

# Exploring the Differences in Chinese and American Audiences' Understanding of Chinese Costume Dramas

## —The Legend of Concubine Zhen Huan as an Example

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**How to cite this paper:** Ding, B. J. (2024). Exploring the Differences in Chinese and American Audiences' Understanding of Chinese Costume Dramas. *Chinese Studies*, 13, 28-42.  
<https://doi.org/10.4236/chnstd.2024.131003>

**Received:** December 11, 2023

**Accepted:** February 19, 2024

**Published:** February 22, 2024

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### Abstract

The Legend of Zhen Huan, the pinnacle of Chinese costume dramas, is still enduring after a decade. It has received unanimous praise from Chinese audiences since its release. Before its release in the United States, the Legend of Zhen Huan team first got it to the Cannes Film Festival to test the waters and gained success. The drama has also received mixed reactions from American audiences after its release in the US. Therefore, as one of the representatives of Chinese costume dramas, this article focuses on the different audience reactions generated by Chinese costume dramas at home and abroad, focusing on The Legend of Concubine Zhen Huan, and doing research and study between the audience feedback in China and the United States. This article compares and contrasts three episodes of Legend of Zhen Huan: the blood-testing link, the protagonist's killing with a borrowed knife, and the love for King Guo and Zhen Huan. Through the comparison, we find that the audiences of the two countries have different or opposite views on these three episodes due to the influence of different cultures.

### Keywords

Chinese Costume Drama, Legend of Zhen Huan, Cultural Differences

## 1. Preface

The purpose of this paper is to study the differences in cultural thoughts about Chinese costume dramas between China and the United States by comparing the different feelings of Chinese and American audiences towards Legend of Concubine Zhen Huan. In order to facilitate the better dissemination of Chinese cos-

tume dramas to the United States, so that American audiences can better understand ancient Chinese culture, this paper centers on the study of Legend of Zhen Huan. At present, research materials are scarce in the academic world on the audience differences generated by the foreign dissemination of Chinese costume dramas, and this paper tries to fill the gap by studying The Legend of Zhen Huan. It is found that some views expressed in Chinese costume dramas give rise to different opinions between Chinese and American audiences. These different opinions are influenced by the different cultures of the two countries and the incomprehensible translation of language. The research process has also obtained some requirements for Chinese costume dramas to meet when they are sent abroad: translate them based on fitting the actors' semantics; try not to cut out key scenes in the process of adaptation, or provide voice-over explanations for some difficult details to make it easier for foreign viewers to understand. In the past decade, Chinese costume dramas have only been responsible for translating, dubbing, and integrating their hit dramas and then releasing them abroad. Due to the direct translation of the past language being too hard, the American audience finds it difficult to understand the meaning of the specific details, only a general understanding of the plot. For example, "Legend of Zhen Huan" was also spread in the United States simply by shortening the plot and directly translating the actors' statements, without paying attention to the differences in thinking between American culture and Chinese costume dramas. The lack of clarity in many expressions is also the reason for the difference in the perception of Chinese costume dramas between Chinese and American audiences. In this paper, based on the study of the different reflections of Chinese and American audiences, it is proposed that we should pay attention to the vividness of Chinese costume dramas so that audiences in other countries can understand Chinese culture and Chinese costume dramas.

## 2. Case Studies

Chinese costume dramas show the life of ancient people to the audience under the premise of respecting history. However, due to cultural differences, Chinese and American audiences have many different views on Chinese costume dramas and understand some details differently. This article examines the views and differences between Chinese and American audiences and analyzes the reasons through two details in the drama.

