportunities, resources, and platforms for telling compelling Chinese stories. Against this backdrop, the documentary *Crafting Civilization: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS*—produced under the guidance of the National Cultural Heritage Administration, China International Communications Group, and the Publicity Department of the CPC Beijing Municipal Committee—presents to global audiences the philosophical foundations, planning principles, and cultural significance of Beijing Central Axis. Broadcast on National Geographic in December 2024, it marks the first

comprehensive interpretation of the Central Axis by an international mainstream media outlet [2].

To diversify interpretive strategies, enhance visual expressiveness, and address the limitations of live-action footage in conveying certain concepts, the documentary integrates more than thirty animated sequences. Using this production as a case study, this paper offers a systematic analysis of its animation design and articulates an animation methodology oriented toward cross-cultural communication. The study aims to provide both conceptual and practical insights for developing a discourse system that bridges China and the world, thereby contributing to more effective communication of Chinese stories and to the broader construction of China's international cultural image.

II. ANIMATION DESIGN METHODS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

A. Cross-Cultural Communication

Cross-cultural communication refers to interpersonal interaction and information transmission among members of different cultural backgrounds, as well as to the migration and diffusion of cultural elements in global society and their impact on different groups, cultures, nations, and even the human community at large. Animation design oriented toward cross-cultural communication is, in essence, a process of encoding visual symbols (Fig. 1). Drawing on Stuart Hall's visual semiotics, G. Li argues that differences in knowledge structures, relations of production, and social structures lead encoders and decoders to rely on distinct "meaning structures" in the encoding and decoding of visual symbols; the ultimate aim of encoding is for audiences to decode in accordance with the encoder's intended meaning [3]. Accordingly, encoders must, from the outset of production, systematically consider the cultural characteristics and interpretive habits of symbol consumers. A. Hu similarly emphasizes that external communication of culture must fully account for the cultural context of the audience and adopt negotiated forms of expression to enhance communicative power and persuasiveness [4]. From this perspective, the central task of the encoder is to construct a consensual discourse in which the encoder's cultural system intersects with the decoder's interpretive framework, enabling target audiences both to understand and to willingly engage with the message. In animation design aimed at cross-cultural communication, the construction of such consensual discourse is therefore fundamental.

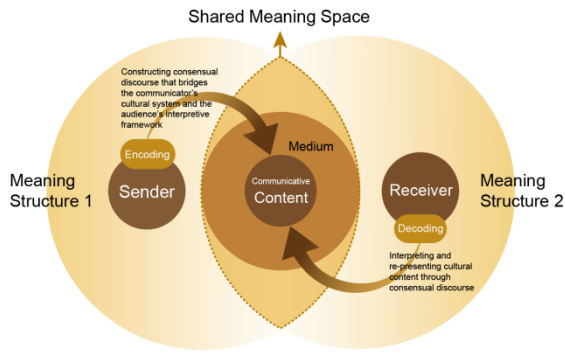


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of cross-cultural communication as an encoding-decoding process

B. Animation Design Centered on Consensual Discourse

First, constructing consensual discourse requires a multidimensional understanding of its objectives. On the one hand, cross-cultural communication is fundamentally about information transmission, so consensual discourse must be anchored in content. On the other hand, the medium of communication is also part of this discourse. As a visual medium, animation carries rich aesthetic connotations that express the communicator's cultural identity beyond factual content. Consequently, in cross-cultural communication, consensual discourse has dual objectives: (1) achieving effective cognitive transmission of information, and (2) establishing cultural identity markers at the aesthetic level so that information dissemination and cultural identification become mutually reinforcing.

Second, consensual discourse is grounded in the "Shared Meaning Space" jointly constructed by sender and receiver. As Q. Guo notes, "Shared Meaning Space" encompasses a common understanding of symbolic meanings and similar or comparable life experiences and cultural backgrounds [5]. In practice, the scope of this "Shared Meaning Space" must be delineated with reference to the target audience (international publics or specific countries). Focusing on the global dissemination of the culture of Beijing Central Axis, this study further divides "Shared Meaning Space" into two levels: a symbolic level, including easily recognizable figurative symbols, internationally shared symbols, and Chinese cultural symbols already familiar to overseas audiences; and an experiential level, including shared or comparable cultural traditions, modern lifestyles, basic knowledge of the world, and universal physiological and psychological traits.

