



Development of a *Conghua* Cat Head Lion Dance Animation as a Catalyst for Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation

Deng Fei^{1✉}, Shaw-Chiang Wong²

¹UCSI University, Malaysia

²Raffles University, Malaysia

Submitted: November 11, 2023. Revised: May 11, 2024. Accepted: October 13, 2024

Abstract

Conghua Cat Head Lion Dance (CHLD) is a traditional dance art that faces challenges in inheritance and education. Animation is engaging and emotionally resonant, naturally appealing to the younger generation, making it a tool that scholars recommend for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). This study employs animation as a catalyst to promote and preserve the art of CHLD among the younger Chinese generation by raising their awareness of it. This study was divided into three stages. In the first stage, a field investigation was conducted at the ancestral hall in *Guangdong* Province, China. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were held with four purposively selected inheritors to collect qualitative data. The application of thematic analysis revealed four distinctive elements that could be incorporated into the animation: (1) characters, (2) patterns and costumes, (3) props, and (4) performance techniques. In the second stage, an animation was created by incorporating CHLD elements, following The Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Mayer & Moreno, 1999) and The Animation and Design Principles for Instructional Animation (Betrancourt, 2005). In the third stage, a self-administered survey questionnaire was used to examine whether the CHLD animation had the potential to increase the awareness of CHLD culture preservation among a randomly selected group of 181 students from *Guangzhou* City Construction College and *Guangdong* Polytechnic. More than 75% of the respondents expressed positive views of the created CHLD animation. The study's findings and the created animation reaffirmed the effectiveness of using digital media to preserve and promote CHLD culture, especially among China's younger generation. This also offers a valuable reference for similar studies contributing to the sustainable development of ICH in the Chinese context.

Keywords: *Conghua* Cat Head Lion Dance; inheritance and preservation; principles of animation; The Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning

How to Cite: Fei, D., & Wong, S. C. (2024). Development of a *Conghua* Cat Head Lion Dance Animation as a Catalyst for Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*, 24(2), 427-443

INTRODUCTION

The *Conghua* CHLD, as a representative of Southern lion dance and an ICH of *Guangdong* Province, embodies the cultural sophistication of the lion dance through

its distinctive characteristics, skills, and symbolic meanings (*Conghua* District Culture Museum, 2015). Southern lion dance encompasses diverse styles, with the primary representatives being the *Foshan* lion dance and the *Heshan* lion dance. Much of

✉ Corresponding author:
E-mail: 1001956878@ucsiuniversity.edu.my

Guangdong regional lion dances have been refined based on these two lion styles. The design of the *Foshan* lion dance is characterised by exaggerated features, drawing inspiration from traditional *Guangdong* stone lion sculptures. Meanwhile, the *Heshan* lion dance builds upon the basic form of the *Foshan* lion, incorporating further enhancements (Li, 2012). Over time, various schools of lion dance have absorbed and refined elements from each other, resulting in the emergence of numerous localised variations with distinct regional characteristics. Today, Southern lion dance has integrated the features of both the *Heshan* and *Foshan* lion dances. The *Conghua* CHLD, for example, exhibits feline facial features, a smaller body compared to traditional Southern lions, and a dignified appearance. Its eyes bulge like those of a goldfish, its mouth is large and round, and atop its head are two bundles of green wheatgrass, giving it a lively, gentle, yet magnanimous demeanour. According to Huang (2017), it is believed that after several generations of refinement, the *Conghua* CHLD represents a locally evolved variant of the lion dance.

The earliest record of the *Conghua* CHLD is found in the article Yearly Folklore in the *Conghua* County Magazine, compiled in 1909: "One day before the Spring Begins, in the ceremony of whipping cows to welcome the Spring in the eastern suburbs, the city had various shows and lion and elephant dances in town" (Editorial Committee of *Conghua* County Annals, 1994). Whenever there is a festival, a temple ritual, or a ceremony, or in Chinese New Year, people will play folklore instruments like *gong*, drum, and *suona*, and put on masks to perform CHLD to chase away evil spirits and hope for good luck (Editorial Committee of *Conghua* County Annals, 1994). The lion dancers sing songs while dancing, praying for peace and harmony in the coming year, the safety of people, and a good harvest. The lion dancers are covered with a red cotton quilt with red and black trim. The unique costume adds to the aroma of *Guangdong's* Hakka culture,

which has a history of over 300 years (*Guangdong* Provincial Government, 2018).

The *Conghua* CHLD originates from the ordinary people, which is about their sincere wishes and aspirations for a better life (*Guangdong* Provincial Culture Center, 2018). The Southern lions of *Guangdong* have roughly the same meaning and a lot in common (*Guangdong* Provincial Government, 2018). The *Conghua* CHLD was inscribed in the Municipal ICH List of *Guangzhou* in 2011 (*Guangzhou* Municipal Government, 2011). It was inscribed in the Provincial ICH List of *Guangdong* in 2015 (*Conghua* District Culture Museum, 2018).

However, changes in society in recent decades have led many CHLD artists to prioritise livelihoods over traditional practice and performance (Li, 2022). Moreover, the ageing generation of artists is facing difficulties in finding successors, while traditional methods of transmission struggle to adapt to societal developments (Er, 2021). The younger generation, with a focus on education and modern socialisation, often lacks awareness of the importance of preserving traditional culture (Li, 2022).

Literature Review

Conghua CHLD and its Preservation Issues

As an outstanding Southern lion dance and Lingnan art culture representative, the *Conghua* CHLD possesses significant heritage value. It offers unique perspectives for understanding Chinese humanities, representing popularised and localised art and embodying the rich history of Southern lion dance culture alongside artistic innovation. It is particularly important to absorb and inherit *Lingnan* cultural elements (Lai & Chan, 2020).