### 2.1. Views on the Blood Test in the Drama

The blood test is the highlight of Legend of Concubine Zhen Huan, and it is one of the most important moments for Chinese viewers. Everyone who watches Legend of Concubine Zhen Huan will watch this part over and over again, unwilling to miss every second. The director adds a lot of details to every second of this part, which may be just the action when Zhen Huan pinches the corner of the table, which will expose the heart of the characters at that time. The entire

segment begins with a tense and exciting denunciation and ends with Zhen Huan's victory. The scene begins with a background padded by the fact that the courtesans around Zhen Huan were asked by the Empress to train new courtesans, leaving the courtesans and eunuchs in Zhen Huan's palace with no time to keep an eye on the Empress and the others, and failing to notice the conspiracy of the Empress and the others. The next day, Qigui ren calls all the consorts in the palace to the Empress's palace, to prevent the rest of the palace from helping Zhen Huan to ventilate the palace. As the main force of the Empress's faction, Qigui ren denounced Xi Guifei (i.e. Zhen Huan) for fornication and got several witnesses. The Empress invited the Emperor to the palace to make him deal with Zhen Huan, or to make him deal with Zhen Huan ruthlessly. And Zhen Huan, in an unguarded situation, was very worried about her affair with the King of Fruit County being told off and pinched the corner of the table. Fortunately, Qi Guiren denounced the "adulterer" is the Imperial Doctor Wen Shichu, and not the fruit king, Zhen Huan sent a sigh of relief. But how can the Queen's detachment easily let Zhen Huan go, adding alum to the water of the blood test, so that the blood of Dr. Wen and the Sixth Prince dissolved, proving that the Sixth Prince is the son of Dr. Wen. And Zhen Huan knows this is not the truth, calm and collected, lets the people around them drop into the water, blood all dissolves, proving that this experiment is wrong. The second time the water to verify whether the Wen doctor and the sixth son of the results are not, proving that Zhen Huan's son is not the Wen doctor's son. But Qi nobleman brought three or four "witnesses" to prove that the two had a private affair, good in the Ning nobleman to their own Palace card to Rumbi and Yu Yao sent, let them go to Lingyun Peak to find witnesses, which confirmed that Zhen Huan did not have a private affair with Dr. Wen. There are so many more details in this segment that it's impossible to say. Chinese viewers believe that the wonderful reason is that the director as well as the actors for the details of this scene control is very good, there not a redundant shots, each shot is ambush and hints: that the Queen's detachment was thwarted, Zhen Huan detachment in this blood test in the victory, recognized by the emperor. Chinese viewers on Douban said, "Since then, the end of all the characters is basically a foregone conclusion. Having brought down the Empress, this big drama will not realize that it is also time to go to the curtain call." "The blood test is the most important game designed by the three people in the Empress' camp to bring down Zhen Huan, and is one of the famous scenes of The Legend of Zhen Huan. It's the episode that sets the stage. Plot layer by layer, the climax is constant; the acting skills of the actors, can be point, no one pulls the crotch out of the drama; character character features more distinctive, justified. Zhen Huan party and the Empress party master strokes, see the moves; a back and forth, wonderful; who is not willing to worship the wind. I remember the tension of watching this scene for the first time. The audience's heart, like Zhen Huan's tightly clenched hand, gripped up the whole time." Chinese viewers thought it was a very good play and a turning point for Zhen Huan

to become a power over the Empress in the Harem. Since then, the Emperor's trust in the Empress has diminished, and he is reluctant to favor several people in the Empress' camp. On the contrary, all of Zhen Huan's camp were promoted and favored by the Emperor.