Finally, this paper proposes a dual-axis collaborative framework that integrates "Shared Meaning Space" into animation design. As shown in Fig. 2, the visual layer is constructed across four dimensions—visual style, formal design of elements, color composition, and layout—balancing differences in aesthetic preference and mediating between international taste and national characteristics so that viewers oscillate productively between familiarity and strangeness. The narrative layer comprises four components—narrative content, narrative structure, motion design, and cinematographic language—through which the interconnectedness between traditional culture and contemporary life, and between Chinese civilization and world civilizations, is highlighted. In this way, the narrative layer employs universally shared human experience as an entry point, reducing cognitive load and fostering cultural resonance.

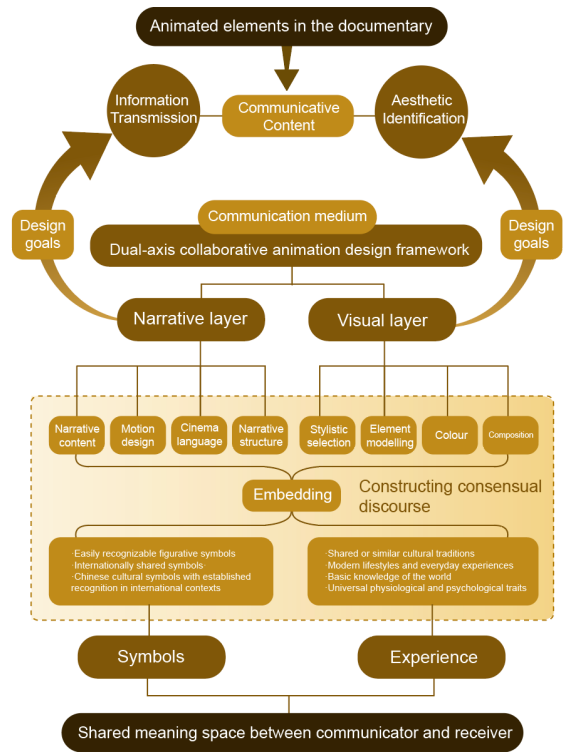


Fig. 2. Dual-axis collaborative animation design framework integrating "Shared Meaning Space" into visual and narrative layers

In operationalizing the "dual-axis collaborative framework" and "Shared Meaning Space" within the animation design workflow, the process can be summarized in five steps.

- (1) The objectives and communicative content of cross-cultural communication are specified, and source-cultural information and target-audience needs are analyzed to determine the core theme and the narrative entry point.
- (2) The "Shared Meaning Space" between sender and receiver is delineated by identifying symbolic elements and experiential content that international audiences can readily understand and resonate with.
- (3) Creative planning proceeds along two primary axes, visual design and narrative design. Along the visual layer, a visual style that is both culturally emblematic and internationally legible is selected from within the Shared Meaning Space, and proposals are developed for the formal design of elements, color composition, and layout so that the visual expression retains cultural specificity while aligning with target-audience aesthetics.
- (4) Along the narrative layer, the selection of narrative content and the narrative structure are refined, and motion and cinematographic language are designed in accordance with the cognitive habits of the target culture, ensuring that the storyline remains both novel and accessible and thereby strengthening cross-cultural resonance.
- (5) The design schemes of the visual and narrative axes are integrated and iteratively tested and adjusted across production stages so that the visual and narrative layers collaboratively convey consensual discourse and maximize communicative impact.

The following case analysis is structured accordingly: it first outlines the cultural resource system of Beijing Central Axis and preliminarily identifies the “Shared Meaning Space” at the content level, before detailing key design decisions on both the visual and narrative axes.

III. BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS FROM A CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

As the communicative content, the culture of BEIJING Central Axis—with its extensive historical trajectory and layered cultural connotations—needs to be interpreted within a cross-cultural communication context so as to distill a shared meaning space that international audiences can readily understand and resonate with. Accordingly, this paper first maps the cultural resource system of BEIJING Central Axis and examines its current state of cross-cultural communication; on this basis, it identifies key elements of shared meaning to establish the content foundation for the subsequent animation design practice.

A. Structuring the Cultural Resource System of Beijing Central Axis

The cultural system of Beijing Central Axis consists of four interrelated dimensions: historical events, physical space, cultural connotations, and living heritage.

