

# The Style Representation and Cultural Theme of Pematsedan Films from the 'Internal Perspective'

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## Abstract

**Pematsedan, the leading figure of "Tibetan New Wave", broke through the traditional stereotype with the angle of "internal perspective" and constructed the original narrative form of Tibetan films. The use of documentary long shot, Tibetan dialogue, and the aesthetic metaphor of animal imagery are the aesthetic expression of the Pematsedan's film style from the Author's Film Perspective. And, the modernization of traditional cultural concepts and the self-construction of individual spirit are the eternal themes of Pematsedan's film performance.**

## Keywords

**Pematsedan; Tibetan film; Author's film.**

## 1. Introduction

“ 'Internal Perspective' is a creation perspective to observe the outside world and express the nation's thinking and experience standing on the required by the development of the times and the nation's own position.”[1] Being the born and bred Tibetan director, the film directed by Pematsedan pays close attention to Tibetan culture with the creation method of "internal perspective", and provides a visual feast for the audience with a breakthrough and solidified creation method.

## 2. The Narrative construction from the Author's Film Perspective

### 2.1. Characteristics of the binary opposition

In the series of films directed by Pematsedan, it is not uncommon to see characters in binary opposition. The father in *Old Dog*, Talo in *Talo and Jinba*, the killer in *Killing a Sheep* can all be classified as the 'Tibetans who stick to cultural traditions'. The opposite category is 'confused Tibetans', such as Son, *Tibetan Girl in the Barber Shop*, *Truck Driver Jinba*. There is a sharp contrast between father and son in *Old Dog*. For example, in the choice of transportation tools to enter the city: there is a contrast between a father riding a horse and a son riding a motorcycle. The acceptance of new things and the different concepts of Tibetan mastiff reflect the different concepts of the two generations.

By the shaping of binary opposition characters, the author increases the contrast between characters in the film. On the basis of this, to create narrative conflict, and promote the further development of the event based on the conflict while increasing the interest of the film. The film narrative fits in with the daily life of Tibetans, which can truly and intuitively show the discomfort and confusion of traditional Tibetans under the impact of modern culture.

### 2.2. The construction of familiarization

In Pematsedan's films, the family presentation is not a complete situation, but always lacks the image of mother. The lack of family members breaks the stable triangle structure, indicating that the stability of personality has been broken. In his four films, there is only the image of father but no image of mother in the construction of family. As an indispensable part of the

family, the image of the mother is lost in all of his films. And the lack of mother image as also makes the warm atmosphere of the film imperfect. For example, in *Balloon*, women lack status in the family and only exist as 'machines'; in *Old Dog*, even if the men lack fertility, women still depend on men. In general, in the *Pematsedan*' series, the lack of female images endows the film with the ability to reveals the instability of the family.

### **3. The aesthetic expression in Pematsedan's film style**

#### **3.1. The use of documentary long shot**

"Andre Bazan, the famous French film theorist, said in his book *What is a Film*, which is called the Bible of the Western film industry, "The truthfulness of narration is in direct opposition to the perceptual truthfulness, which comes first from the truthfulness of space"。 [2]

The narrative path of "on the road" is presented as a formula by the director. The use of long shot to construct narrative coherence and describe Tibetan environment has an obviously difference from the colorful and dreamy scenery imagination of traditional Tibetan areas. In the *Old Dog*, in the clip of his son selling dogs in the city, the long shot objectively shows the surrounding environment, which shows that the traditional pastoral area full of barbed wire has changed into a muddy road and noisy environment in the process of modern industrial construction. And the long shot of the old man riding into the city has reflected the incompatibility between traditional means of transportation and modern environment. In the film of *Killing a Sheep*, the long shot in the car shows the real scene of the road through the window, and the landscape realism brings a sense of aridity and desolation. In *Talo*, the long lens shows Taluo taking photos in the county, and constructs two location factors, namely, the up and down of the mountain. The different locations at both ends of the bridge have profound meanings of the dialogue between tradition and modernity.

#### **3.2. Tibetan dialogue**

"The formation and independence of language are often related to a certain group identity, which is usually national identity." [3] By injecting Tibetan dialogue into the film, Pematsedan makes the film have a distinct personal creative tendency. At the same time, dialect also plays a strong narrative role in telling the location of the story. It can also be said that Tibetan dialogue endows the film with documentary characteristics. Pematsedan mentioned in the interview that "Tibetan dialects are very different. In general, there are three major dialect areas: Weizang, Anduo and Kangba." Moreover, there is a big gap between each dialect. Therefore, to ensure the presentation of Tibetan dialogue in his film, actors need to learn the local Tibetan in advance.

The use of Tibetan has unique advantages for the presentation of Tibetan culture. For example, the Tibetan proverb in "Killing a Sheep". If the audience cannot stay in the specific cultural background, they cannot understand the narrative content of the film, and even have "cultural misreading" to the ideas and values conveyed by the director. Similarly, in *Talo*, in the switch between Tibetan and Mandarin, Tarot's characters are more authentic.