After watching the show, American viewers thought that the blood test was really unnecessary and didn't understand why it was necessary to take it this way to confirm that the Sixth Prince was not the Emperor's biological son. Here's what American viewers of Reddit had to say, "It makes me wonder about the historical accuracy of that description. Was this a common practice or belief at the time, or was it more for the dramatic effect of the show? In that scene where blood is used to determine family relationships, I think it's a very instinctive and literal interpretation of blood ties. It's very different from how we usually think about DNA testing and so on in modern times." American viewers did not understand why DNA verification was not used instead of a blood drop, and their investigation yielded the following reasoning "I've been doing some reading on the subject, and I've found that the herbalists and beliefs of that era had a lot of practices that might be unusual for us now. It emphasizes the importance of blood ties in the cultural context of the story. Blood is not just a biological factor here. It's full of deep emotional and familial significance. The fact that the play depicts it in such a reverent and serious way really emphasizes the weight of this act in the story. It's not just a test. It's a profound declaration of identity and belonging." They believed that Chinese medicine had adopted many practices that Western medicine could not understand, while blood might be emphasizing Chinese culture and that blood was the tie that held families together. In fact, at that time the Qing Dynasty was still a closed and feudal society and did not have such advanced DNA technology. The blood drop test was the best way at that time to verify whether two people were related. Modern technology has also proved that the blood test is not accurate. The blood of a person who is not his/her biological father and son can also dissolve in water because they may have the same blood type or the blood-related factors match. United States has been a capitalist society since its founding, adopting Western medical treatment protocols with little understanding of the culture of Chinese medicine. The American audience also cannot understand why a father and son can be proven to be a biological father and son if their blood drops dissolve in water, their understanding is just that Chinese people are more concerned about blood relationships, so they put their verification method on blood. The Western family is more concerned with the privacy of each individual, unlike the Chinese family which is a complete group. Blood relationship is the bond of the Chinese family, and those who are not related by blood are outsiders to the group. The Chinese family places a high value on blood ties and emphasizes the proximity of the bloodline. American families highly praise individualism and use rational principles to treat family members and handle family affairs. They respect each other's privacy and rarely interfere in each other's private affairs. But speechless

undoubtedly, the audience in both countries thought that the scene in that paragraph had a sense of urgency, fearing that the protagonist Zhen Huan had problems in this episode. Viewers in both countries stand on the female lead position do not want to see the hard-to-get glory and wealth Zhen Huan lose everything, also do not want as the “bad guys” on behalf of the Queen’s camp to win, after all, the Queen’s camp on the protagonist Zhen Huan persecution too many times.

## **2.2. Opinions on the Different Ways the Protagonists in the Play Used to Torture People**

In *The Legend of Concubine Zhen Huan*, the women in the harem involved in the palace fights are not directly used to kill or, rather, to directly fight with the enemy, but use a lot of means. For example, Concubine Hua asked Shen Meizhuang to copy the account books of the harem, and she did it many times and with fewer candles, which made Shen Meizhuang’s eyes sore and her shoulders hurt after she finished copying the account books; for example, the Emperor and the Empress Dowager discussed to get rid of Concubine Xiang, but they also sent a maid to poison her sleeping pills, so that she would slowly die of poisoning. For Chinese viewers, this is a very normal operation. Especially in feudal society, there is an order of seniority and inferiority. Those with high status can punish those with low status as much as they want, because in their eyes, only those with high status have the right to speak and dispose of things, and all others with low status have no human rights. Although Empress Hua and the Emperor and others could have killed Shen Meizhuang and Concubine Xiang directly, they were after all concubines in the harem and could not abuse their power and dispose of them at will. Even if the palace maids and guards in the harem broke the law, they, as high-status administrators, could not kill them directly, but could only employ various punishments to torture them. In the heart of the Chinese people, people with high status as rulers have the power to manage those people with low status, but killing them directly is too obvious, and will make everyone think that people with high status are very cruel, lack support for them, and also lower their reputation. Often these means of torture are the most cruel. For example, in the drama, Zhen Huan said something like “It’s too easy to let a person die, but to be worse than death in the palace is the best punishment for a person.” The high-status people use this torturous way to punish the low-status people, on the one hand, it will make them worse than death, so that they can take revenge; on the other hand, it can also save their own reputation, which is really the best of both worlds for the Chinese audience. But for American viewers, they just thought that was just too cruel. “Those people were going to die, it’s pathetic, why do they have to resort to such means? Why can’t they just be killed? And for Concubine Hua, as a concubine in the palace, although her status is high, why does she have to bully other concubines in various ways? She obviously doesn’t like the other concubines, just doesn’t interact with them? It’s too cruel to bully concubines like this.” “Concubine Qi had her palace maid slap

