

The cultural codes transmitted to the audience through animated films in Soviet Kyrgyz cinema

Banu ERDOĞAN ÇAKAR^{1*}

¹Communications Sciences, Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, Kyrgyzstan

Abstract. The primary objective of this study is to identify the animated films produced in Kyrgyz cinema during the Soviet Union era and to reveal the cultural values transmitted to children through these films. The population of the study consists of animated films produced in Kyrgyz cinema during the Soviet period. It was determined that 30 films were produced between 1978 and 1991. Using a purposive sampling method, 13 films were selected as the sample of the study, with each film representing a different year. The study employed semiotic analysis and qualitative content analysis methods. The analysis revealed that visual codes in the films include Kyrgyz national clothing, the "boz-üy" (the traditional Kyrgyz yurt), national motifs used in living spaces, and traditional musical instruments as symbols. It was found that the animated films produced in Kyrgyz cinema during the Soviet period conveyed significant social and cultural values related to both Soviet ideology and Kyrgyz national culture. When the values presented in the animated films were compared with UNESCO's universal values, the value of responsibility appeared most frequently, while no storyline corresponding to the values of honesty or simplicity was identified.

1 Introduction

As Gerbner has expressed, mass media can influence the shaping of individuals' perceptions. The constructed stories create a fantasy world that viewers perceive as reality. In this world, society's vision, rules, and goals are determined [1]. The codes embedded in these stories are especially ingrained in viewers who are exposed to them for a prolonged period, eventually manifesting as changes in individual behavior. From this perspective, cinema, like other forms of mass media, has the power to influence individuals' opinions and their perception of the world. The social norms, values, and cultural appearances in animated films aimed at children are of particular significance. The codes implanted in children, the future inheritors of society, reflect the values that nations wish to either change or reinforce.

A general review of the literature reveals numerous studies on the use of animated films as educational tools. In a 2011 study conducted in Iran, Bahrani and Soltani proved that animated films increase motivation in language learning [2]. Özdemir and Ramazan, in a 2012 study in Turkey, investigated mothers' opinions on the influence of animated films on

* Corresponding author: banu.erdogancakar@manas.edu.kg

children and concluded that animated films serve as a multifunctional educational tool [3]. Similarly, Türkmen's 2012 study proposed that animated films partly serve as cultural carriers, filling the gap left by working mothers in transmitting culture [4]. In a 2014 study, Temizyürek emphasized that the function of cultural transmission is not limited to national values; every production carries the values of the culture in which it was created and the ideology of its creator, highlighting the importance of teaching children how to use media technologies properly [5]. Alongside studies emphasizing the role of animated films as cultural carriers and the need for awareness in this regard, some studies focus on their positive educational functions. In a 2014 study by Eker and Karadeniz, it was found that when animated films were used as an educational tool, they positively influenced students' success [6]. A 2017 study conducted by Balandina in Russia concluded that the moral development levels of children in the experimental group were positively affected [7]. In a 2018 study in India, Malhotra, Jonjua, and Rana pointed out that animated films are a useful tool for developing language skills [8]. A 2021 study by Ai and Nuruly in Indonesia showed that animated films had become a phenomenon among children, enhancing their creativity [9]. Finally, a 2023 study by Kovalenko, which took a deterministic view of technology, emphasized the importance of producing animated films for preschools, based on the idea that these films help develop children's creative talents, which are fundamental to their socialization in the modern world [10].

In light of these findings from the literature, this study aimed to examine the cultural and social values transmitted to children through animated films produced in Kyrgyz cinema during the Soviet Union era and to explore how these values correspond to universal values. This study is significant as it reveals how Kyrgyz animated films produced during the Soviet era function not only as entertainment but also as tools for transmitting cultural and ideological values to children, and it highlights which universal values these transmitted social values correspond to.

2 Materials and Methods

The population of the study consists of animated films produced in Kyrgyz cinema during the Soviet Union era. From 1978, when Soviet Kyrgyz cinema produced its first animated film, until Kyrgyzstan gained independence in 1992, a total of 30 films were made [11]. Within the scope of the research, 13 animated films were selected using a purposive sampling method, with each film representing a different year. In years where more than one film was produced, a preliminary review was conducted, and films with a higher concentration of Kyrgyz cultural codes were chosen for analysis.

A mixed-method approach was employed to analyse the animated films. First, semiotic analysis was used to identify the cultural symbols presented in the films. Through this method, the visual codes in the animated films were analysed. The social values depicted in the films were identified using qualitative content analysis. Based on the narrative structure of the films, the values embedded in the main themes were coded by two coders and then compared with the universal values defined by UNESCO.

3 Results and discussion




The study analyzes when and by whom the animated films produced during the Soviet Kyrgyz cinema period were made, the cultural symbols featured in these films, the values depicted, and how these values correspond to universal values. Table 1 presents the titles of the films produced during this period, their distribution by year, the films selected for the study, and the directors who produced these films.


Table 1. Animated films produced in Soviet Kyrgyz cinema and their directors ([11], p.205-225).