The use of minority language shows the cultural position of the film to some extent, that is, the film is narrated from the perspective of ethnic minorities. In some sense, "The incomprehensible language, while constituting a barrier, allows us to complete an understanding - a deeper understanding." [5] When the film narrative space of the points to the specific environment of the Tibetan region, the Tibetan dialogue makes the film have the unique aesthetic characteristics.

### 3.3. Aesthetic metaphor of animal imagery

As one of the oldest nationalities in China, Tibetan people have an inseparable relationship with animals in their development. In Pematsedan's film imagery system, animal imagery is one of its important components. In other word, it is precisely because of the full use of animal imagery in the film narrative that the film has a unique aesthetic metaphor.

In his films, sheep are very common, and the sheep imagery also reflects the change of the hero's fate. In *Balloon*, the image of ewe is in contrast with Zhuoga. The infertile ewes cannot escape being sold, and the bound sheep also indicate that Zhuoga is trapped in traditional ideas and cannot escape. Another example, in *Talo*, Talo and the lamb are mirror images of each other (the orphan identity of the lamb corresponds to Talo's orphan identity). They refer to and depend on each other, and are in a delicate balance. However, as the lamb was killed by the wolf, the balance between the them was also broken. The death of the lamb represents the turning point of Talo's destiny. The spiritual sustenance between orphan identities was split, and Talo's individual identity cognition was also in crisis.

In Tibetan life, dog is the close friend of Tibetans. It can help herding and defend against enemies. In the film *Old Dog*, the story revolves around the clue of "selling dogs". From the perspective of the elderly, the dog is a member of the family, and selling dog is like giving up with the family. In addition, the interruption of family inheritance is a heavy spiritual blow to the elderly. Therefore, dogs in the eyes of the elderly contain the image of heir. "From the perspective of Tibetan cultural practice, fantasy and metaphor are the most common narrative forms in Tibetan culture". [6] With the help of traditional cultural connotation, the director implanted animal imagery symbols into the narrative and create a poetic beauty rich in Tibetan color for the film.

## 4. Cultural Reflection and Self-exploration in Pematsedan's film

### 4.1. The modern development of traditional cultural concepts

In the interview, Pematsedan mentioned that, "What my work presents is not the binary opposition between modern and traditional, but a realistic state." [7] in his films, the regional settings embodying both traditional and modern can always be noticed. Besides that, the concepts of traditional and modern are concentrated between pastoral areas and towns, or even in a smaller space.

For example, the narration in *hospital* focuses on the collision of traditional and modern concepts. Male resistance to the hospital in the film *Old Dog*, they regard stepping into the hospital as opening the "Pandora's Box". Although the son was difficult to accept, he finally acquiesced to the result that he had reproductive defects. In *Balloon*, the establishment of hospital scenes reflects the female shame on modern contraceptives under the influence of traditional ideas. The problem of children's abandonment is a choice between traditional religious views and modern concepts. In *Talo*, although there is no specific scene of the hospital in the film, but for the treatment of cough, Tarot chose Baijiu to deal with it also reflects the image of hospital. The establishment of space more directly reflects the collision between traditional ideas and modern ideas.

The director showed the cultural anxiety of Tibetans in today's society on the screen actually. For these differences and conflicts, Tibetan people are unavoidable in their process of development and cannot choose to settle in a corner. Therefore, in the films, Pematsedan tried to find a balance between tradition and modernity.

### 4.2. The self-construction of individual spirit

In the film, the individual characters always have confusion and anxiety, and they do not know how to follow the pace of modern society. Therefore, these characters are always inevitably

moving towards tragedy in the conflict. "As the spiritual core of Pematsedan's film works, nationality and identity anxiety run through his works all the time." [8] Pematsedan paid attention to the living conditions of individuals in Tibetan areas from the perspective of "Demystification" and "removing Otherness".

The individual spirit crisis leads to the trend of its own tragedy. In the film *Old Dog*, the image of father itself contains tragic color. The stray sheep symbolize the separation of the individual from the group, and also indicates the difference between the father and the young group. For stray lambs, they can break through the fence and integrate into the group. But the tragic end of his father's final choice to kill the Tibetan mastiff indicates his embarrassment, uneasiness and panic in modern society. Another example, in the film of Talo, Talo, who lives in the traditional pastoral area, also lost his personal "pigtail" mark on the way to find his identity. In *Balloon*, the director used an open ending instead of telling Zhuoga's ending directly, the image of the red balloon flying over the Tibetan area left an infinite space for the audience to discuss.

## 5. Conclusion

Being the leading figure of "Tibetan New Wave", Pematsedan broke through the traditional "Otherness Perspective" with a "Internal Perspective" to reflect Tibetan areas objectively and truly. In his series of films, he used a unique shooting technique to record the daily life of Tibetan people in pastoral areas from an objective and calm perspective. However, in this quiet narrative, the conflict between traditional farming culture and modern industrial culture is also perfectly displayed and became the cultural purport hidden in the film.

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