However, the *Conghua* CHLD is currently encountering various challenges. In the 1950s and 1960s, there were more than 20 CHLD teams in *Conghua*, mainly in *Aotou* Town, but the number was reduced to only ten teams in the 1980s. Today, there are merely two teams left, making it difficult to organise regular lion dance

performances. The current ICH protection system poses challenges for inheritors, including financial constraints and lack of venues and successors. Furthermore, public interest in these traditional cultures has declined with societal changes. In the market-driven economy, folk arts like *Conghua* CHLD struggle to maintain and develop without sufficient funding (Zhang, 2018).

Xiao (2017) proposed the integration of CHLD culture into the school curriculum and activities, emphasising the importance of cultural education in subjects like ‘morality and society’ and ‘physical education’. This approach raises students’ awareness of inheriting and preserving traditional cultures from an early age and promotes physical activity for healthier bodies, achieving a dual purpose. On the other hand, Kuang (2017) also suggested introducing CHLD into school education as a crucial method for protecting ICH in a changing cultural landscape; however, implementing CHLD teaching in classrooms can be challenging. To address this, teachers must continually enhance their teaching methods, enabling students to incorporate their unique qualities while learning CHLD performance. This way, each student can showcase their distinctive ‘CHLD.’

Digital Preservation of ICH

Digital preservation involves the application of computer technology, multimedia, and information dissemination to protect and preserve ICH (Zhang, 2016). The widespread use of digital technologies has transformed traditional production, lifestyle, and entertainment, reshaping the concept of preserving ICH within the cultural ecosystem (Song, 2015). Countries like Japan and Italy have effectively explored digital preservation methods, with successful cases such as digitising Sicilian puppetry, Japanese lion dance, and Japanese animation projects (Zhuo, 2013). In China, the General Office of the State Council released ‘Recommendations on the Strengthening of the Protection of China’s ICH’ in 2011, emphasising the

need for authentic and comprehensive records of ICH through various means, including written transcripts, audio recordings, video recording, and other digital multimedia formats (Song, 2021).

Huang (2005) argued that digitised film and television works offer a more authentic, scientific, dynamic, and multi-dimensional representation of the original form of folk culture. By narrating and performing cultural stories through characters in film, television works, or animation, history can be conveyed to potential audiences, providing an effective means of disseminating ICH (Huang, 2005).

Accordingly, Li (2012) proposed that specific strategies for animating ICH can be derived from three key aspects: spiritual theme, image ancestry, and aesthetic appeals (Figure 1). Animation serves as a medium for optimising and integrating cultural knowledge, concepts, and values, thereby facilitating the development of diverse forms of animation and communication tools. The combination of ICH and animation addresses current shortcomings in protection activities and expands the knowledge of ICH (Gong, 2021). By overcoming constraints of time and geography, animation reduces costs associated with learning culture, such as monetary, temporal, and spatial, while dynamically presenting its captivating essence (Li, 2012).

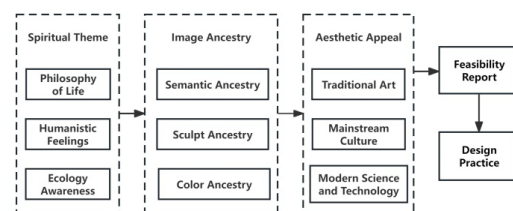


Figure 1. Creative Design Flow Chart for an Animation (Source: Adapted from Li, 2012)

In today’s cultural landscape, animation goes beyond being a cultural industry, an artistic creation, or a form of entertainment. It has evolved into a visual medium for widespread cultural dissemination, deeply integrated into people’s daily lives (Guo & Zhuang, 2018). With its high en-

gagement and emotional impact, animation particularly resonates with younger generations. In many ways, it serves as a universal language that transcends cultural boundaries and can be understood by people from all walks of life. Therefore, animation should actively participate in the preservation of ICH in contemporary times, playing a vital role in promoting the inheritance and dissemination of these cultural treasures (Chen, 2014).

Principles of Animation

Animation principles refer to studying and analysing various aspects of animation, including its art, technology, aesthetics, and culture. It is an important field in animation research aimed at exploring all aspects of animation production in depth, such as its history, production processes, artistic styles, technical methods, cultural significance, and so on (Williams, 2009).

The Animation and Interactivity Principles in Multimedia Learning by Betrancourt (2005) explains how learning can be improved by considering three distinctive factors: (1) to provide support during visualisation and mental representation processes; (2) to create an animation to stimulate 'cognitive conflicts' for learning purposes; and (3) to enable learners to explore a topic through a discovery approach. According to the 3D animation production process by Yao (2022), the production of animation covers three stages: (1) pre-production, including script writing, character design, and scene design; (2) production, including 3D modelling, character rigging, camera construction, keyframe animation; and (3) post-production, lighting rendering, synthetic output (Yao, 2022).

The Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning

According to The Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Mayer & Moreno, 1999), learning is optimised when combining words and pictures. People's brain processes a series of stimuli such as words, pictures, and audio simultaneously

through transferring, selecting, organising, and associating to make sense of something. Therefore, multimedia learning is much more effective than single-medium-based learning (Rosli et al., 2020).

Based on the literature review, related animation works of the *Conghua* CHLD are rarely found on online or social media platforms, such as YouTube, Bilibili, Tencent Video, and iQIYI Video. Therefore, there is great potential for promoting and disseminating *Conghua* CHLD animation works online to reach younger generations in China. In addition, there are also very limited studies related to the traditional dance art and culture of CHLD. This means that further investigation is needed. Therefore, this study employs animation as a catalyst to promote and preserve the art of CHLD among the younger Chinese generation by raising their awareness of it. The research questions of this study are as follows: (1) What elements can be used in the creation of the animation of the *Conghua* CHLD? (2) How can the elements of the *Conghua* CHLD be used to create an animation? And (3) To what extent can the animation arouse the Chinese younger generation's awareness of preserving the *Conghua* CHLD culture?