The historical events dimension encompasses more than 750 years of development, usually divided into three stages: (1) its initial establishment during the construction of the Yuan capital and subsequent refinement and transformation through the Ming, Qing, and Republican periods, embodying the urban order described in the *Kao Gong Ji*; (2) the construction of national landmark buildings such as Tian'anmen Square along the Axis after the founding of the People's Republic of China; and (3) the “growth” and “evolution” of the Axis in response to urban development after the reform and opening-up period [6].

The physical space dimension comprises fifteen heritage components, including the Drum and Bell Towers, Wanning Bridge, Jingshan, the Forbidden City, Tian'anmen, the Outer Golden Water Bridge, the Imperial Ancestral Temple, the Altar of Land and Grain, Tian'anmen Square and its architectural ensemble (the Monument to the People's Heroes, the Memorial Hall of Chairman Mao, the National Museum of China, and the Great Hall of the People), Zhengyangmen, the remains of the southern road segment, the Temple of Heaven, the Temple of Agriculture, and Yongdingmen.

The cultural connotations of the Axis—Zhongzheng Hexie (centrality and harmony)—embody an ethos of impartial centrality and moderated harmony that permeates political structures, modes of living, philosophical thought, cosmology, and aesthetic values [7].

Living heritage highlights the close relationship between the Central Axis and contemporary social development. As a “starting point and constituent element of new belief and behavioural paradigms” [6], it is continually reinterpreted. For example, as political structures have transformed, its cultural connotations have shifted from “imperial supremacy” to “people as masters of the country”; as the economy has developed, its physical spaces have been deeply integrated into the tourism industry; and as digital technologies have

advanced, tools such as digital twins and augmented reality have provided new ways of interpreting the Central Axis.

B. Current Situation and Challenges in the Cross-Cultural Communication of Beijing Central Axis

On 27 July 2024, Beijing Central Axis was officially inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. As a unique example of urban axial planning in world urban history, it now bears an important mission of facilitating cross-cultural dialogue in a globalized context.

However, its current level of international visibility remains limited. A content analysis by F. He and S. Fu shows that the overall concept of the Beijing Central Axis appears only 33 times in international news reports, far fewer than comparable urban cultural axes such as the National Mall in Washington (1,492 times) or the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris (838 times) [8].

Their study further indicates that, among the core elements of the cultural system of the Central Axis, international recognition is highest for Tian'anmen and Tian'anmen Square and its architectural ensemble—deeply embedded in political narratives—followed by the Forbidden City, which is closely tied to the tourism industry. One key reason is that Beijing Central Axis lacks a clear, simple, and symbolically powerful cultural signifier that can support high-frequency, multi-platform international communication. By contrast, the National Mall, the Forbidden City, and the Champs-Élysées possess readily intelligible labels—political, imperial, and fashionable, respectively.

Although the ideal of cross-cultural communication is to balance depth and breadth, the precondition is that culture must first become “visible” in international discourse. The symbolic articulation of the Central Axis, however, needs to be gradually refined through communicative practice, and it would be unrealistic to expect an immediate conclusion. A pragmatic strategy is therefore to begin with the more concrete resources of historical events, physical space, and living heritage, extract from them the “Shared Meaning Space”, and then progressively link these to the abstract cultural connotation of centrality and harmony. This forms a communication path of “concrete entry, conceptual deepening.”

C. “Shared Meaning Space” within the Cultural System of Beijing Central Axis

Extracting “Shared Meaning Space” from the three categories of resources—historical events, physical space, and living heritage—helps identify the interconnectedness between traditional culture and modern life, and between Chinese civilization and world civilizations. In doing so, it builds emotional and semantic connections between communicative content and audiences, enabling international viewers to move from cultural bystanders to cultural participants.

First, historical events provide clues to international connections—for example, Marco Polo's accounts of the urban complex along the Axis during his travels to the Yuan capital, or Matteo Ricci's use of the Axis in his missionary activities during the Ming dynasty.

Second, communication can begin with Chinese cultural elements that enjoy high international visibility, using familiar content to guide audiences toward unfamiliar cultural

contexts—for instance, starting from widely recognized landmarks such as Tian'anmen and the Forbidden City and then extending to sites with lower recognition, such as Yongdingmen and the Drum and Bell Towers, or using globally recognizable symbols like Chinese characters and martial arts as entry points into stories of Beijing Central Axis.

Third, cases from living heritage—such as tourism projects or cultural and creative products related to the Central Axis—offer "experiential" and "perceptible" entry points through which international audiences can participate in and feel the culture directly.