Zhen Huan's mouth on Long Street, and Zhen Huan's face was slapped red, so horrible. It's too insulting to watch, I'm so angry! Why can't Zhen Huan just hit back!" American viewers can't understand the hierarchy of Chinese feudal society and don't understand why people are not equal to each other. The problem of hierarchy has always existed in China, because all dynasties advocated the difference between the inferior and the superior, and thus were seriously held back by the idea of hierarchy in human interactions. The Chinese people still have a serious idea of humility. Subordinates need to take the initiative to greet their superiors when they see them, and juniors need to respect and behave in a civilized manner when they see their elders (Liu Yan, 2020). American viewers are angry whenever they see some of the characters in the show receive abuse from others and want them to rise against it. But this is impossible. In feudal society, the weak and the strong rule makes people forget to fight back and how to fight back. They only know how to grovel and silently endure the punishment of those in high positions. If it is true, as the American audience said, that when being punished, they rebel up, then those of low status will only get even more cruel torture and treatment. The feudal people could not say "stay away from me" to those they disliked or kill their enemies as they did in the United States. When they were bullied or faced with unfair treatment, they could only endure in silence until they got a higher position like Zhen Huan and then came back to clean up their enemies, which was the way to fight back in the feudal society of China.

### **2.3. For the King Guo and Zhen Huan's Love Evaluation**

The most controversial part of The Legend of Concubine Zhen Huan which triggered the Chinese audience is the love between King Guo and Zhen Huan. They think that the love between King Guo and Zhen Huan is incest, with the younger brother looking at his own brother's woman. Whenever they saw the episode of Legend of Zhen Huan in which Zhen Huan and King Guo's story in Ling Yun Peak, Chinese viewers chose to skip the way. According to Chinese viewers, "First of all, King Guoxian is flirtatious. He complimented every woman several times, causing many women to fall for him. Through this means, King Guo also hooked up with Zhen Huan and fell in love with her. Secondly, the love between King Guo and Zhen Huan went against human ethics. They are sister-in-law and brother-in-law and cannot be together. Lastly, the King Guo is very selfish. When he was with Zhen Huan, he didn't think about Zhen Huan, if the whole thing came to light, what about Zhen Huan and her family. What about the King's mother. King Guo and Zhen Huan only think of their own love, and never thought of family. In a feudal society, ruled by the powerful, Zhen Huan and King Guo would surely get a great punishment if the Emperor knew about it." "Although we are angry that the Emperor used Zhen Huan as a stand-in, who is it not good for King Guo to like, why should he like his sister-in-law? He also failed so many women's hearts. In the later stages of the drama, he was afraid that the Emperor couldn't see that he was interested in

Zhen Huan, right? He's not doing well himself and still wants to drag Zhen Huan along with him? Too stupid." As you can see, the Chinese audience did not think highly of the love between King Guo and Zhen Huan, and even slammed it. They don't want Zhen Huan and King Guo to be together, and feel that it is against ethics and morality, and puts Zhen Huan in a dilemma. If the Emperor finds out, Zhen Huan and King Guo's whole family will die without a burial place.

