

Analysis of the Multimodal Construction and Dissemination Strategies of Traditional Chinese Philosophical Thought in Online Games

-- The Case of Black Myth: Wukong

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Abstract

The preservation of traditional culture presents a significant challenge in the era of digital media. Traditional Chinese philosophical thought, characterized by its relatively high cognitive threshold, faces practical issues including insufficient integration with emerging media contexts and interpretive barriers in contemporary mass communication. Grounded in multimodal discourse analysis theory, this study examines the integration of traditional Chinese philosophy with game narratology in the AAA title *Black Myth: Wukong*, exploring how the game employs multimodal coordination strategies-encompassing language, imagery, and sound-to construct and disseminate philosophical concepts. The findings reveal that the game reconstructs traditional precepts through dialogic devices such as "Reverse-Parodying the Eight Precepts," evokes cultivation imagery through the suspended sculptures of the Little Western Paradise, and blends electronic sound effects with traditional instruments to articulate philosophical propositions. This multimodal coordination mechanism creates an immersive cultural space that transforms abstract doctrines into perceptible, interactive experiences. The study concludes that embodied communication mechanisms within game narratives effectively lower cognitive barriers to understanding traditional Chinese philosophy, demonstrating an innovative dissemination pathway for integrating traditional culture with popular media.

Keywords

Multimodal Discourse Analysis; Traditional Chinese Philosophical Thought; Black Myth: Wukong; Cultural Communication.

1. Introduction

The iterative development of digital technology has profoundly reshaped the ecology of cultural communication, transforming video games from mere entertainment products into significant vehicles for the modern expression and global dissemination of traditional culture. However, traditional Chinese philosophical thought confronts notable difficulties in contemporary international communication [1]. Philosophical discourse of this kind is prone to "cultural discount" in cross-cultural transmission-a phenomenon whereby audiences experience marked attenuation of interest and comprehension due to cultural differences and cognitive gaps [2]. When exported abroad, such thought frequently falls into a dilemma between being oversimplified into superficial symbols and posing excessively high barriers to understanding [1].

Against this backdrop, video games, by virtue of their immersive, interactive, and multimodal narrative capacities, offer a new pathway for the globalized dissemination of high-context

culture. Through the construction of perceptible, interactive virtual worlds, games concretize abstract ideas within gameplay, narrative, and audiovisual experience, effecting a shift in communication paradigm from "didacticism" to "experience" [3]. Their characteristic of "procedural rhetoric"-that is, the conveyance of values through game mechanics themselves-enables players to spontaneously perceive and identify with cultural cores during interaction, significantly reducing cultural discount and rendering games an effective cross-cultural medium [1].

Black Myth: Wukong, an action role-playing game developed by Game Science (China) and released in August 2024, stands as an outstanding practitioner of this pathway. The game conducts deep cultural deconstruction based on the Journey to the West IP, weaving Chinese philosophical and religious narratives throughout. On August 20, 2024, the game rapidly set sales records upon release and garnered major accolades including "Best Art Direction" at The Game Awards 2024, becoming a landmark event in Chinese digital content's international expansion and cultural communication [3].

Accordingly, this study aims to elucidate how Black Myth: Wukong achieves the cultural translation and semantic reconstruction of traditional Chinese philosophical thought through multimodal coordination strategies. The study further argues that the game embodies abstract philosophical ideas within interactive narrative, forming an intrinsic mechanism of "interpreting philosophy through gameplay" that effectively lowers cognitive barriers and explores an innovative pathway for the globalized dissemination of traditional Chinese culture.

2. Literature Review

In existing research on Black Myth: Wukong, scholars have predominantly approached the topic from perspectives such as cultural communication and transmedia narrative, examining the game's contributions to the dissemination efficacy and innovative development of traditional culture as a significant medium.

2.1. Research on the Integration of Philosophical Belief and Popular Culture

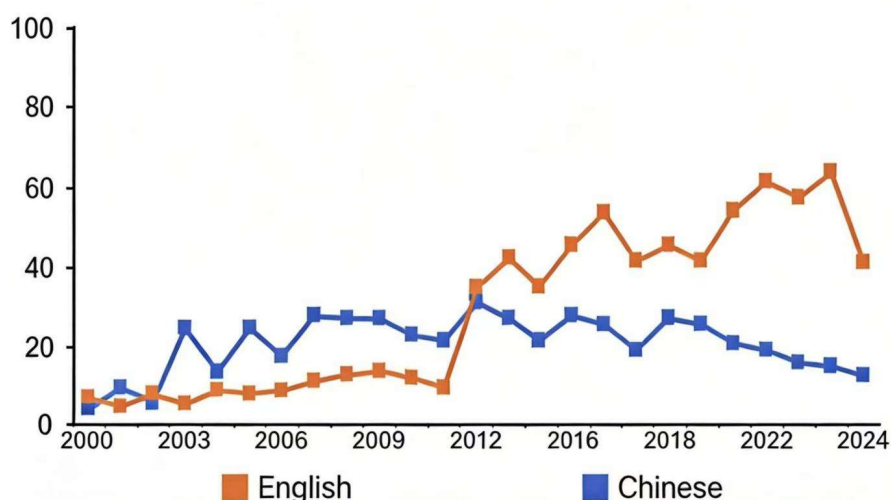


Figure 1. Research Trends on the Integration of Philosophical Beliefs and Popular Culture

