

# **Ecological Aesthetic Consciousness of the Classic of Mountains and Seas and Its Influence on Contemporary Visual Communication Creation**

**Xiaomei Tang**

Panzhuhua University, Panzhuhua, Sichuan, China

kshongtang@126.com

**Keywords:** The classic of mountains and seas, Ecological aesthetic consciousness, Visual communication creation

**Abstract:** The Classic of Mountains and Seas occupies an important position in Chinese traditional culture. In the contemporary era, people view it from a new perspective and give it new meaning. The Classic of Mountains and Seas has a far-reaching impact on many contemporary artistic creations, and the visual communication creation is enriched by the introduction of The Classic of Mountains and Seas. This paper analyzes the ecological aesthetic of The Classic of Mountains and Seas, expounds its influence on contemporary visual communication creation, so as to improve the level of contemporary visual communication creation.

## **1. Introduction**

The Classic of Mountains and Seas takes mountains and the sea as the main contents, including astronomy, geography, unique mountains and waters and other phenomena on earth. It has been widely spread due to fantastic and magical deities, rare animals, wild imagination and amazing fairy tales, attracting generations of scholars to study its mythology, literature, history, religion and other aspects. In recent years, the aesthetic field has also strengthened the study of aesthetics art creation in The Classic of Mountains and Seas to apply its artistic beauty to the creation of aesthetic art. Therefore, it is of great significance to study the ecological aesthetic consciousness of The Classic of Mountains and Seas and its influence on contemporary visual communication creation.

## **2. On the Ecological Aesthetic Consciousness of the Classic of Mountains and Seas**

### **2.1 Ecological Holistic View of the Harmony between the Heaven and Human**

Since ancient times, there has been legends that Nu Wa (a goddess in Chinese mythology) created human beings and Pan Gu (creator of the universe in Chinese mythology) separated the heaven and earth, showing that the ancestors believed that heaven and earth are the origin and component of human life. They regarded heaven and man as one, and viewed the relationship between heaven and man from the perspective of “harmony between the heaven and human”. It can be seen that the ancestors’ ecological concept was that human beings are only part of the ecosystem, and man and nature are interdependent. West Wilderness (a part of The Classic of Mountains and Seas) says that “A man named Shujun was farming. The lord of heaven, Di Jun, gave birth to Houji, who brought the seeds of all kinds of grains from the heaven to the human world. Hou Ji’s younger brother was called Tai Xi, who gave birth to Shujun. So Shujun planted all kinds of grain instead of his father and Houji, and began to create farming methods.” It shows that human sow grains before farming and farmers rely on grains to survive, reflecting the ecological wisdom of harmony of all things. There are many similar records in The Classic of Mountains and Seas, including the ecological holistic view of human beings and animals and plants, and the return of human beings to heaven and earth after death. All these reflect the ecological holistic view in ecological aesthetics.

### **2.2 Ecological View of Equality of All Living Beings**

In *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, there are no clear boundaries in the description of the appearances of human beings, deities and animals, which is often chaotic and completely different from the appearance of gods in ancient Greek mythology, that is, the appearance of human beings, reflecting the ecological view of equality among human beings, deities and animals. For example, the mountain deity's appearance is composed of animal characteristics. There are also living beings, such as Gedan (an animal) that "looks like a wolf with a red head and mouse-like eyes, and makes a sound like a pig's cry", Huashe (an animal) "with human face but jackal body, bird wing and it moves with the body on the ground" and people in Di country "with human head face but fish body, no feet". The combination of human, animal and bird fully reflects the ecological view of equality of all living beings. In addition, the ecological view of equality is also reflected from the "transformation" phenomena. The description of transforming the material into the original, the material into other things, the human being into the material, and the human into the human reflects the ancestors' endless pursuit of the life. Finally, the struggle between man and the heaven and earth shows that the ancestors worshipped nature and longed for a harmonious relationship with the nature.

### **2.3 Ecological Ethics of Respecting Heaven and Earth**

The ecological ethics of respecting heaven and earth in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* is reflected in the following aspects. The first is the understanding of all things in nature. In *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, many exotic flowers, plants and rare animals are recorded, all of which have magical medical and health care functions. For example, "There is a plant shaped like a leek with green flowers, named Zhuyu. If eating it, people won't feel hungry." and "There are trees shaped like black paper mulberry, shining the surroundings, named Migu. People won't lose their way with it." Secondly, *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* advocates the etiquette of heaven and earth, and distinguishes between good and evil. For example, "Gentleman's country is in the north. All the people in the country are well-dressed and wear swords. They all keep wild animals and there are always two big tigers around them. They are modest, tolerant and unwilling to fight.", which expresses the ancestors' admiration for etiquette. In addition, during drought, people held rain praying ceremony through dragon dance custom to worship heaven and earth, showing that the ancestors respect heaven and earth. The last is the pursuit of the unity of objects and human, expressing the yearning for a harmonious ecological home. In *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, the description of the ecological environment is reflected in the rich natural resources, the natural conditions suitable for the growth of all things, the harmonious coexistence of man, animals and nature, and the emphasis on the unity of objects and human, showing the ancestors' ecological ethics of respecting heaven and earth.