METHOD

This research employs a mixed-methods research approach, addressing the three questions posed above through three phases: (1.) field investigation and semi-structured interview; (2.) animation making; and (3.) questionnaire survey. The following sections provide more detailed explanations.

Phase 1: Field Work

Field work involves collecting data and conducting research in the natural or real-world environment, typically through direct observation, interviews, and other data collection methods that take place in the field where the phenomenon of interest occurs (Bernard, 2006).

To comprehensively study the techni-

ques and elements needed for the *Conghua* CHLD performance, the researcher used two sites for field work: (1) *Guangzhou Minle* Primary School. The school is a training base for *Conghua* CHLD, and every Wednesday, the inheritors would come here to teach performance techniques and skills to the school kids (2) *Guangzhou Aotou* Town *Xinwei* Village Ancestral Hall. This is the birthplace of the *Conghua* CHLD, recording the development history of the *Conghua* CHLD and exhibiting the props, costumes, and other items used in the lion dance performance.

During the data collection process, the researcher prepared tools like cameras and mobile phones to take photos while observing the relevant materials when visiting the ancestral hall where the performance items of the CHLD were stored. Videos were taken while watching the performance at the training base of the *Conghua* CHLD to watch the performance closely and get in touch with the performers. By documenting the materials digitally, the researcher was able to see details of the roles, movements of the performance, and expressions of the performers. It is believed that these photos and videos, after analysis, provided raw resources or inspiration sources for making the animation.

After the initial fieldwork, four inheritors of *Conghua* CHLD were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Three key criteria were used to select these four interviewers. Firstly, these individuals had more than 20 years of experience in the CHLD performance. Secondly, they have vast skills and knowledge in different aspects of CHLD. Thirdly, they have experience as captains to lead the performance team.

Interviews, as a qualitative research method, involve direct communication between the interviewer and interviewee to explore and discuss specific issues (Sven et al., 2020). Catherine (2016) defined semi-structured interviews as a data collection method that allows participants to freely express their views and experiences within a specific topic framework while ensuring

that the research questions are answered. The purpose of semi-structured interviews is to allow the researcher to discuss the issues and challenges faced by the inheritors, including the factors that have caused the cultural decline. The interviews also discussed the meaningful elements of CHLD that can be used for animation making. The inheritors provided their suggestions and ideas for promoting CHLD culture through animation.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected in the fieldwork, including the visual materials and narrative data from the interview. As mentioned, the researcher collected photos and videos during the fieldwork; by conducting an in-depth analysis of this theme, the researcher was able to better understand the elements of the CHLD that can be used for animation making.

Phase 2: Animation Making

The whole procedure of making the animation, starting from the topic selection to the final completion of the animation work, can be regarded as a series of standardised processes. Generally, the procedure is divided into three stages: (1) the pre-production stage, (2) the production stage, and (3) the post-production stage (Yao, 2022).

Pre-Production Stage

Planning in the early stage includes script writing, character design, and scene setting (Yao, 2022). A script is a story written in the form of a literary scenario, including the written form of characters' lines, actions, and plots and the written descriptions of the characters' personalities, costumes, props, and story background. In short, the story is woven by the picture (Ge, 2017). The script of the CHLD focuses on three main themes: (1) the features of the CHLD, (2) the skills of the performance, and (3.) the thoughts of the people.

Character design refers to designing characters' costumes, hairstyles, body shapes, and other appearances (Zhang, 2015). The character design of the CHLD revol-

ves around the cat head lion, the big head Buddha, and the monkey. Based on the information collected about the CHLD, the researcher was able to do a second design of the characters' body size and costume patterns.

Scene setting involves all settings of the sceneries and places in which the characters live, including the tool setting and environment setting (Han, 2017). The scene setting in the animation of the CHLD is based on the local construction with a unique characteristic style. It is a second design of the real architecture while keeping to the authenticity of the scene.

Production Stage

The production in the medium stage includes 3D modelling, rigging of the characters, camera designing, and movement adjusting (Yao, 2022). In 3D modelling, the modeller draws the character model or scene model with 3D software on the computer based on the preliminary design of the character or scene. This procedure includes model making, UV unwrapping, and mapping (Song, 2011). There are three parts of 3D modeling in the animation of CHLD: character modeling, scene modeling, and prop modeling. These are mainly based on the preliminary design of the characters, scenes, and props.

Character rigging is the process of creating a skeleton for a character model, which allows the character model to move with the skeleton with the help of skin modifiers (Stewart, 2011). Rigging in the animation of CHLD is conducted for the three main characters: the cat head lion, the big-headed Buddha, and the monkey.

Shooting design refers to the process of shooting the 3D characters according to the script and story, including the camera setting in the software, the basic animation and the camera's time setting (Song, 2011). The shooting design of this animation is the process of linking the content of the script through the camera.

Movement adjustment is the adjustment of the keyframes in the 3D software. A key frame is a frame that denotes the start

as well as the end of the changes incurred with respect to a certain set of parameters. Dynamic animation is done by adjusting the parameters of the movements, putting the keyframes together, and playing them continuously (Zhang, 2020). The movement adjustment of the CHLD animation is a fine-tuning of the characters according to the shooting design and the script, making the gesture language of the characters richer and the animation smoother.

Post-Production Stage

The post-production of the animation includes light rendering and compositing (Yao, 2022). Light rendering consists of scene light setting and rendering. Light setting is the stimulation of different lights in the real world. The main setups of the light setting are: (1) determine the main light; (2) backlight the main light; (3) add some fill-in light to simulate light reflecting (Sun, 2017). The steps above are the methods that are most used. Rendering refers to computer's rendering images according to the programming of the software. After being rendered frame by frame, the images will be played continuously - this is what makes an animation (Ma, 2021). The light rendering of the CHLD animation follows the methods of the two scholars, and the visual effect of the images conforms to the settings.