Based on the intersection of philosophical belief and popular culture, this study conducted a search and statistical analysis of Chinese and international literature from 2000 to 2024 (see Figure 1). Chinese-language data were retrieved from CNKI using keywords such as "philosophical belief" and "popular culture"; English-language data were sourced from Web of Science using keywords including "philosophical belief" and "popular culture." The analysis

reveals significant differences between domestic and international scholarship in terms of focal points and developmental trajectories regarding the dissemination of philosophical belief combined with popular elements-particularly games.

Overall, given that the circulation and clash of diverse philosophical and religious cultures are more pronounced internationally, research in this domain commenced earlier abroad, with numerous scholars proposing relevant theories and conducting extensive studies on the integration of games with philosophical and religious culture. For instance, Stig Hjarvard proposed mediatization theory, emphasizing that digital games, as an autonomous media logic, reshape the expression and experience of belief [4]. Liam de Wildt further argued that belief can achieve "re-enchantment" through popular culture (music, film, games) and be reconstructed through video games, producing "gamified belief"-wherein philosophical and religious thought persists in mediatized form within virtual worlds, advancing the integrated development of games and philosophical cultural thought [5].

Domestic research, by contrast, focuses more on how philosophical concepts representative of core traditional Chinese philosophical thought can achieve semantic reconstruction once detached from their original contexts. For example, Lou Yang and Zou Zan analyzed *Black Myth: Wukong's* narrativized reconstruction of the "Five Poisons of Buddhism" [6]; Deng Zhen explored how digital games construct multimodal, interactive, and transmedia discourse to achieve transmedia narration of Chinese culture [7]; Chen Lujia and Chen Xianhong examined how to integrate the philosophical cores of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism into game worldbuilding and interactive design, thereby achieving an implicit transformation from national narrative to global narrative [8]; Xu Ying and Yang Siyu demonstrated how games, through their procedural rhetoric, serve as an effective new vehicle for cultural diplomacy [9]. In summary, the academic community has accorded a certain degree of attention and recognition to the contributions of games in reproducing and disseminating cultural elements. Building on this foundation, the present study takes *Black Myth: Wukong* as a case study to further explore the mechanisms and effects of traditional Chinese philosophical thought dissemination under the multimodal coordination of games.

2.2. Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Game Works

Multimodal discourse analysis is an approach that examines how semiotic systems beyond language-such as images, sound, and color-interact with language to construct meaning [10]. In recent years, it has gradually expanded from static to dynamic domains, demonstrating broad application prospects in interdisciplinary research.

Games constitute a dynamic, bidirectional multimodal discourse that integrates numerous social semiotic resources including language, image, sound, and animation, providing a new platform for investigating multimodal discourse. However, both domestic and international multimodal research on game works remains at an early stage, with relatively few systematic explorations.

This study conducted a quantitative analysis of relevant literature from 2000 to 2024 on the application of multimodal discourse analysis in game research (see Figure 2). Chinese data were retrieved from CNKI using keywords "multimodal," "discourse analysis," and "game"; English data were sourced from Web of Science using keywords "multimodal," "discourse analysis," and "game." The analysis reveals that research on game multimodality remains limited and is predominantly confined to the study of a single modality or the interaction of a limited number of modalities, with research on integrating multimodal resources and excavating their synergistic mechanisms being relatively underdeveloped.

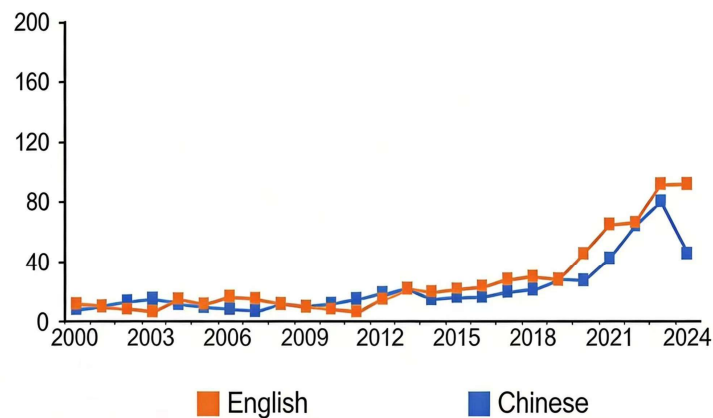


Figure 2. Trends in Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Game Works

Regarding multimodal discourse analysis of game works, early research in this field-both domestically and internationally-was scarce. Since approximately the mid-2010s, the number of related publications has begun to show an upward trend. Research during this period has gradually shifted from theoretical discussion to practical analysis of dynamic, interactive texts. For example, Hawreliak (2018) systematically explored how semiotic systems in games construct rhetorical meaning through the multimodal coordination of visual, auditory, and textual elements [11]; Zhang Zizhong et al. focused on how overseas players construct "Chineseness," revealing how games such as Genshin Impact function as "cultural translators" that facilitate the negotiated expression of "dynamic Chineseness" through multimodal signs [12].