This structuring of the cultural resources of Beijing Central Axis, together with the extraction of “Shared Meaning Space,” provides a clear content guide for animation design. The paper therefore turns to the animation production of the documentary *Crafting Civilization: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS* as a case study, detailing how “Shared Meaning Space” is embedded into both the visual layer and the narrative layer of the animation, and validating the effectiveness of the proposed animation design method through practice.

IV. ANIMATION DESIGN PRACTICE IN CRAFTING CIVILIZATION: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS

The integration of animated elements into the documentary effectively compensates for content that cannot be directly filmed or is difficult to render in a vivid manner on screen [9]. As shown in Fig. 3, in *Crafting Civilization: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS*, animation is inserted into the documentary in a fragmented and episodic manner: it is used both to visualize historical materials and to translate abstract information into graphic form. The animated elements fall into four categories: historical maps of the area along BEIJING Central Axis, the architectural complexes that constitute the Axis, the historical figures who appear in relevant narratives, and auxiliary elements that construct the surrounding scenes. Among these, the map functions as the shared visual element across all sequences and serves as the core stage for animated narration.

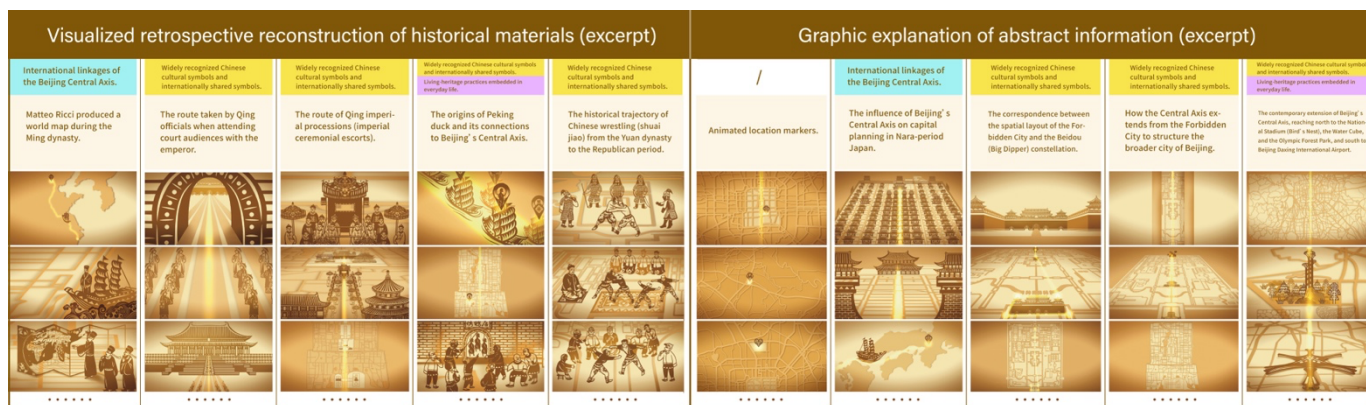


Fig. 3. Excerpts of fragmented animated inserts in *Crafting Civilization: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS*

The above animation content can be translated into two complementary design-practice briefs. The visual brief specifies recognizability criteria and information hierarchy for key elements such as maps and architecture, ensuring “cultural emblematicity” while maintaining “global legibility”, so as to avoid increasing interpretive burden through excessive stylization or ornamentation. The narrative brief, by contrast, clarifies the narrative function and informational selection of each animated segment. It foregrounds the alignment between narrative content and narrative structure, the control of motion design and shot rhythm, and the sound-image correspondence between voice-over semantics and on-screen actions, so that each segment remains intelligible as a standalone unit while integrating seamlessly with the documentary’s main line. In doing so, each segment can fulfil the dual objectives of “effective cognitive transmission of information” and “the establishment of cultural identity markers” within a limited duration.

A. Integrating the “Shared Meaning Space” into the Visual Layer of Animation

Animation is not an art of material reconstruction but an art of the spiritual world [10]. In this documentary, the animated sequences are tasked with presenting the artistic characteristics of Chinese culture to international audiences; accordingly, choices of visual language must meet the dual objectives of cross-cultural communication—ensuring

informational legibility on the one hand while articulating cultural identity on the other.