In contrast the American audience loved the character of King Guo. They think the two are free to love each other and should not be bound by other things. "The United States preaches equality for all and will not look at the order of elders and children (Hu, 2021)." "I really like the character of King Guo, very romantic and knows how to love the person he likes." "Both Zhen Huan and King Guo think that each other is their ideal type of lover. I was really sad that in King Guo's last moments, she didn't tell him that the twins were his children. I think he should have known that she never wanted to betray him, she just did what she thought was best for the children and wanted to avenge him." Love is something that can break through all restraints and gain respect and recognition. But in the feudal society of China, people's character was suppressed and buried. People could not live according to ideal thinking but were bound by all kinds of power and rules. The love between King Guo and Zhen Huan could not be recognized by the society at that time. Although King Guo's mother supported them, it was only an idealized form. The freedom of love that the American audience appreciates is almost non-existent in feudal China. Chinese feudal society insisted on "the order of parents and the words of matchmakers". Chinese feudal society could not approve of two people of different statuses being together, and they emphasized the importance of the "right family". The King Guo was a prince of a country, and his status was honored. Zhen Huan was a nun, or a concubine who was abolished by the emperor. It was impossible for the King of Fruit County to take such a status as his wife, and the Emperor found out that there was a possibility of death by lynching. The emperor is a very cruel person, moreover, although the emperor abolished Zhen Huan, the heart is still very much in love with Zhen Huan, and it is impossible to give it to others. "In ancient Chinese society, a woman's fate is often not up to her, whether she marries or not, who she marries, are not allowed to make their own decisions, but Zhen Huan defies the world's customary courage to desire their own love. This kind of personal hero's growth history under the theme of love is in line with the American audience's appreciation tastes (Lai, 2018)."

Afterthoughts from some American netizens:

The 17th prince affair looked like a fairy tale. In a drama fraught with such realism, the 17th prince affair just looked too idealistic, too imaginary. 17th Prince was like a story book character, the fairytale prince on a white horse coming to save the damsel in distress, he didn't seem to have the nuances of the other characters in the drama. That's not to say I didn't enjoy or appreciate the inclusion of such a moral character in the drama. Because, let's face it this drama needed some positivity among the rampant scheming, murders and evilness.



To summarize, “Legend of Zhen Huan”, the pinnacle of Chinese ancient costume dramas, has been well received by the Chinese audience as well as the American audience. American viewers cannot understand many of the practices of Chinese medicine in the play, but they can only show respect for the differences. For people of high status casually torturing people of low status, American viewers express their anger and incomprehension; for the free love between King Guo and Zhen Huan, American viewers express their support. There are many differences between these ideas and the Chinese audience, but that doesn’t stop everyone from agreeing that The Legend of Zhen Huan is a great TV series. With the spread of Chinese costume dramas, more other countries know about Chinese culture, which can also reduce differences and better understand China.

### 3. Analysis of Causes

“The formation of cultural values is intrinsically linked to specific historical, regional and folk cultures, and the reasons for their formation should be explored at the level of cultural development. However, under the influence of modern culture, cultural values are constrained by family factors and form distinctive different characteristics (Fan, 2022).”

Chinese culture emphasizes first and foremost the concept of family and the sense of community. “In traditional Chinese culture, the concept of ‘family’ is most valued, and the family itself is inseparable (Li, 2022).” Everyone is expected to give to the group to which he or she belongs, without expecting anything in return. Especially for Chinese families, everyone is an essential part of the family. Secondly, Chinese people pay more attention to the order of seniority and inferiority. When facing the older and higher ranking people, they should show some respect and not exceed the rules. Thirdly, when interacting with others, Chinese people are always humble and courteous. “Chinese society advocates harmony, which means that collective interests are prioritized and the greater good is given priority, and when collective goals are achieved, individual interests are also realized in a ‘win-win and reciprocal’ model (Wan & Yuan, 2021).” In the face of dissatisfied people, they will not directly express their dissatisfaction with each other, but will gradually alienate themselves from the people they hate or privately use some means of revenge.

The main characteristics of American culture are, firstly, that Americans strongly believe in individualism, and that they consider themselves to be independent individuals rather than members of a close-knit family or religious group, ethnicity, etc. Two, Americans believe that all people enjoy equal status and are therefore reluctant to show public respect, such as bowing their heads. In particular, they do not understand the “please greet”, “kneeling”, and “bowing” aspects of the “Legend of Zhen Huan”. Third, when dealing with others, Americans emphasize openness and frankness. They believe that conflicts and disagreements are best resolved through frank discussions among the people involved. Americans believe that if someone has a problem with another person,



that person should be told clearly and directly so that a solution to the problem can be proposed.