Compositing refers to the artistic reprocessing of the sequence frame materials rendered from the 3D software based on the film script and the relevant theories of film screen assembly; it is conducted with the purpose of achieving a perfect audio-visual effect (Zhang, 2017). Compositing is the last but most important part of animation production, including video and audio compositing. It is also the final step of the animating of CHLD before the output.

Phase 3: Survey Questionnaire

A self-administered survey questionnaire was conducted to gain insights into the responses of the younger generation in China regarding the culture of *Conghua*

CHLD and to evaluate the feasibility of disseminating CHLD through animation. There were two parts and ten questions in total in the questionnaire. Part A contained three questions to collect demographic information such as their age, gender, and educational background from the respondents. Part B comprises six questions to investigate respondents' emotional response to the animation work and their overall impression of its quality.

According to Gliner et al. (2011), simple random sampling is a method of sampling where each member of a population has an equal chance of being selected for the sample. This type of sampling is commonly used in research to ensure that the sample is representative of the entire population and to reduce the risk of bias in the sample selection process. The researcher spent one month conducting a large-scale survey. In May 2021, the researcher got in touch with the teachers at *Guangzhou City Construction College* and *Guangdong Polytechnic*, respectively. With their help, the randomly selected students of these two colleges watched the animation of CHLD during breaks and filled in the questionnaire survey by scanning the QR code.

A total of 206 copies of the questionnaire were collected, and the responses that did not meet the requirements were excluded from the results by the researcher. The exclusion of the response follows two principles: (1) the response that is incomplete with some leave-outs, or those who choose two or more answers for a particular question; (2) the response that gives the same answer in successive items. There are 181 valid responses after the invalid one was excluded.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of Fieldwork and Semi-structured Interview

The process of sorting and categorising *Conghua* CHLD elements involves dealing with a substantial amount of visual data, including photos and videos col-

lected during visits to the ancestral hall and performances. In total, 281 photographs and six videos were collected. Initially, the visual materials were filtered. Those that were duplicated and in poor quality were removed. The remaining data, i.e., 130 photos and four videos, was organised into themes or categories using thematic analysis procedures. Further analysis and comparison of these themes allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the CHLD elements present in the data. Through this process, four initial themes or elements of CHLD emerged, namely: (1) characters, (2) patterns and costumes, (3) props, and (4) performance techniques, as illustrated in Figure 2.

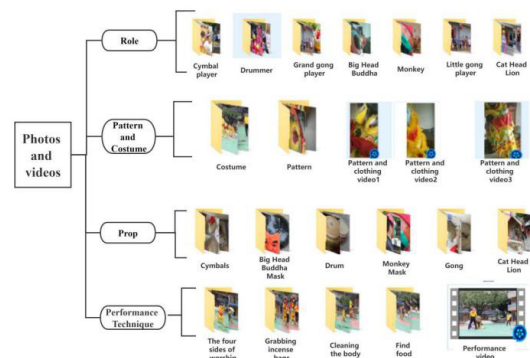


Figure 2. Categorisation of CHLD Elements based on Themes (Source: Compiled by the researcher)

Semi-structured interviews were held with four purposively selected inheritors to validate the elements of CHLD that were previously identified and collect opinions from them on the animation design of CHLD. Table 1 summarises inheritors' profiles.

An analysis of the interview can further confirm the elements of CHLD data that could be used in the creation of the CHLD animation. Below is a further description of the data analysis.

CHLD Characters

When being asked the questions about the CHLD characters, most interviewees believed that the role performance of cat head lion was the key to the whole

Table 1. Individual Characteristics Statistics of Questionnaire Results of CHLD Animation

Code	Role	Qualification	Achievements
L	Cat Head Lion and Drummer	He has more than 40 years of experience in performing the CHLD and is proficient in various roles in the CHLD.	He formed a CHLD team and has vast experience working on ICH projects. He is also a provincial inheritor of CHLD in <i>Conghua</i> .
S	Big Head Buddha	He has more than 30 years of experience performing CHLD and is proficient in various roles in CHLD.	He is a leading member of the CHLD team. He will be the next inheritor. He is the head instructor at the CHLD training facility.
W	Monkey	He has more than 50 years of experience performing monkeys.	He is a leading member of the CHLD team. He plays the monkey.
Z	Drummer, Gong Master, and Cymbal Player	He has more than 50 years of experience playing the instrument.	He is a leading CHLD team member specialising in playing the musical instrument for the CHLD.

[Source: Compiled by the researcher]

team. Interviewee W shared,

In this region of *Guangdong*, almost every village had its own lion dance team, but there was no Lion Dance team in our village. The cat head lion combines unique elements of a cat and a lion.

Interviewee Z talked said: The main characters of the CHLD are the cat head lion, the big head Buddha, and the monkey. These three characters are the soul of the entire performance. The cat-head lion is a combination of the lion head and the cat head. The casting of the big head Buddha prefers a slightly fat body, which should also give the audience the impression of simplicity and honesty in the performance.

CHLD Pattern and Costume

In terms of the patterns of the CHLD, most interviewees believed that the patterns were like charm spells, which could avoid disasters and bring good luck to people. Interviewee S said: The patterns of CHLD include fire grain design, Tang Dynasty flower design, Tiger stripe design. The fire grain is designed because the sun fire can drive away evil; the Tang Dynasty flower design pays respect to the clouds in the sky, symbolising auspiciousness which will bring good luck to people. Tiger stripe design is derived from the texture of feline animals, which shows the characteristics of cats and lions.

Interviewee L added that, The costu-

me of CHLD is a common performance costume, with some collocations to manifest the lion's characteristics. The furry balls on the lion's head are the decorations to make it look hearty. The colour tone of the CHLD is black, yellow, red, green, purple, blue, and other pure colours, which represent the meaning of happiness in traditional Chinese culture and tradition.