Under the combined constraints of information load, symbol recognition, and aesthetic reception, this study identifies Chinese paper cutting as the overarching visual style of the animation. Two considerations are central. First, in terms of content fit, paper-cutting—built on silhouetted contours and the use of negative space—renders the cartographic space (the core narrative stage of the Central Axis) with particular clarity. Second, in terms of cross-cultural accessibility, paper-cutting functions as a silhouetted artistic practice that exists across multiple cultural contexts; it thus embodies a degree of “Shared Meaning Space” and provides a formal basis for constructing consensual discourse. Chinese folk paper-cutting was inscribed on China’s first national list of intangible cultural heritage in 2006 and on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009, underscoring its significance in China and worldwide. Traditions of using cut paper to express everyday wishes and emotions also exist in many Western countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Denmark, and the United States [11]. In contemporary art, modern papercutting has further developed into a cross-cultural creative technique that occupies a visible place on the global art scene. These observations suggest that papercutting offers a recognizable formal channel for international

communication; however, its cultural connotations still require deliberate design control to achieve an intelligible translation for global audiences.

Because they are rooted in different cultural traditions, Chinese folk paper-cutting, Western paper-cutting, and modern paper-cutting art display both similarities and differences. Chinese folk papercutting tends toward a higher degree of deformation and denser ornamentation, resulting in heavier symbolic loading; by contrast, Western and modern paper-cutting works are more realistic or minimalist, with relatively accurate proportions. The key implication is that, as ornamentation and deformation increase, cultural legibility may be strengthened while the cost of information recognition rises simultaneously. Rather than directly reproducing any single paper-cutting tradition, the project therefore extracts a shared formal mechanism—embedding decorative motifs within silhouetted outlines—and translates it into operational control rules.

Accordingly, the animation adopts the shared strategy of “silhouetted outlines plus decorative elements” and controls

the extent of deformation and ornamentation in a tiered manner in response to different informational and recognition demands. As shown in Fig. 4, maps carry the greatest informational load and require the highest accuracy; they are therefore simplified on the basis of original cartographic materials, without deformation or added ornament, so as to reduce the cognitive burden of map-reading. Architectural elements must remain recognizable but need not replicate real-world proportions; moderate stylization and limited ornamentation are permitted as long as identification is not compromised. For human figures, once identity and historical period are clarified through appearance and dress, a larger degree of exaggeration in posture, facial expression, and costume is encouraged to support stylization and affective expression. Auxiliary scene elements are abstracted and adapted from the decorative lexicon of folk paper cutting. This produces a “map–architecture–figure–auxiliary” gradation: the denser the information, the more restrained the ornament; the stronger the stylization, the lower the information load.

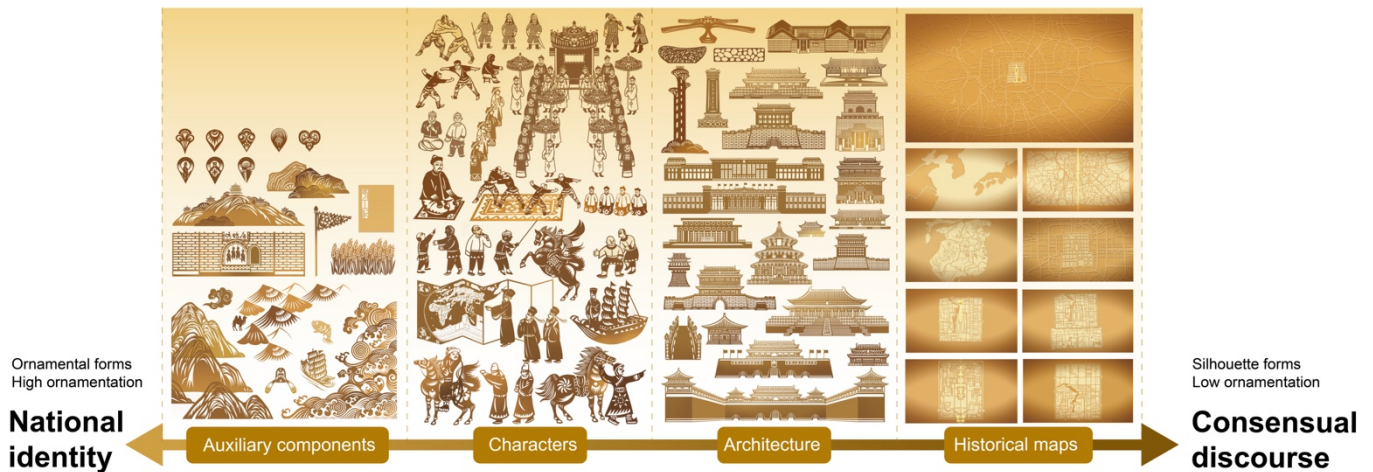


Fig. 4. Elements in Crafting Civilization: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS

After the modelling hierarchy is established, the color strategy further serves the visual integration between animation and live-action footage. Traditional Chinese folk paper-cutting predominantly employs red—a color widely recognized as emblematic of “China.” However, in *Crafting Civilization: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS*, extensive use of highly saturated red would create a sharp tonal break between the animated sequences and the live-action footage, thereby weakening narrative continuity. The palette is therefore oriented toward reducing visual abruptness and maintaining overall tonal coherence, adopting a brownish-yellow scheme that enhances a sense of historical depth and resonates with the imagery of the imperial capital. At the same time, yellow echoes the overall color of yellow-tiled roofs visible in aerial views of heritage buildings, visually indicating the Axis as an ordered complex of architectural ensembles rather than a single linear roadway.

The compositional strategy likewise follows the principle of reducing interpretive cost. Traditional compositions in Chinese folk paper-cutting foreground planarity and subjective arrangement rather than depth and perspectival relations; yet the Central Axis narrative requires a clear articulation of spatiotemporal orientation and spatial relationships. The project therefore adopts a light-and-space-

based compositional strategy: maps are used as a stable spatial substrate, while layered light and shadow and controlled viewpoint shifts establish locatable spatial relations, enabling audiences to move cognitively between two-dimensional map space and three-dimensional architectural space.

To assess the implementation and preliminary reception of this visual system, the production team conducted multiple rounds of internal review and developed qualitative observations across several dimensions, including style acceptability, recognizability of key elements, tonal integration between animation and live-action footage, and the efficiency with which composition conveys spatial relations. Overall, the reviews support the paper-cutting style as a stable framework for cultural identification, while also indicating that:

- (1) In information-dense segments, decorative density should be further restrained to maintain readability.
- (2) Color saturation should be kept within a range consistent with the live-action tonal palette to reduce abruptness at segment transitions.

(3) Composition should retain clear spatial positioning cues to improve comprehension when shifting between two-dimensional maps and three-dimensional architectural space.

It should be noted that these findings are derived primarily from internal reviews (including a small number of cross-cultural participants) and can serve as process-based evidence, but they cannot substitute for systematic feedback from international audiences. Due to practical constraints on recruiting international audiences at the production stage, internal review is used as interim evidence.

B. Integrating the "Shared Meaning Space" into the Narrative Layer of Animation

After balancing “cultural identifiability” and “global readability” at the visual level, the focus of narrative design shifts to the “accessibility of meaning”: first, at the level of narrative content, selecting and prioritizing those points that are more readily connected to Shared Meaning Space and thus more easily linked to audiences’ experience; second, at the level of expression, using coordinated constraints across narrative structure, motion design, and cinematographic language to organize cultural knowledge points into a traceable narrative process aligned with international audiences’ viewing rhythms, thereby reducing cognitive load and strengthening inter-segment coherence. Since the previous section has already addressed the structuring and selection of content-level resources, this section focuses primarily on design strategies at the level of expression.

Given that international audiences possess only limited knowledge of Chinese culture in general and of Beijing Central Axis in particular, the project deliberately avoids the grand historical narratives typical of many historical documentaries. Instead, it adopts an individual-centered narrative approach that foregrounds the connections between Beijing Central Axis and everyday life. Drawing on established practices in documentary production, such as those used by National Geographic and the BBC [12], the animation replaces extended linear storylines with a series of interwoven short episodes. This cross-cutting narrative structure is better aligned with contemporary viewing and memory patterns shaped by digital and new media environments.

Following the clarification of “what to tell” and “how to tell it” in the narrative strategy, dynamic design must further address “how to make the information legible.” Under the dual constraints of fragmentary segment duration (5–60 seconds) and the cadence of bilingual voice-over, it should offer a compressible and expandable organization of motion to ensure audiovisual alignment and reduce cognitive load. Conventional paper-cutting animation often borrows the joint-assembly logic of folk shadow puppetry, prioritizing character movement while downplaying environmental dynamics, and thus does not fully suit the present project. Accordingly, this study adopts the three-dimensional physical states of paper—folding, unfolding, erecting, collapsing, and shifting—as the primary motion vocabulary, enabling flexible staging to match varying narrative densities and rhythms across segments. In slower-paced passages, traditional actions such as walking and jumping are selectively incorporated to enrich expressive layers and enhance viewing engagement.