### 3.1. Historical and Cultural Differences

China has a long history and culture of more than five thousand years. Especially in the feudal society, has been practicing male superiority and female inferiority, and respect for the ritual system. To “survive in heaven, extinguish human desire”. Feudal etiquette trapped countless men and women from bravely pursuing their love, not in line with the etiquette of the relationship is “incest”, such as for the relationship between Yunli and Zhenhuan in the drama, even if the two are equal in age, very good match. But Zhen Huan was once the woman of Yunli’s half-brother, and Chinese viewers will express strong dissatisfaction and criticism of their relationship.

China is more family-oriented, and from ancient times, many families would also keep genealogies and ancestral halls to prove blood ties. Kinship, for the Chinese, is vital. The Chinese prefer to have grandchildren and grandchildren, etc. living together, with everyone in the entire family living in one mansion. On New Year’s holidays, incense is offered to ancestors in order of seniority. But for the family to prosper there must be many men and the bloodline must be pure. The male members of the family must be of the family name’s bloodline, and cannot be mixed. Usually the “righteous son”, or “adopted son”, must also be the family of other branches of the lineage. Unless the family is really not prosperous, to adopt a man of the opposite sex, but also to change the family name to worship ancestral hall. So in the eyes of the Chinese audience, blood ties are extremely important. Zhen Huan’s return to the palace with Yun Li’s child was also feared by the Chinese audience. Standing in the position of the heroine, Chinese viewers are very worried about the sixth prince’s blood relationship was found out, so the “blood test” becomes the climax of the whole drama. The royal bloodline, moreover, must maintain the purity of the bloodline. Especially the ancient emperors had to have their own children. They wouldn’t raise children for others, and they wouldn’t accept their own women having children with others.

“The Chinese concept of the family is more about the order of elders and children, with the younger generation obeying the elders. While the American social concept is more pursuing equal rights, children and parents are equal (Xuan & Lu, 2022).”

The history and culture of the United States are only about 400 years old, without a long historical system, and in the process of national construction, immigrants from Britain, France, Germany, and other countries flowed into the United States in large numbers and formed a fierce struggle, so the hierarchical concepts of the Americans are relatively thin, emphasizing the equality of status and position. The U.S. believes in Christian culture, and “salvation” and “gratitude” are labeled as the beliefs of Americans. Therefore, in social activities,

Americans do not need to emphasize complex ethical relationships, but to ensure the equality of their own rights and obligations, for example, American parents will not take care of their children for the sake of “blood relations”. For example, American parents do not take care of their children for the sake of “blood relationship”, and the children do not draw closer to their parents to a certain extent, which is not in line with the idea of “please be at peace” and “superiority and inferiority” embodied in Legend of Concubine Zhen Huan. They are taught that everyone is equal, and they believe in free love. They don’t care if their girlfriends or boyfriends were once the other half of their families. Love is a matter of two people, not a family. American viewers loved the love between Zhen Huan and Yun Li in the drama, and the love between the Emperor and Zhen Huan caused a lively discussion. The main body of their discussion was whether the Emperor really loved Zhen Huan or not, and whether the Emperor’s favor for Zhen Huan was because Zhen Huan looked like Empress Chun Yuan. Americans insist that love is about feelings and not about morality, so they think it’s cruel to let two people who no longer have feelings live together. They will not continue a marriage without love for the sake of their children; for Americans, their own happiness is more important. Marriage is just a sublimation of love, having children is not the ultimate goal of marriage. That’s why they prefer Yunli to be with Zhenhuan, and can’t understand why Zhenhuan ends up with the loveless Emperor again.