Given that philosophical belief frequently encounters comprehension barriers due to its abstractness and the opacity of its symbols, this study contends that exploring philosophical belief through the medium of games can be regarded as an effective transmedia transformation pathway. Through popularized representation and scenario-based narrative, such an approach considerably lowers cognitive thresholds, facilitating the popularization and public cognition of traditional philosophical belief.

3. Theoretical Framework

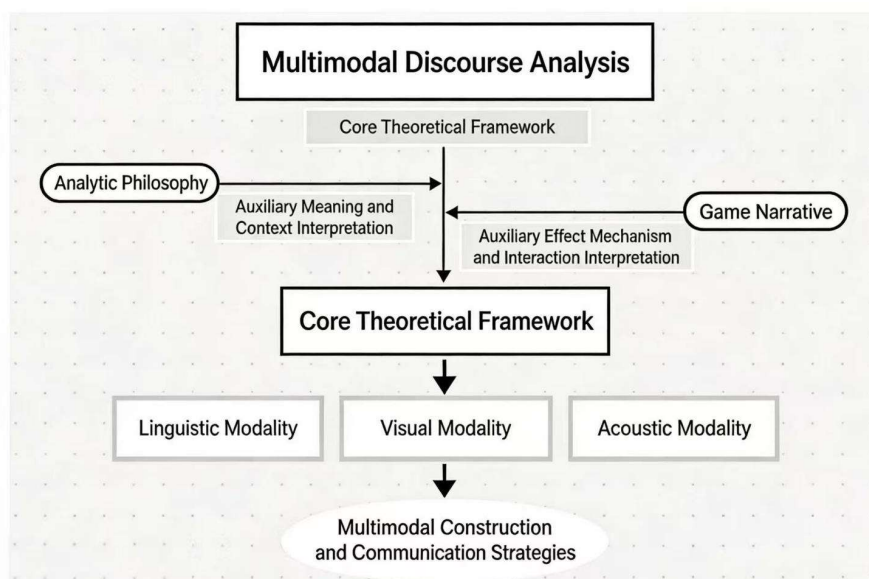


Figure 3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts multimodal discourse analysis theory as its core framework, supplemented by the perspectives of analytic philosophy and the analytical methods of game narratology, to construct an analytical pathway suitable for interpreting the discursive construction and dissemination of philosophical thought in *Black Myth: Wukong*.

3.1. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal discourse analysis is an approach that transcends traditional linguistic analysis by combining multiple communicative forms—including text, image, sound, and spatial layout—to convey meaning collectively. Its theoretical lineage is deep-rooted, primarily originating from two major traditions: European and North American [14]. The European tradition can be traced back to the Prague School of the 1930s and 1940s, which pioneered the extension of the linguistic perspective to non-verbal semiotic systems such as theater and visual arts [15]. By the 1960s, the Paris structuralist semiotics school, represented by Barthes, conducted in-depth analyses of popular culture including advertising and photography, proposing classic relational models such as "anchorage" between image and text [16]. In the 1990s, the Sydney School, led by Kress and Van Leeuwen, integrated systemic functional linguistics with social semiotics to establish the groundbreaking visual grammar analytical framework, marking the formal emergence of multimodal research [17]. In contrast, the North American tradition extended from empirical research on nonverbal communicative behavior (such as proxemics and gaze) to Scollon's "mediated discourse analysis," which attends to the connections between social practice and macro-context [18]. Though the two traditions initially had distinct origins, their boundaries have become increasingly blurred with the deepening of research, exhibiting pronounced characteristics of interdisciplinary integration.

In the process of theoretical development and integration, multimodal discourse analysis encompasses the following key foci [19]: research from a multimodal social functional perspective, multimodal ethnographic discourse research, corpus-based multimodal discourse research, multimodal discourse metaphor and metonymy research, multimodal discourse perception research, and new media discourse and digital technology analysis research. This study conducts its analysis from three dimensions—language, sound, and image—within the multimodal social functional perspective. This perspective is conducive to revealing how *Black Myth: Wukong*, through the interaction of diverse signs, transforms abstract philosophical ideas into perceptible gaming experiences, enabling players to comprehend its thought within immersive interaction.

3.2. Analytic Philosophy and Game Narratology

Analytic philosophy is a philosophical school that advocates linguistic and logical analysis. Originating in early twentieth-century Britain and Europe, it primarily investigates the language expressing concepts and their underlying logical systems [13]. Rejecting Neo-Hegelianism, it emphasizes formal analysis and logical deduction, with notable developments in the philosophy of science and philosophy of language, among other fields. This study draws upon the ideas of analytic philosophy to conduct in-depth analysis of game semiotic language, philosophical belief, and cultural background.