CHLD Props

Most interviewees said that props were auxiliary tools that could help better complete the performance of CHLD. Interviewee Z mentioned,

Big-head Buddha props require the performer to hide his whole head in the helmet. The monkey mask is a face mask, and other props involved in the performance are mainly musical instruments which are passed down from the older generation.

CHLD Performance Technique

The four sets of performances - worshipping the four directions, the lion cleaning itself, looking for food, and grabbing incense bags - were a bit complicated and took a long time. They worked hard to shorten the time while retaining their essence. As interviewee W highlighted,

Worshipping the four directions is the performance of the characters worshipping the gods of the east, south, west,

and north; the lion cleaning itself involves the lion itself clearing the body for cleanliness and tidiness; looking for food is the cat head lion to get food, meaning a good harvest; grabbing incense bags is to get good luck; these are the parts performed in current CHLD performance.

Interviewee L shared that, Nowadays, people have a fast pace of life, so they don't spend too much time watching traditional performances. Moreover, after several improvements, the time for the complete set of performance is controlled within one hour.

Animation Creation Process and Outcome: Application of CHLD Elements

As shown in Figure 3, the Cat Head Lion is the main character in the CHLD. Red phoenix eyes, cat ears, and antennae are the iconic features of the Cat Head Lion, and the cartoon characters are designed based on the prototype. The Cat Head Lion decoration of the cat and lion has a lot of colours. In the design process, the researcher mainly used red, yellow, and green colours, which create a festive atmosphere in China. The researcher kept the colour of the lion's tail to match the colour of the cat's head.



Figure 3. Cat Head Lion Character Design
(Source: Created by the researcher)

There are many images of the big head Buddha in the Lion Dance. The image of the CHLD differs from another big-head Buddhas in that its head colour is mainly red, and the red cloth on its chest is more festive. Its thick and long eyebrows and fat body shape make it look lovely. In

the whole character design, the colour selection of the face of the Big Head Buddha adopts a similar colour to the reference prototype. The costumes of the Big Head Buddha performers are mainly yellow and adjusted with patterns of blue, red, and purple. The character modelling is designed with the shape of the fat-bodied to show the character's honesty (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Big Head Buddha Character Design
[Source: Created by the researcher]

The main characters in the CHLD performance are the monkey and the big head Buddha characters to adjust the atmosphere. In the design, its mask is mainly green, yellow is secondary, and the Burgundy cloth covers the hair. The thin and flexible body of the monkey contrasts with the fat head of the Buddha. The round and small eyes of the monkey are designed to show his lively and naughty. The monkey costume is the same as the big-head Buddha costume, thus forming a uniform costume (Figure 5).

Based on the video footage obtained from fieldwork, keyframe animation of the CHLD performance techniques was produced, referencing relevant video materials. The performance techniques of the CHLD include worshipping the four directions, the lion cleaning itself, looking for food, and grabbing incense bags. Look at the picture below (Figure 6). The reference image is shown on the right side of the picture, while the screenshot of the produced animation is on the left.



Figure 5. Monkey Character Design
[Source: Created by the researcher]

Questionnaire Results

After completing the production of the CHLD animation, the researcher conducted a survey with students from the Animation Production Technology program at Guangzhou City Construction College and the Digital Media Technology program at Guangdong Polytechnic. These students are characterised by their active thinking, openness to new things, and strong passion for anime. It is worth mentioning that they also possess a certain level of discernment, allowing them to provide objective responses to the survey questions. One hundred eighty-one valid questionnaires were obtained. Their specific demographic information is tabulated in Table 2.

It can be seen from Table 2 that the proportion of females is higher than that of males, indicating that the number of people filling out the questionnaire is mostly female, and the results reflected by the data are more likely to represent the thoughts of females. The respondents were mainly aged between 16 and 28 years old. 86.7% of the respondents are from the Animation Production Technology programme while 13.3% are from Digital Media Technology programme.



Figure 6. Keyframe action screenshot
(Source: Created by the researcher)

Table 2. Individual Characteristics Statistics of Questionnaire Results of CHLD Animation

		Frequency (n=181)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	79	43.6
	Female	102	56.4
		181	100%
Age	16 to 18 years old	69	38.1
	19 to 8 years old	112	61.9
		181	100%
Program	Animation Production Technology	157	86.7
	Digital Media Technology	24	13.3
		181	100%

[Source: Compiled by the researcher]

The respondents came to a general conclusion after watching the CHLD animation, and the results showed that animation works can improve their awareness of the protection of the CHLD culture. When the audience understands the ICH, most learn about relevant information through the Internet, and animation works prefer relaxing and relieving pressure. The specific results of the questionnaire are shown in Table 3.

The questionnaire data reveals several key findings. Most respondents (75.6%) express positive views on the CHLD animation, with 35.3% thinking it was 'very nice' and 40.3% indicating 'nice.' However, a substantial portion of respondents (23.2%) remain uncertain about their opinion, while a small percentage (1.2%) felt it was 'not nice.'

Regarding its educational impact, the data indicates that the CHLD animation is effective in enhancing cultural understanding. A significant majority of respondents (74.7%) found learning about the culture helpful. Specifically, 31.4% found it very clear, 43% found it clear, and 24.3% found it somewhat clear. Only a small percentage (1.3%) found it unclear, suggesting the animation's overall effectiveness in conveying cultural information.

Impressions of the CHLD performance culture through animation are generally favourable, with a small minority expressing dissatisfaction (1.8%).

The primary sources of information about CHLD culture are TV/Internet (55.8%) and live performances (30.9%), indicating the crucial role of media in disseminating information. Social software platforms such as Weibo and WeChat play a minor role (12.7%), while a very low percentage of respondents learn about CHLD culture through travel (0.6%).

