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*Inheritance and Innovation Across Time:
Historical Authenticity and Cultural Hybridity
of Costume Culture in Chinese Historical
Films Since 2000*

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The research explores costume culture in Chinese historical films since 2000, with particular emphasis on three interrelated questions. It examines how costumes function as cultural symbols in the construction of historical authenticity, how they embody cultural hybridity under the influence of historical contexts and regional cultures, and how costume culture in Chinese historical films achieves both inheritance and innovation in the context of globalisation. This research aims to elucidate the cultural functions of costume beyond its decorative role, as well as to explain how costume functions as a visual structure with profound significance in the presentation of historical films. The research focuses on Chinese historical films released since 2000 and set in historical periods prior to 1949. It employs a qualitative research design, with still image analysis as the core method, supplemented by subtitle analysis and selected IMDb user reviews as supplementary textual materials. Drawing upon theoretical dimensions such as cultural symbol, cultural capital and cultural hybridity, this research constructs a multi-layered coding framework to analyse the costume elements and their cultural implications in the selected sample films. Findings reveal that costume culture plays a central role in the representation of the historical world. Costumes mainly construct historical authenticity through symbolic organisation, enabling the representation of identity, hierarchy, ritual order, political authority, and historical atmosphere on screen. In addition, costume culture in Chinese historical films exhibits a consistent hybridity, a characteristic formed through the negotiation of traditional costume resources, regional and ethnic elements, modern aesthetics, and industrialised visual logic. Lastly, the inheritance and innovation of costume culture are realised through a process of dynamic balance, selectively reconstructing visual forms in accordance with contemporary film expression and transnational dissemination requirements, thereby preserving traditional cultural connotations. By positioning costume culture as the central object of analysis in Chinese historical films and integrating historical authenticity, cultural hybridity, and cultural capital into a unified interpretative framework, this research contributes to the field of film costume studies. Furthermore, it offers practical insights for costume design, cultural dissemination, and the representation of traditional Chinese costume culture on the contemporary screen.