Game narratology is the study of how games achieve meaningful expression through narrative structure. The application of game narratology in this study primarily draws upon the theory proposed by Espen Aarseth regarding how narrative and gameplay can be integrated to form a set of game narratological constructs [20]. Based on this theory, the present study analyzes how the philosophical belief narrative within the game is incorporated into and fully established within the game's narrative structure without compromising the player's experiential engagement.

Taking Buddhist philosophical thought as its example, this study analyzes how Black Myth: Wukong presents traditional Chinese philosophical belief from the three modalities of language, image, and sound, grounded in the above theories, thereby exploring effective strategies for the popularization of philosophical belief.

4. Multimodal Reconstruction Analysis of Philosophical Thought Discourse in Game Narrative

Grounded in multimodal discourse analysis theory and supplemented by analytic philosophy and game narratology, this study examines the traditional Chinese philosophical thought presented in Black Myth: Wukong from three modalities-language, image, and sound-exploring the specific presentational techniques employed. From the perspective of philosophical belief, the study investigates how the game itself facilitates popularization and mass dissemination, thereby lowering entry barriers, illustrated through concrete examples.

4.1. Linguistic Modality: Reconstruction of Traditional Thought Through Character Dialogue

As the most direct semiotic system for bearing and transmitting philosophical thought, the linguistic modality achieves creative expression and reconstruction of traditional ideas in Black Myth: Wukong through character dialogue. This section selects the monologue of the Yellow-Browed King (Huangmei) and his "Reverse-Parodying the Eight Precepts" for analysis, demonstrating specifically how the game achieves linguistic modal construction-for instance, how dialogue conveys contemporary understandings of traditional philosophical thought through subversive reconstruction, how language shapes the character of Huangmei, and how dialogue translation balances philosophical connotation with character personality.

Example 1:

Kneel before the Buddha of the Future!

Thou shalt kill, lest feuds instill.

Thou shalt snatch, a fair play in a fair match.

Thou shalt lust, before all loves turn into dust.

Thou shalt boast, for prestige and legacy it doth host.

Thou shalt drink, and drenched unease shall sink.

They should've treated their guests. Now we're on our own in this!

Thou shalt dream, to reach in bleak void the sole gleam.

Thou shalt indulge, or life is but a scourge!

Example 1 is drawn from Chapter Three, "Night Brings White Dew" (Yesheng Bailu), and is an excerpt of the Yellow-Browed King's speech in the Lesser Thunder Monastery, where he impersonates Maitreya Buddha to address the Destined One (the player character).

Huangmei is a demon king in the game whose prototype is the Yellow-Browed Boy, the cymbal-striking attendant of the Eastern Coming Buddha Maitreya in Journey to the West. Having stolen Maitreya's magical treasures, he descended to the mortal world without permission and established himself as king at the Lesser Thunder Monastery. In the game, Huangmei impersonates Maitreya and, upon his first appearance, berates the Destined One: "Kneel before the Buddha of the Future!"

First, this line invokes the concept of the "Three Buddhas of the Three Ages"-the Buddhas of the past, present, and future-where "the Future" refers to Maitreya, the Buddha of the future age. As the Future Buddha, Maitreya symbolizes future hope, radiance, and the suffering-free state of nirvana. Huangmei's impersonation of Maitreya here reflects his worldview and values. Appearing under Maitreya's name, he seeks to oppress and rule others through the authority

of that identity. In his eyes, sentient beings are ignorant and require the Buddha's salvation; thus, kneeling before the Buddha is a matter of course—a view diametrically opposed to the traditional Buddhist philosophical principle that all sentient beings and the Buddha are equal. By contrast, this further highlights Huangmei's arrogance and his inability to become a true Buddha.

During the Destined One's battle with the Red-Rumped Macaque, Huangmei delivers the remainder of the monologue in Example 1, known as Huangmei's "Reverse-Parodying the Eight Precepts." These lines bear similarities to traditional philosophical thought while also exhibiting cultural distinctiveness. For instance, Huangmei's dialogue includes the precepts against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and intoxication—consistent with the first five of the traditional Eight Precepts. However, they also manifest a subversion and reinterpretation of traditional philosophical precepts. A comparison between the Reverse-Parodied Eight Precepts and the traditional Eight Precepts reveals that Huangmei challenges and questions the first five precepts, while the latter three, though not directly mentioned in his dialogue, also show points of conflict and divergent interpretation, as analyzed in the table below:

Table 1. A Comparative Analysis of "The Reverse-Saying Eight Precepts" and the Traditional Eight Precepts