Respondents' preferences for CHLD animation types for preservation purposes are diverse. Humorous and funny animation is highly favoured (91.7%), followed by science fiction (64%), Sweet and Warm (59.6%), suspense (40.8%), and Horror and Thriller (29.8%) animations. A notable por-

tion (33.1%) has other preferences, reflecting a wide range of tastes among the respondents.

The CHLD animation is well-received, effectively conveys cultural knowledge, and caters to diverse preferences, primarily through media sources like TV/Internet and live performances. These findings offer valuable insights into the reception and educational potential of CHLD culture and animations among the surveyed pop.

Discussion

The Elements that can be Used in *Conghua* CHLD Animation

The rich elements of the CHLD provide good materials for making the animation. The system of all cultures is built up because of the rich and diversified elements, and a specific cultural element is often used as a metaphor for the entire cultural system (Chen, 2012). During the fieldwork and interviews, a significant amount of photographic and videographic materials were collected, which were categorised into characters, props, patterns and costumes, and performance techniques. In addition to the four elements mentioned above, the elements of the CHLD also include the stories of the inheritors and the music of the performance. The reason for highlighting these elements is that they seem to be more important in the interviews and are frequently seen in the photographs. As a branch of the Southern Lion Dance, the *Conghua* CHLD has a strong regional feature.

In collecting the character features of the CHLD, the researcher paid special attention to the traits and appearance of the performers. The main characters in the performance, the Cat Head Lion, the Big Head Buddha, and the Monkey, are imitating something amusing in life to entertain their audience. Scholars believe that the characters' images and personalities come from yet above life and reflect people's attitudes towards real life and their pursuit of ideals. A good character of a work usually has very distinctive personality traits

Table 3. Statistics of Investigation Questions on The Animation Expression of ICH CHLD Culture

Question	Option	Frequency (n=181)	Percentage (%)
What do you think of the CHLD animation you have just watched?	Very Nice	64	35.3
	Nice	73	40.3
	Uncertainty	42	23.2
	Not Nice	2	1.2
		181	100%
Does the CHLD animation help you learn more about the culture?	Very clear	57	31.4
	Clear	78	43
	Somewhat clear	44	24.3
	Unclear	2	1.3
		181	100%
What are the most important reasons for you to learn about the culture of the CHLD from the animation (Multiple choice)?	Leisure and entertainment	96/181	53/100
	Art preservation	115/181	63.5/100
	Knowledge of culture	155/181	85.6/100
	Related to my studies	63/181	34/100
How do you feel about the performance of the CHLD through the animation?	Very good	81	44.7
	Good	51	28.1
	Neutral	46	25.4
	Dislike	3	1.8
		181	100%
From where do you usually learn about the culture of CHLD?	TV/Internet	101	55.8
	Live performance	56	30.9
	Weibo, WeChat, etc.	23	12.7
	When traveling	1	0.6
		181	100%
What kind of animation works do you like, especially for CHLD preservation (Multiple choice)?	Humorous and funny	166/181	91.7/100
	Science fiction	116/181	64/100
	Suspense	74/181	40.8/100
	Sweet and warm	108/181	59.6/100
	Horror and thriller	54/181	29.8/100
	Other	60/181	33.1/100

[Source: Compiled by the researcher]

(Liu et al., 2006). Therefore, the researcher preferred the elements of the characters from standard performance movements and original styles. These materials preserved the authenticity of the CHLD well and provided direct reference for subsequent research.

In collecting the patterns and costumes of the CHLD, the researcher discovered that patterns in the costumes, such

as the fire and Tang Dynasty patterns, have implied meanings of good fortune or warding off disaster. They have similar meanings in some other ICH as well. The researcher found that some furry balls were added to costumes, which made them more colourful, representative, and distinguished from other south lions. Bai (2020) stated that the patterns and costumes reflect people’s daily lives and social

conditions, which directly reflect the real life of the time. Decorative patterns are the richest and most complex living art created by human beings and play an important role in human civilisation. Although there are plenty of patterns in the CHLD, they need to be inherited and innovated as a traditional motif. The researcher wishes to give it a modern design by using modern technologies, making it a modern motif that adapts to and meets modern society's aesthetic and usage needs.

The props of the CHLD are tools to assist with the whole performance. In addition to the masks and musical instruments, there are several auxiliary props, such as tables and chairs. Each character has his own set of masks in the performance, distinguishing them from each other in appearance.

There is a standard set of movements in the performance of CHLD; the full set takes nearly four hours, making it difficult for people to watch the whole performance. People pay little attention to the performance of CHLD in an era when information is spread at an incredible speed. They are also more interested in the proper use of fragmented time (Zan & Gao, 2013). Therefore, in collecting the performance skills, the researcher chose the four sets of performances - worshipping the four directions, the lion cleaning itself, the lion seeking the green (looking for food), and the lion picking the red (grabbing incense bags). The four sets of performances embody the core of the culture. The researcher also looked for a common aesthetic appeal in the performance for the audience's easy understanding.

Creation of Animation Based on the Elements of CHLD

The making of the CHLD animation follows the general procedure, which consists of three main stages - pre-production, production, and post-production (Yao, 2022). The researcher identified the features and performance skills of the CHLD from the information of the field study and interviews. In the pre-production sta-

ge, the researcher did a second design of the characters according to their features and designed the animation image of the Cat Head Lion, the Big Head Buddha, and the Monkey. Based on the contents of interviews with the inheritors, an overview of their current situation of the CHLD was added to the script writing.

In the production stage, the researcher identified elements of performance skills from the field study and interviews and selected the four plots of worshipping the four directions: the lion cleaning itself, looking for food, and the lion picking the red. These elements of performance skills were used in the animation production when designing the shooting and adjusting the movements, bringing the animation closer to the original culture.

In the post-production stage, the researcher carefully crafted the animation work. With the consent of the inheritors, the finished animation film was launched to the target audience.