### **2.4 Ecological Operation View of Conforming to Nature**

The ecological operation view of conforming to nature in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* is mainly reflected in two aspects. On the one hand, it is the understanding of the way of nature. For example, "The deity of Zhongshan is named Zhu Yin. When it opens eyes, the world is day; when it closes eyes, the world is night; when it blows, the world is winter; when it breathes, the world is summer." It reflects the ancestors' understanding of the cycle of the four seasons and the changes of day and night, believing that all operations are controlled by the deity "Zhu Yin". Deity has mysterious power and inviolable characteristics, which shows that ancestors conform to nature and respect nature. On the other hand, it describes the terrible consequences caused by the anti-nature way. For example, West Wilderness describes that Kua Fu's wanted to catch up with the sun but died of thirst, showing Kua Fu's courage to fight tenaciously. However, his going against nature and trying to catch up with the sun eventually caused bad consequences that he died of thirst on the way. All these reflect the ecological operation view of conforming to nature in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*.

### **3. Influence of Ecological Aesthetic Consciousness of the Classic of Mountains and Seas on Contemporary Visual Communication Creation**

#### **3.1 Innovate Contemporary Visual Communication Design**

Most of the descriptions of deities and animals, strange mountains and waters, unique land and scenery in The Classic of Mountains and Seas do not exist in real life, full of imagination and creativity. Contemporary visual communication design can learn from the artistic elements, re-examine The Classic of Mountains and Seas from the perspective of contemporary culture and art, so as to carry forward and inherit the book on the basis of reference and innovate modern visual communication design methods. In addition, it is necessary to apply the transformation and reference means reasonably in the contemporary visual communication design, and change the artistic elements in The Classic of Mountains and Seas to meet the specific needs of contemporary visual communication design.

#### **3.2 Innovate the Concept of Contemporary Visual Communication Design**

The Classic of Mountains and Seas contains the ecological consciousness of reverence for nature, the pursuit of harmony between man and nature, and the equality of life. At the same time, the images of various deities and animals recorded in it are different, unique and diverse, which provide new ideas for contemporary visual communication. In the creation of visual communication, it is also necessary to give a certain meaning to the works. The personal thoughts and feelings should be organically combined with the creative works to create in the way of natural expression, rather than simply pursuing the creative skills. For example, the effect of asymmetric patterns can be more harmonious and beautiful, and the bold use of color can break through the conventional thinking, which may create unexpected effect. In contemporary times, people are impacted by more and more new things. In addition to using new means and techniques in visual communication design, we also need to seek the most authentic creative inspiration, create unique works different from others, innovate design concepts, and get out of mediocre and stylized design.

#### **3.3 Innovate the Visual Language of Contemporary Visual Communication Design**

In contemporary visual communication design, to convey information and culture, designers need to constantly search for, excavate and use new visual language, so as to convey their design concept and express artistic ideas. In The Classic of Mountains and Seas, there are towering and mysterious mountains, vast water, dazzling gold, stone and jewelry, magic and rich plants and so on. It can be said that it covers all the world. Everything that exists or does not exist in natural life can be described in the book, which provides a lot of materials for the visual language of contemporary visual communication design. The description of these things can be refined, combined with modern technology, skillfully applied to the creation of works to enhance the flexibility and mystery of the works, and present a richer visual language in the works. The innovation of visual language lies in graphics, text and color. For creators, they need to have a solid foundation of professional knowledge and high aesthetic taste, so as to transform the artistic materials in The Classic of Mountains and Seas into visual language in contemporary visual communication design.

#### **3.4 Innovate the Expression Way of Contemporary Visual Communication Design**

Contemporary visual communication design is a kind of visual communication design created by designers based on folk art and culture with modern materials and tools under the function of designer's own consciousness and imagination. In visual communication design, every designer should be aware that his works are the carrier of commercialization of science and technology, and the designer himself is the intermediary to transform art into entity. As an ancient mythological novel in China, The Classic of Mountains and Seas has rich story resources and lofty ecological

aesthetics, which provides more resources for visual communication designers in the way of expression. Many stories convey traditional and simple emotions and wisdom. Designers need to have keen creative intuition to modernize the ecological consciousness beauty in The Classic of Mountains and Seas, continue to innovate, radiate new vitality, promote the development of visual communication art.

#### **4. Conclusion**

To sum up, we know that The Classic of Mountains and Seas shows the ecological aesthetic consciousness of the ancients, namely, the harmony between the heaven and human, equality of all living beings, respect for heaven and earth, and conform to nature, which coincides with the ecological concept of harmonious coexistence between man and nature advocated by the contemporary era. If practitioners in the field of visual communication want to use the tangible graphic meaning to express their emotions and themes, they can study The Classic of Mountains and Seas carefully, learn from the rich and colorful artistic elements and the simple and scientific ecological concept to improve their own creative skills, broaden their creative ideas, and design more unique, novel, rich and full-fledged visual communication works which can give people full imagination space and enlighten them combining with modern creative techniques.

#### **5. Acknowledgment**

Project of National Social Science Foundation: “Shan Hai Jing” image category and contemporary animation character model to construct aesthetic theory system research, Approval number: 17CZX066

#### **References**

- [1] Wang Xuan. Research on Ecological Aesthetic Consciousness of The Classic of Mountains and Seas. Anhui University, 2019.
- [2] Li Jin. Influence of Traditional Cultural Elements on Visual Communication Design. The Farmers Consultant, no.19, pp.286, 2017.
- [3] Qu Yi. On the Application and Influence of Traditional Culture in Visual Communication Design. MING (Attitude), no.08, pp.59, 2017.
- [4] Wang Runzhuo. Research on Lu Xun’s Novels from the Perspective of Ecological Aesthetics -- Taking Village Opera as An Example. Masterpieces Review, no.33, pp.78-81 + 85, 2020.