Meaning	Buddhist Precepts	Traditional Philosophical View	Huangmei Philosophical View	Doctrinal Change
Even without killing, hatred may persist indefinitely.	No Killing	Respect life; Compassionate	Not opposed to killing	Reshaped: Compassion → Hatred
Without theft, strength and weakness make no difference to me.	No Stealing	Do not steal property; Maintain social order	Approve of theft	Reshaped: Order → Authoritarianism
Without indulgence, all emotions are suffering.	No Sexual Misconduct	Maintain sexual purity and morality	Advocate indulgence	Reshaped: Restraint → Licentiousness
Even without lying, reality is but an illusion.	No False Speech	Be honest; Maintain interpersonal relationships	Deny truth	Reshaped: Honesty → Nothingness
Even without alcohol, life's worries and fears rise and fall like tides.	No Drinking	Avoid alcohol-induced loss of control and moral decay	Life is impermanent	Simplified/Reshaped: Sobriety cannot alleviate suffering
Even without indulging in pleasure, youth and beauty fade instantly.	---	Avoid excessive pleasure; Maintain spiritual purity	Time is fleeting; Seize the day	Added: Hedonism
Even without oversleeping, people may still suffer and remain bound.	---	Diligent practice; Avoid attachment to sleep; Pursue spiritual liberation	Doubt the path to liberation	Added: Questioning the possibility of liberation
Excessive restraint of desire makes life dull and meaningless.	---	Control desires; Achieve inner peace	Challenge restraint	Added: Openly challenge "restraint" as a foundational practice; Advocate indulgence

From this, it is evident that Huangmei challenges traditional philosophical thought. As a "false Buddha," when he exercises control under the guise of the Buddha, he compels players to reflect on what constitutes a true Buddha: is it an imperious authority figure like Huangmei, or one who genuinely advocates the equality of all sentient beings with compassion? This stark contrast serves to highlight all the more the true essence of "goodness" in Buddhist

philosophical thought. Furthermore, Huangmei is not a flat villain but a "debater" possessing a self-consistent philosophical worldview. His existence elevates the game beyond simple monster-slaying and leveling-up into a debate about philosophy and belief. Moreover, for overseas players unfamiliar with traditional Chinese philosophical culture, a dramatic, authority-challenging antagonist like Huangmei offers a more penetrating understanding of traditional philosophical thought-one with greater memorability and impact than direct cultural indoctrination.

At the level of cross-cultural communication, the game's English translation of the dialogue undergoes specific processing. For example, "bu wangyu" (no false speech) originally means honesty and trustworthiness in maintaining interpersonal relationships, constituting a core moral precept of the traditional Five Precepts. "Wangyu" specifically means speaking contrary to one's true thoughts-that is, lying [21]. Its English version, "Thou shalt boast, for prestige and legacy it doth host," uses "boast" (to brag), which attenuates the original philosophical connotation through conceptual substitution, reinterpreting it as "boasting to gain prestige and legacy." The semantic focus shifts from moral commandment to personal vanity, departing considerably from the original precept against false speech.

The English version of "bu zongyu, zhuxing liaowu shengqu" (Without indulgence, all endeavors lack vitality) is "Thou shalt indulge, or life is but a scourge!" Here, the original meaning is intensified: if one does not indulge in desire, life becomes unbearably bitter. Borrowing the imagery of Last Judgment from the Bible, this amplifies the pain of non-indulgence, accentuating the character's extremist stance and more forcefully reflecting Huangmei's hedonistic philosophy.

Overall, the English versions preserve the core philosophical ideas of the original lines while making appropriate adjustments according to the cultural background and expressive conventions of the target language. However, due to the unique nature of philosophical language, certain word choices still cannot accurately convey the philosophical and religious thought embedded in the original Chinese. Yet from the perspective of game narrative, such "imperfect translation" effectively expands the game's audience, transforming abstruse philosophical concepts into more accessible expressions and laying the groundwork for the germination of broader cultural interest.

4.2. Visual Modality: Game Scene Construction Under Buddhist Aesthetics

The analysis of the visual modality focuses on how elements such as color, composition, and style convey Buddhist philosophical thought, thereby constructing an immersive cultural experience within the game environment. This section selects the "Little Western Paradise" (Xiao Xitian) scene as a representative case, as it concentrically showcases the quintessential imagery of traditional philosophical aesthetics and effectively demonstrates the advantages of multimodal discourse in cross-cultural communication.



Figure 4. Excerpts from the "Little Western Paradise" Game Chapter

4.2.1. Buddhist Decorative Style

As shown in Figure 4-1, the scene features resplendent suspended sculptures in gold, evoking the celestial realm of the Western Paradise. The architecture and suspended sculptures in this scene are primarily modeled after the Great Hall of the Thousand Buddha Hermitage (Qianfo An) in Xi County, Shanxi Province—commonly known as the "Little Western Paradise." Founded in the second year of the Chongzhen reign of the Ming Dynasty (1629), it is celebrated for its magnificent hall filled with exquisite Ming-era polychrome suspended sculptures, hailed as the "swan song of suspended sculpture." The hall houses thousands of polychrome statues depicting Buddhas, bodhisattvas, disciples, and apsaras, vividly presenting the solemn beauty of the Buddhist world—a crowning achievement of Ming Dynasty sculptural art possessing exceptional artistic and historical value. This aesthetic refinement and cultural "borrowing" grounds the virtual game world in authentic cultural soil, so that when players explore the "Little Western Paradise," they enter not merely a game level but a cultural field that distills the artistic spirit of Eastern philosophical thought.