The making of CHLD strictly follows the production process of animation works, and most 3D animated films, such as *Kung Fu Panda* and *Jiang Ziya*, are also completed in accordance with this production process (Amidi, 2015). The CHLD animation belongs to educational animation, and according to *Animation and Principles for Multimedia Learning* (Betancourt, 2005) and *The Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning* (Mayer & Moreno, 1999), which can psychologically and visually stimulate people to learn the goal. In the process of making the CHLD animation, from the script writing to the character design and the composition of the 3D animation, the researcher conducted research according to the animation and design principles of animation.

Animation that Potentially Increases Awareness of Preserving the *Conghua* CHLD Culture among Chinese Young People

A questionnaire survey was conducted with students of the two universities to determine their opinions of the

animation created using CHLD elements. The results of the questionnaire implied that the audience accepted the culture of CHLD quite well after watching the animation. The students of the two universities were able to understand the meaning of the elements of the CHLD and the implicit meaning of the performance, and they realised the crisis that traditional Chinese cultures are facing. Most of them are willing to carry on and promote the culture of CHLD. However, young people are looking for something more humorous and novel in the animated films. Wang (2018) argued that the proper use of modern communication strategies such as social media, entities, and the idol effect enables excellent traditional culture to take on new life in the new media environment. With the deepening of modernisation, people have a much wider horizon than ever before and are always asking for something new. For the CHLD to be inherited and effectively spread among young people, it is best to promote and disseminate it in a diversified way, making the culture a part of people's daily lives.

Implications

This study investigates a digital means to preserve *Conghua* CHLD culture, a branch of the Southern Lion Dance in China. The research focuses on the dissemination and inheritance of ICH in the form of animation. This study proposes that animation works contribute to the inheritance and dissemination of ICH in contemporary society. The research conducted a field study and interviews to collect related information in the local area, made an animated film about the culture, and promoted the culture among young people in the form of animation to promote the preservation and inheritance of the *Conghua* CHLD. The researcher argues that the inheritance of *Conghua* CHLD is facing difficulties, and innovations must be made to change the current situation. The preservation and inheritance of the culture need the help of modern media, cultural industries, and modern education, which will ensure the

continuation of ICH in the contemporary era. With its multiple identities as a visual art, a communication medium, and a cultural industry, animation can represent the essence of ICH and promote the dissemination and acceptance of ICH in contemporary society; it also plays an active role in ICH education with its creativity and technology.

Limitations and Recommendations

The research has its limitations despite the achievements it has made. Improvements will be made in the future study from the following aspects:

In China, there are three places that have records of the CHLD culture: the *Conghua* CHLD in Guangzhou City, the *Wengyuan* CHLD in Shaoguan City, and the *Heping* CHLD in Heyuan City. The *Wengyuan* CHLD features a lion's body with a cat's head, which is an adjustment on the lion head of the traditional lion dance (Xie et al., 1999). The performance techniques of the *Wengyuan* CHLD imitate the characteristics of cats, combining their movements with the character of lions, and have been further improved over time (Xie et al., 1999). The *Heping* CHLD is neither like the Northern Lion dance nor the Southern Lion dance, but rather, it resembles both a cat and a lion, with the most obvious characteristic being a golden character for 'king' on its forehead (Guangdong Provincial Culture Center, 2018). In terms of production, it incorporates the features of folk crafts such as mud sculpture and painting (Guangdong Provincial Culture Center, 2018). These three places have their own unique features in the culture of the CHLD. Though the researcher has done some studies on the *Conghua* CHLD, there is still a need for more research on other CHLD varieties, which will be the direction of future research.

This study only interviewed four key inheritors, and the design of the questions was relatively limited, so further improvements are needed in these areas. In future research, the sampling range will be expanded, more people will be interview-

wed, and the questionnaire design will be more targeted to ensure the accuracy of the sampling data.

In the study of the *Conghua* CHLD, the researcher also conducted literature reviews on the culture of the *Wengyuan* CHLD and the *Heping* CHLD. The researcher compared the CHLD elements of these three places and found that though the main CHLD characters of the three places are the same, their looks and styles are different. The pattern and costume are fused with local cultural characteristics, with few similarities. In terms of props, the mask designs for the characters are all different. In terms of performance techniques, each has its own unique features. These elements can be the focus of future research by the researcher.

The total length of the CHLD animation is 5 minutes and 30 seconds. The animation design for the CHLD was completed independently by the researcher. However, as the researcher knowledge and creative ability are limited, the research may not cover all aspects. In future research, the researchers can invite more professional researchers to join the team to improve the quality of the animation and extend its duration, making it more in line with the audience's aesthetic standards.

Future researchers are encouraged to create some derivative products based on the animation, such as using the animation as a carrier to promote the culture of the CHLD in VR devices or designing the characters from the CHLD animation into products to promote the culture of the CHLD.

CONCLUSION

The study emphasises the importance of utilising animation as a medium for preserving and disseminating the culture of *Conghua* CHLD. Traditional methods of passing down the CHLD culture face challenges due to changing interests and limited access to traditional teaching methods. The researcher suggests that animation can overcome these challenges by reaching a wider audience through

various media platforms like the internet and theme parks. The rich elements of the CHLD culture provide a solid foundation for creating the animation. The researcher carefully selected and incorporated these elements, ensuring the authenticity and cultural significance of the CHLD in the animation. The questionnaire survey results indicate that the animation effectively increases people's understanding and appreciation of the CHLD culture, thus playing a role in cultural preservation. The study highlights the potential of animation as a tool for cultural education and promotion, especially among the younger generation. By utilising modern communication strategies and incorporating elements of humor and novelty, the animation can capture the attention and interest of the audience, making the culture more relatable and accessible. The research demonstrates that animation can be a powerful medium for preserving and disseminating intangible cultural heritage. It not only enhances people's understanding of the CHLD culture but also attracts new audiences and promotes the continuation of the tradition. The findings of this study contribute to the broader field of animation research and provide insights into the effective use of animation for cultural preservation and education.