“Individualistic values in the United States are expressed in the emphasis on personal independence, privacy, self-reliance, and self-actualization (Pan, 2022).” “Americans have a strong sense of boundaries, each family member retains their own private space, and almost never imposes their will on other members, even parents do not have the right to children’s marriage to any interference, in the view of the Americans, the marriage does not need to go through the parents of the permission, so the Americans in the case of marriage before they visit each other’s parents is not uncommon. Americans believe that parents have a legal obligation and social responsibility to raise their children, but this is only temporary support, once the child becomes an adult, he or she will move out of the parents’ home to live independently, and even if he or she continues to live in his or her parents’ home, he or she will need to pay his or her parents for food and lodging, and the parents and their children will respect each other and be independent of each other (Lin, 2022).” After marriage, the husband-wife relationship takes precedence over all family relationships, i.e., the husband-wife relationship takes precedence over kinship relationships such as parents and children. Americans want their offspring to be independent. Older generations can live hundreds of miles from their children.

### 3.2. Differences in Medical Culture

As a method of verification in traditional Chinese medicine, blood test has been highly respected during the feudal period. In ancient times, many men would

also use this method in order to prove their family relationship. Or to verify whether their sons are biological or not. Chinese medicine has always been highly respected, and in the era of feudal society, Chinese medicine treatment was the most progressive treatment at that time. Due to their immaturity, people in feudal society were not willing to study the relationship of differences in blood types, and could only verify kinship through a simple blood drop test. Moreover, Chinese medicine practitioners did not advise people to damage their own bodies and paid more attention to their own maintenance. They will not take the means to damage their bodies until it is necessary (such as pricking their fingers for blood in the drama). TCM practitioners have never thought that there is anything wrong with a blood test, but simply consider that a child is a union of the parents and is bound to carry the blood of the parents.

The medical industry in the United States has also been very advanced, and Western medicine has developed at a faster pace. “Chinese medicine cannot be explained in scientific terms, so it is difficult for American audiences to accept (Zhang, 2020a).” Since the founding of the United States, it has been modern Western medicine that has been treating patients, so it is completely ignorant of Chinese medicine and unable to understand many of the methods of treatment. In addition to being puzzled by the blood drop test, they did not understand the practice of harem women drinking tonics when they were sick, including the difficult way of giving birth. After research, Western medicine discovered the difference in blood types, and that even the blood of biological fathers and sons did not always merge in water. So the American audience did not know why the “blood test” became a key element in the minds of the Chinese audience. Unlike Chinese medicine, which focuses on slow health maintenance, American Western medicine focuses more on how to treat the disease quickly and neglects the recovery and maintenance of the body in the later stages.

### **3.3. Cultural Differences in Socialization**

“The constraints and management of the people of the country by those in power in the feudal society made people conservative in their thinking, lack of innovation, and valued teamwork and win-win cooperation with others in their life and work, so it resulted in strong constraints in the aspect of cultural dimensions and a strong sense of collectivism (Kong, 2021).” When it comes to dealing with people, Chinese people try not to get into head-on conflicts with others. The Chinese are good at finding balance in all matters, and when encountering conflicts the Chinese prefer to resolve them through dialog rather than confrontation (Ma & Fan, 2020). Even though they hate someone, they will not have a verbal argument with others. For example, two camps have been formed in the late harem of the play, one is Zhen Huan’s faction and the other is the Empress’s faction. But they just use their own ploys to put others in the other camp, using the borrowed knife method, stabbing in the dark. Chinese people are good at saving face, so they will not easily tear their faces with others. The Chinese often

use the method of “face and heart do not get along” to socialize with people they do not like.

Americans are the “straight-talking” type, and American culture favors expressing one’s thoughts directly rather than keeping them in one’s heart. When confronted with someone or something they don’t like, Americans choose to speak their minds directly or to “slap” them in the face. Americans are in contact with a wider range of people, and the time of contact and communication is relatively short, so Americans are accustomed to calling strangers friends, and will quickly fade the relationship, and make and meet new friends. On the other hand, in China, the term “confidant” is used, and Chinese people value the long-term value of “friends” and are willing to invest more time in “friendship”. Chinese people try to establish close relationships with colleagues or classmates at work or in school, while Americans prefer their own independent space and enjoy their own free space. Americans, on the other hand, have a strong sense of “independence” and spirit, pay attention to their own rights and interests, and therefore lack of “collective” thinking, ignore the role of others in their own career development, emotional shaping, and social activities, and believe that over-valuing “interpersonal relationships” is the most important factor in their lives. They also believe that excessive emphasis on “interpersonal relationships” will lead to the influence and destruction of their own “private space”, so Americans will intentionally or unintentionally alienate “others”.