In terms of color application, the scene places resplendent golden statues against a deep, dark background, leveraging strong chiaroscuro contrasts to accentuate a sense of the sacred. Gold in traditional philosophical culture symbolizes nobility and sanctity, while the overall darkened tonal register collectively creates an atmosphere of solemnity. In terms of composition, the scene employs typical symmetrical framing and a low-angle perspective. The former produces a visual experience of stability, balance, and pronounced order, consonant with the idealized tableau of a harmonious and solemn Pure Land in traditional philosophical thought; the latter compels the player to observe the scene with a posture of reverence, constructing an awe-inspiring "celestial Western realm."

This visual design holds significant implications for international communication. The international communication arena is a low-context cultural environment [7], where most overseas players lack the corresponding cultural background and knowledge system. Through the perception of multimodal signs such as color, scale, shape, and style, overseas players can more immersively and intuitively experience the game's "visual pleasure and the unique experiential quality of heterogeneous culture" and the finest traditions of Chinese culture [22], thereby transcending cultural cognitive differences and apprehending the aesthetic mood of traditional Chinese philosophy.

4.2.2. Meditative Zen Imagery

Meditation (zuochan), as an important spiritual practice in traditional philosophical culture, is presented in the game through meticulously designed visual compositions. As shown in Figures 4-2 and 4-3, the arrangement of the player's upward gaze and the Buddha statue's downward gaze creates an atmosphere of solemn gravity. The Destined One sits cross-legged in meditative stillness, his posture merging with the snow-white environment, embodying the practice philosophy of stilling the mind and reflecting inwardly—"turning the search inward" (fanqiu zhuji) [23].

This design allows players to experience firsthand that the power of an Eastern hero derives from the cultivation of the mind and character—the essential characteristics of the "Three Studies" (sila, samadhi, prajna: morality, concentration, and wisdom). Through the meditative interaction, players transform the "external afflictions" of combat into "internal cultivation" of the mind, echoing the theme in *Journey to the West* that "tribulation is itself spiritual practice." At the conceptual level, this embodies the Eastern wisdom of "seeking within" and the Zen essence of "concentrating the mind on one point," guiding players to understand that the growth of a Chinese-style hero lies in spiritual transcendence amid adversity rather than violent conquest [7].

The low-angle perspective allows players to experience the aesthetic mood of philosophical thought as if physically present. This direct visual experience transcends linguistic and cultural barriers, enabling players to naturally apprehend the essence of spiritual practice through interaction. Through this embodied participatory mechanism, the visual modality successfully transforms abstract philosophical ideas into perceptible gaming experiences, achieving the effective communication of traditional Chinese philosophical thought.

4.3. Auditory Modality: Re-creation of Religious and Philosophical Sound Elements and Narrative Propulsion

The auditory modality in the game does more than create atmosphere; it plays a key role in philosophical expression and narrative construction. This section analyzes "I'll Give Being a Chosen One a Try" as a case study, examining how it shapes the character of "Bu Bai" (lit. "Not White") and achieves contemporary translation of traditional Chinese philosophical thought through the fusion of traditional religious musical elements with modern electronic sound effects.

4.3.1. Melody

The lyrics of "I'll Give Being a Chosen One a Try" are drawn from the Rebirth Mantra (Wangsheng Zhou), a classic text of traditional Buddhist philosophical thought. Its full title is the Dharani for Pulling Out All Karmic Obstructions by the Roots and Being Reborn in the Pure Land (Ba Yiqie Yezhang Genben Desheng Jingtu Tuoluoni; Sanskrit: Sukhāvātī Vyūha Dhāraṇī). It is one of the "Ten Short Mantras" in the Morning and Evening Liturgy Collection used universally in Buddhist temples [24]. Practitioners believe that sincere recitation of this mantra grants the blessing of peaceful joy and is also used for the deliverance of departed souls.

As a special philosophical sonic symbol, the "mantra" (zhou) possesses a traditional chanting practice characterized by highly regular, repetitive audio structures that create a meditative field transcending everyday language. From an acoustic perspective, the sound waves of traditional mantras typically exhibit stable, smooth periodic waveforms with a prominent fundamental frequency, clear harmonic structure, and energy that diminishes in an orderly fashion as frequency increases-appearing on spectrograms as a series of neat, evenly spaced spectral lines.



Figure 5. Sound Wave Image of Traditional Chanting of the Rebirth Mantra

As Figure 5 illustrates, the sound waves produced by traditional chanting of the Rebirth Mantra are gentle and regular, exhibiting a high degree of similarity to the wave frequency of alpha brain waves (see Figure 6). Such regular sonic patterns typically induce alpha brain waves, helping listeners or chanters reduce psychological alertness and produce feelings of tranquility, focus, and even trance, thereby promoting inner peace and spiritual unity [25].