REFERENCES

- Amidi, A. (2015). *The Art of Pixar: 25th Anniversary*. Chronicle Books.
- Bai, L. (2020). The Application of Traditional Decorative Patterns in Modern Design. *Peony*, 16, 91–92.
- Bernard, H. R. (2006). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Rowman Altamira.
- Betrancourt, M. (2005). *The Animation and Design Principles for Instructional Animation* (pp. 15–20). The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Chen, S. F. (2014). Research on the animation inheritance and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage [Master's thesis, Shandong University].

- Chen, Y. L. (2012). Symbolic Survival of Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Journal of Chongqing Radio and Television University*, 24(06), 66–69.
- Ear E. (2021, July 25). *Guangdong Grade Intangible Cultural Heritage Conghua Cat Head Lion*. Bilibili.
- Ge, J. (2017). *Animation Script Creation*. Beijing United Publishing Company.
- Gliner, J. A., Morgan, G. A., & Leech, N. L. (2011). *Research methods in applied settings: An integrated approach to design and analysis: Vol. 2nd ed.* Routledge.
- Gong, C. (2021). Research on the Dissemination Strategy of 'Intangible Cultural Heritage + Animation.' *Journal of Tonghua Normal University*, 42(1), 26–30.
- Guangdong Provincial Culture Center. (2018). *Cat Head Lion Dance*. Guangdong Provincial Culture Center.
- Guo, J., & Zhuang, W. (2018). Innovation of Guangdong Animation Industry under the Cultural Renaissance Strategy. *Development and Reform Theory and Practice*, 05, 5–10.
- Han, X. (2017). *Animation Scene Design*. Beijing United Publishing Company.
- Huang, F. L. (2005). On Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection from the Features of Folk Films. *Jiangxi Social Sciences*, 12, 25–28.
- Kuang, Y. (2017). Strategies for Inheriting and Developing Intangible Cultural Heritage 'Cat Head Lion Dance' in Primary School Classroom Teaching. *New Course*, 1(08), 6–7.
- Li, M, H. & Chen, W, J. (2020). Inheritance of Lingnan Traditional Cultural Art and National Quality Education. *Journal of Hubei Open Vocational College*, 33(18), 117–119.
- Li, M. (2022). Problems and Countermeasures in the Protection of Local Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Office Business*, (12), 70–72.
- Li, Q. T. (2012). Animation Communication of Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 33(03), 147–149.
- Li, X. (2018). Research on the Protection and Inheritance of Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage from the Perspective of 'Internet Plus.' *Packaging Engineering*, 11, 92–96.
- Liu, M. L., & Yang, Q. (2006). *Animation Character Design*. Hefei University of Technology Press.
- Ma, K. (2021). Comparative Application of Rendering Technology in CG images. *Thesis*. Shanghai Jiao Tong University.
- Mayer, & Moreno. (1999). *The Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rosli, H., Woo, P. Y., Shahril, A. M., Azmi, E., & Akhir, I. M. (2020). Implementing animation production process: Case study of desktop application learning system (MILO) for front office management. *Voice of Academia*, 16(1), 108–117.
- Song, J. H. (2015). Reflections on Digital Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Cultural Heritage*, 02, 1–8.
- Song, J. Y. (2011). *Analysis of the Whole Process of 3D Animation Creation*. Peking University Press.
- Song, Y. (2021, August 12). *Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Xinhua News Agency.
- Sun, Z. F. (2017). *3D Animation Rendering*. Beijing United Publishing Company.
- Sven, B., Steinar, K., & Qu, X. (2020). *Interview: Vol. Second Edition*. Gezhi Publishing House.
- Wang, D. S. (2018). Diversified Communication Strategies of Intangible Cultural Heritage. *News Enthusiast*, 06, 73–76.
- Wang, K. K. (March 27, 2020). *The Sixth Batch of Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage List in Guangdong Province*. China MinZu Cultural Resources.
- Williams, R. (2009). *The Animator's Survival Kit: A Manual of Methods, Principles, and Formulas for Classical, Computer, Games, Stop Motion and Internet Animators*. Faber & Faber.

- Xiao, Y., F. (2017). Research on the Inheritance and Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage ‘Cat Head Lion’ under the concept of ‘Harmony and music’ cultural education. *New Course*, 11, 44–45.
- Xie, J. S., He, W. Q., Huang, B. J., Chen, X. Q., Wu, Y. Y., & Yang, Y. J. (1999). *Wengyuan County Annals*. Guangdong People’s Publishing House.
- Yao, G. P. (2022). *Introduction to Animation*. Tsinghua University Press.
- Zan, T., Q., & Gao, K. (2013). A ‘Long tail Theory’ Analysis on the Value of Mobile Phone ‘Fragmentation Time’. *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)*, 35(11), 96–99.
- Zhang, A. H. (2015). *Character Modeling Design and Production*. Educational Science Press.
- Zhang, M., J. (2020). Theoretical Research on 3D Animation and Computer Graphics. *Digital Technology and Applications*, 38(05), 55–56.
- Zhang, X. (2016). A Review of Research on Digital Protection of China’s Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Inner Mongolia Science and Technology and Economy*, 12, 6–9.
- Zhang, Y. H. (2017). On the Effective Development of 3D Animation Short Film Creation. *Art Science and Technology*, 30(11), 136–137.
- Zhang, Y. (2018). Reflections on the “Repackaging” of “Intangible Cultural Heritage” Taking the Suixi Lion Dance Culture as an Example. *Journal of Luoyang Normal University*, 37(07), 94–97.
- Zhuo, M. C. (2013). Research on Digital Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Laboratory Research and Exploration*, 32(08), 225–227.