#### **4. Dissemination Difficulties and Solutions**

A comparative study of the American version of Legend of Concubine Zhen Huan and the original Legend of Concubine Zhen Huan reveals that there are a lot of immaturity in the process of cultural export of Chinese costume dramas. First of all, talk about it from the cultural point of view. Before Chinese costume dramas are exported to foreign countries, there is no certain explanation and popularization of Chinese history that Americans do not understand. Directly released in the U.S., it will make the American audience automatically substitute the thought pattern of modern society instead of the thought pattern of ancient Chinese feudal society. Secondly, from the perspective of translation. Many of the proprietary names of the concubines in Legend of Zhen Huan cannot be reasonably explained and translated, and American audiences need to go through them repeatedly to recognize the unequal relationships in the harem. The translation of the ancient poems in the drama also lacks the unique aesthetic thinking of the Chinese, and is a bit rigid and lacks the vividness of combining with the American language. Finally, from the editing point of view. The editing of the U.S. version of “Legend of Concubine Zhen Huan” deleted some seemingly unimportant “details”, but it will make the American audience have questions about the plot. Many American viewers will even look for the original Chinese version and compare the details. This makes it more difficult for American audiences to understand.

By analyzing the foreign communication of Legend of Zhen Huan, we found that when communicating Chinese costume dramas to the outside world, we should try to explain clearly the historical environment, lifestyle, customs and habits in which the costume dramas are set. This can be expressed by editing some pilot movies or inserting extra sound. Secondly, for the problem of inaccurate translation, we can prioritize translators who have lived in the U.S., understand Chinese culture and conform to American culture. Translate the Chinese language into a language that is easy to understand by American audiences, so that American audiences can better understand the plot. Third, when editing Chinese costume dramas, it is important to comply with the length and episode limitations of American video requirements, but also pay attention to the details of the drama. If many plots really need to be discarded, additional explanations should be provided by inserting voice-overs and other means to reduce the degree of incomprehension of American viewers.

## 5. Summarize

“The ways of thinking of different nationalities have both common and different aspects. The common aspects enable people of different nationalities to understand each other; the differences can create certain obstacles in cross-cultural communication (Zhang, 2020b).”

Due to the differences between Chinese and American cultures, Americans do not understand and approve of the methods of killing with a borrowed knife and blood test in Legend of Concubine Zhenhuan. They can't understand and recognize some of the rules of feudal China, the treatment methods of Chinese medicine, etc., but they slowly accept and respect the cultural differences while watching the drama. Chinese audience the most controversial heroine and brother-in-law together “incest love” in the eyes of Americans is the embodiment of the brave pursuit of love.

“The purpose of the foreign dissemination of Chinese films and dramas is to want people from different cultures to increase their understanding of Chinese culture, hoping to enhance communication with them and thus enrich Chinese culture (Lu, 2020).” Chinese costume drama out of the country is the embodiment of China's cultural export. “To attract overseas markets, Chinese TV dramas need, on the one hand, to draw on art forms such as American dramas and Hollywood movies to spread internationalized values. On the other hand, it is necessary to adopt narrative forms that adapt to the aesthetic habits of overseas audiences (Zhou, 2019).” However, if you want to be recognized by foreign audiences, you need to understand the words of the characters more carefully and translate them into phrases that are more in line with the thinking of foreign audiences so that they can understand them easily. In the process of translation, it is also necessary to choose some people who have experience in foreign thinking to provide voice-over narration for Chinese costume dramas that are difficult to understand by foreign viewers, so as to minimize the errors of foreign viewers' understanding of Chinese costume dramas.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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