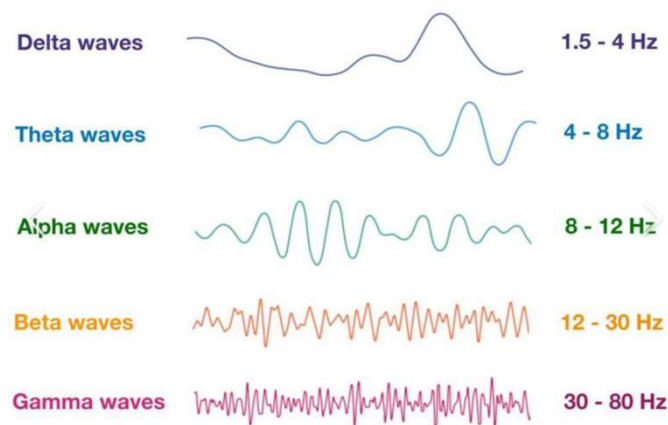


Figure 6. Alpha Brainwave Frequency Chart

However, the Rebirth Mantra in *Black Myth: Wukong* undergoes a thorough "cyber" deconstruction. While retaining the original melodic contour of the mantra, its tonality incorporates intense electronic beats overlaid with distortion, flanging, and other audio processing effects, warping the sound wave from smooth periodic waves into complex waveforms with severe harmonic distortion and dramatic dynamic range fluctuations (see Figure 7). This disruption of the traditional acoustic structure thoroughly subverts the original neurophysiological effects of the mantra. Far from inducing tranquility and focus, it instead creates cognitive conflict and psychological discomfort in the player's subconscious through discordant and chaotic auditory experience, thereby masterfully serving the game's narrative—namely, expressing the character "Bu Bai's" inner conflict and duality between righteousness and wickedness.



Figure 7. Sound Wave Image from "I'll Give Being a Chosen One a Try"

4.3.2. Instrumentation

The track constructs a multi-layered sonic narrative through the combination of traditional ethnic instruments and modern electronic instruments. Traditional instruments such as the pipa and ethnic percussion—including the Peking Opera small gong and large drum—establish the music's Eastern tonal foundation. The pipa's tremolo and strumming techniques simulate the clashing of blades on a battlefield, highlighting the intensity of combat; the rhythmic patterns of ethnic percussion draw upon operatic conventions, evoking associations with martial scenes and enhancing narrative tension. These elements combine with Buddhist mantras to collectively construct a soundscape in which solemnity and turbulence coexist.

Modern electronic instruments such as electric keyboards and synthesizers reinforce the game's "cyber" aesthetic through timbral design. The sustained drone and pulse sequences generated by keyboards create a dark, technologized atmosphere that forms a sharp contrast with traditional sutra chanting. This timbral collision is not arbitrary pastiche but serves the game's exploration of the theme of "Buddha and demon as one."

4.4. Multimodal Coordination Mechanism

Having analyzed the independent functions of the linguistic, visual, and auditory modalities respectively, it becomes evident that the essence of *Black Myth: Wukong's* cultural

communicative power lies in its multimodal coordination mechanism. Through precise orchestration, these modalities interweave into a three-dimensional, immersive semantic network that, through complementarity, reinforcement, and tension, collectively achieves the figurative translation of traditional Chinese philosophical concepts. This section focuses on two representative cases, analyzing in depth how they transform abstract philosophical ideas into experiences that are thinkable, perceivable, and participatory for players.

Case 1:

In Chapter Three, "Little Western Paradise," the line "Kneel before the Buddha of the Future!" is Huangmei's first utterance upon his appearance. At this moment, the force of language and the visual field intertwine, instantly drawing the player into the authoritative illusion he has constructed, producing an effect of intimidation through bluff.

From the linguistic modality, the words "the Future" directly usurp the sacred status of Maitreya, while the rhetorical question pattern "Since you have beheld... why do you not..." adopts a condescending interrogative posture that functions as a verdict, stripping the player of space for reflection and questioning. This places the listener squarely in a predicament of spiritual inquisition: to not kneel is an act of supreme disrespect toward the "Future Buddha." Huangmei exploits this sacred linguistic logic as a trap, seeking to achieve psychological suppression of challengers at the discursive level. The entire utterance functions like a decree, forcibly establishing the image of a supreme "false Buddha" through the sheer momentum of language and the weight of philosophical and religious symbols-its intimidating effect direct and forceful.

From the visual modality, the scene's architecture and sculptures reference the authentic ancient buildings and "suspended sculpture" art of the Little Western Paradise in Shanxi. The resplendent, deity-filled complexity of the scene serves as a direct visual footnote to Huangmei's claim to legitimacy. Meanwhile, the complex lighting within the temple-perpetual lamps, reflections from Buddha statues, the glow from Huangmei's staff-collectively creates an eerie, solemn, and dangerous philosophical cultural atmosphere in which the majesty of the "Buddha" coexists with the alienness of the "demon," visually rendering the paradox of sanctity and usurpation expressed in the dialogue. The shot progresses from medium shot to close-up and then suddenly pulls back to full view: the focus shifts from Huangmei's upper body to his face and then to the panoramic scene. Each camera advance intensifies the sense of oppression; as the staff illuminates and the camera rapidly pulls away, a powerful deterrent force is conveyed, resonating in synchrony with the coercive force of the dialogue's imperative syntax. Ultimately, the linguistic and visual modalities fuse in depth, jointly accomplishing the instantaneous establishment of the "false Buddha's" authority and a powerful psychological impact on the player.