When the motion vocabulary is deliberately restrained, cinematographic language becomes essential for enhancing dynamism and structuring the viewer’s perceptual path. To enable smooth transitions and seamless integration between live-action and animated footage, the project adopts camera movements that simulate real-world shooting practices. The animation makes extensive use of zooming, dollying, panning, and tracking. Zoom and dolly shots are particularly effective in expressing spatial transitions and temporal shifts (Fig. 5): from a bird's-eye perspective, they facilitate shifts between wide and close shots when visualizing cartographic changes, thereby linking overall structure and local detail, whereas at eye level they articulate spatial relations among buildings and evoke an embodied experience of moving through the architectural environment. Panning shots support transitions between the two-dimensional map space viewed from above and the three-dimensional architectural space perceived at ground level, allowing audiences to oscillate between macro-level understanding and embodied perception of the Axis. Tracking shots are primarily employed to guide viewers' gaze and foreground narrative focal points. Finally, given the relatively short duration of each animated segment, long takes are used to underscore the fluidity and continuity of the animation.

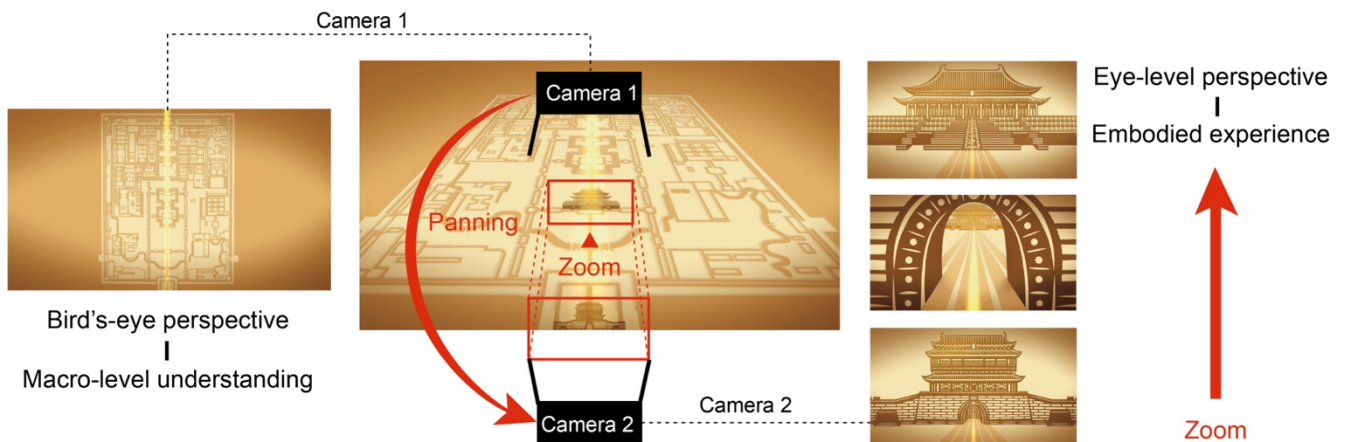


Fig. 5. Cinematographic language in Crafting Civilization: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS

Finally, to examine the implementation and interim reception of the proposed strategies for narrative structure,

dynamic design, and cinematographic language, multiple rounds of internal review were likewise conducted during

production. Qualitative observations were documented with respect to cognitive load under fragmentary durations (5–60 seconds), audiovisual alignment (including rhythm differences between Chinese and English narration), the naturalness of cross-segment transitions (i.e., the smoothness of animated-to-live-action cuts), and the traceability of the narrative process (i.e., whether key information can be continuously followed), thereby supporting iterative verification and refinement of key decisions. Overall, the review results suggested that these expressive-level strategies can support narration under a fragmented insertion mode; however, they also indicated that:

(1) Short cross-cut stories should establish clear closure at the beginning and end of each segment, or explicitly anchor themselves to adjacent documentary footage, in order to reduce perceived discontinuity and fragmentation.

(2) In segments where narration rhythms diverge substantially between Chinese and English, information density per unit time should be reduced, and actions such as “folding, unfolding, erecting, collapsing, and shifting” should be used as semantic nodes to strengthen audiovisual alignment.