Case 2:

In the concluding cinematic of Chapter Three, "Night Brings White Dew," the linguistic, visual, and auditory modalities mutually corroborate and interpret one another, collectively revealing the illusoriness of the paradise meticulously fabricated by Huangmei. The passage "The Three Realms and Four Continents-desireless, beyond salvation" is analyzed as a representative segment.

First, language, through highly condensed philosophical concepts, accomplishes the construction of the scene. "The Three Realms" refers to the desire realm, form realm, and formless realm through which sentient beings cycle in samsara; "the Four Continents" refers to the four great continents surrounding Mount Sumeru in Buddhist scripture-the dwelling places of humanity. Here, "the Three Realms and Four Continents" stands metonymically for the mortal world and all living beings. "Desireless" (wu suo qiu) represents the supreme state of spiritual practice in traditional philosophical thought. In this context, Huangmei may be

understood as self-proclaiming that he has attained this state of desirelessness, while in his view, the suffering of all sentient beings lies precisely in their still "having desires." "Beyond salvation" (bu ke jiu) is most directly understood as "incurably hopeless." Huangmei considers the sentient beings throughout the Three Realms and Four Continents to be so deeply mired in their "desiring" that they are beyond remedy. This lyrical passage establishes a critical tone for the subsequent audiovisual presentation.

At this point, the visual modality provides a "demonstration" for the linguistic proclamation through intensely impactful dynamic imagery. The entire frame adopts warm golden tones symbolizing temptation and wealth, evoking the psychological state of villagers consumed by greed. Copper coins, pearls, and similar objects serve as metaphors for the immersion in desire and the lure of profit. When the line "The Three Realms and Four Continents"-imbued with divine resonance-sounds, the accompanying visuals depict villagers' expressions turning greedy and frenzied, with golden jewels gushing from the belly of a great turtle like viscera. As the music continues to advance, the entire frame disintegrates in fragmented, torn compositions, with the collective plunging into the abyss of desire. The warm golden jewels are the embodied avatars of "that which is sought," while the frame's descent into disorder and the imagery of falling provide the most intuitive visual interpretation of the "beyond salvation" state. The visual modality here assumes the function of "presenting consequences," substantiating the cruel verdict pronounced by language.

The auditory modality at this juncture serves an emotional rendering function. Traditional instruments such as bianzhong (bronze bells) and qing (stone chimes) create an atmosphere of solemn ethereality. Simultaneously, the string section's ascending pitches subtly signify the gradual swelling of desire in the human heart. When the lyrics "The Three Realms and Four Continents-desireless, beyond salvation" sound, resonant drums enter with heavy beats, infusing the auditory dimension with an irresistible sense of fate and escalating frenzy. The music creates a sharp "soundscape opposition": above the illusory sacred background sound, the realistic drumbeats representing desire and destruction press forward relentlessly. The arrangement combining traditional Chinese instruments with Western orchestral elements transforms Huangmei's philosophy of "inverting black and white, reversing cause and effect" from an abstract concept into a perceivable auditory experience. This auditory sense of rupture precisely externalizes the scene's internal contradiction: the true driving force behind the operation and collapse of a paradise that proclaims itself "desireless" is precisely the frenzied "desiring" of all sentient beings.

The three modalities coordinate with one another, incisively revealing the cruelty and illusoriness of Huangmei's designed experiment on human nature.

5. Conclusion

Through the coordinated operation of multimodal signs encompassing language, image, and sound, *Black Myth: Wukong* successfully constructs a contemporary translation pathway for traditional Chinese philosophical thought. In the linguistic modality, the game reconstructs traditional precepts through innovative expressions such as "Reverse-Parodying the Eight Precepts," prompting players to comprehend the contemporary significance of core traditional philosophical concepts through reflection. The visual modality transforms abstract philosophical imagery into perceptible visual experience through scene designs such as the suspended sculptures of the Little Western Paradise. The auditory modality fuses traditional instruments with electronic sound effects, achieving the immersive construction of philosophical propositions through "cyber sutra chanting." Multimodal coordination not only reduces cultural discount but also shifts philosophical thought from didactic to experiential communication through game narrative.

This mechanism of interpreting philosophical thought through interactive narrative provides a new paradigm for the globalized dissemination of traditional philosophical cultural thought. Through the organic integration of multimodal signs, the game enables players to spontaneously complete their identification with cultural cores during participation, significantly enhancing communicative efficacy. Accordingly, *Black Myth: Wukong* constitutes a successful instance of cultural communication practice, reshaping the mode of reception of traditional Chinese philosophical thought through multimodal coordination and achieving a profound transformation—from "readable" to "playable," from "contemplative" to "experiential"—within the global context.

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