(3) Camera movements (zoom/dolly, pan, and tracking) and the use of long takes should be deployed in accordance with narrative focal points, avoiding excessive motion that may distract attention and undermine the traceability of the narrative process

V. CONCLUSION

This study proposes an animation design methodology oriented toward cross-cultural communication, providing a case-based reference for designers and cultural communicators seeking to “build a discourse system that bridges China and the world and tell compelling Chinese stories.”

It first argues that design practice in cross-cultural communication is essentially a process in which individuals or groups situated in different meaning structures encode and decode information. Encoding—namely, design—ultimately aims for the decoder to interpret information in line with the

encoder's intention. Accordingly, the core task of design is to construct consensual discourse that is compatible with both the encoder's cultural system and the decoder's interpretive framework. On this basis, the paper advances an animation design method centered on consensual discourse.

First, it emphasizes a multilayered understanding of the goals of consensual discourse. Using animation as an example, design should not only ensure efficient information transmission at the cognitive level but also construct cultural identity markers at the aesthetic level, thereby articulating the communicator's cultural characteristics and artistic sensibilities in a multi-dimensional manner.

Second, consensual discourse must be grounded in the “Shared Meaning Space” jointly shaped by senders and receivers. Designers should delineate the scope of this “Shared Meaning Space” according to the target audience (international publics or specific countries) and map out common symbolic associations as well as similar life experiences and cultural backgrounds.

Third, based on the dual objectives of consensual discourse, the study proposes a dual-axis collaborative animation design framework that incorporates “Shared Meaning Space”. Visually, it coordinates stylistic choices, element modelling, color composition, and compositional strategies to balance aesthetic differences between communicators and audiences. Narratively, it constructs accessible and resonant storytelling strategies through the selection of narrative content, narrative structure, motion design, and cinematographic language.

Finally, drawing on the animation production of *Crafting Civilization: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS* (Fig. 6), the paper demonstrates how “Shared Meaning Space” is embedded at both visual and narrative levels and validates the effectiveness of the “dual-axis collaboration & “Shared Meaning Space”” framework. As “Shared Meaning Space” expands through repeated interaction between communicators and audiences, the repertoire of consensual discourse is continuously enriched, thereby enhancing the depth and efficiency of cross-cultural communication and contributing to a virtuous cycle in global cultural exchange.

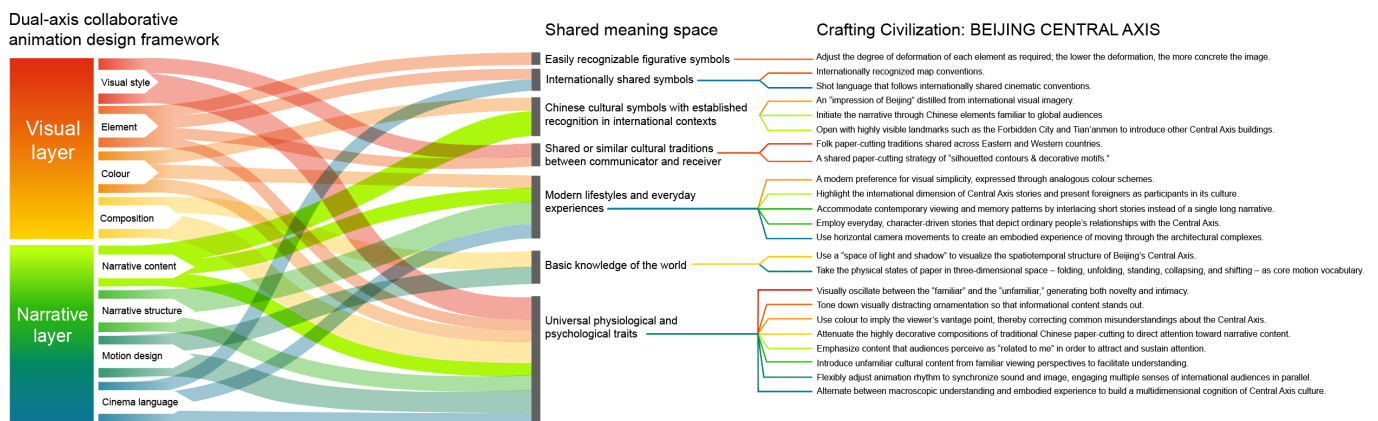


Fig. 6. Operationalization of the dual-axis collaborative animation design framework through shared meaning space in *Crafting Civilization: BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS*

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