Year of production	Title of the film	Selected film for the analysis	Director of the Selected Film for the Analysis
1978	Tsifry Sporyat (Цифры спорят)	Tsifry Sporyat	S. Ishenov
1979	Olokon (Олокон) Korogoch (Корогоч)	Olokon	S. Ishenov
1980	Uzornaia Skazka (Узорная сказка) Starik meke i chorni velikan (Старик меке и черный Великан) Dva zaichonka (Два зайчонка)	Uzornaya Skazka	V. Belov
1981	-	-	-
1982	Portret (Портрет)	Portret	S. Ishenov
1983	Tri Hrabretsa (Три Храбреца) Peshera drakona (Пещера дракона) Tolubai (Толубай)	Tri Hrabretsa	Ş. Cekşenbayev
1984	Hromoi (Хромой) Kak syn spas ottsa (Как сын спас отца) Volshebni balzam (Волшебный бальзам)	Hromoi	B. Jumalyev
1985	Bodlivyi (Бодливый) Verblujonok botoloi (Верблюжонок ботолой) Chelovek silnee kreposty (Человек сильнее Крепости)	Bodlivyi	U. Jaylobaiev
1986	Teatr Shuta Rustama (Театр шута Рустама) Oh uj eti roditeli (Ох уж эти родители)	Teatr Şuta Rustama	Ş. Cekshenbaiev
1987	Nochnoy Prikluchenie (Ночное приключение) Superpudel (Суперпудель) Kookor-kojanni sosud (Коокор — Кожанный сосуд)	Nochnoy Prikluchenie	T. Musakeiev
1988	Pyvusheie Yabloko (Пывущее яблоко)	Pivusheie Yabloko	U. Jaylobaiev
1989	Pletka (Плетка) Akın (АКЫН) Molenie o prechistkoi Ptitse (Моление О пречистой Птице) Odin den (Один день)	Pletka	Torobekov
1990	Predanie Davnih Let (Преданье давних лет)	Predanie Davnih Let	D. Mukambetova
1991	Jadnyi Pauk (Жадный паук) Lagusha i zmeia (Лягушка и змея) Sandyk (Сандык)	Jadnyi Pauk	B. Jumalyev

As seen in Table 1, Soviet Kyrgyz cinema produced a total of 30 films between 1978 and 1991, excluding the year 1981. When examining the ethnic identities of the directors of the 13 films selected for analysis, it is observed that 1 Russian and 12 Kyrgyz. Among the directors, only 1 female, while the others are male. This distribution in Soviet Kyrgyz animated films is generally consistent with the broader trends in Soviet Kyrgyz cinema. When evaluated over time, it can be noted that since the 1950s, Kyrgyz filmmakers have begun to be sent to the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography for training, and these newly trained filmmakers have been instrumental in transferring the majority of film production to Kyrgyz producers. Regardless of the period, the low number of female directors compared to male directors in documentary and fictional films in Soviet Kyrgyz cinema is also evident in animated film production.

Table 2. Cultural visual codes featured in the films.

Title of the film	Sign	Signifier	Figure	Signified
Tsifyry Sporyat	• Object	• Kyrgyz hat		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wearing of the hat by a child symbolizes the transmission of traditional clothing practices from generation to generation.
Olokon	• Object	• Kyrgyz yurt in the pasture		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lives depicted in the film reflect the core of the Kyrgyz people
Uzornaya Skazka	• Object	• Mother Umay		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inclusion of Umay Ana, a figure in Kyrgyz mythology, highlights cultural heritage. Additionally, invoking Umay Ana through prayer refers to the concept of religion.

Tri Hrabretsa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Object 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A man playing the komuz 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The culture is reflected on screen by featuring a man in traditional clothing playing the komuz, which is the national musical instrument of the Kyrgyz people.
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As seen in Table 2, symbols related to Kyrgyz culture (such as national clothing, musical instruments, and living spaces like boz-uy) have been used in the films. These elements aim to introduce and preserve Kyrgyz culture for children. The settings featured in the films are highlighted as pastures, mountains, and riverbanks that reflect the nomadic lifestyle. In parallel with the governance approach of the era, the phenomenon of religion, which had previously been impossible to depict, is also included.

In the research, a list of values characterized as universal values, which is included in the Living Values Education Program supported by UNESCO and implemented in various parts of the world, was used as the data collection tool. These values include love, respect, honesty, cooperation, happiness, humility, peace, responsibility, simplicity, tolerance, unity, and freedom. Table 3 presents the values featured in the animated films and indicates which universal values correspond to them.

Table 3. Values conveyed through linguistic codes featured in the films their correspondence to universal values.

Title of the film	Values Conveyed in the Film	Forms of Expression Related to the Value	Correspondence of the values featured in the film to universal values
Tsifyry Sporyat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unity / Solidarity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer cooperation to others • Share tasks and collaborate within the group • Participate in group activities • Complete a task collaboratively <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish collective action and unite efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Unity / Solidarity
Olokon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love for animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting and assisting in the care of living beings in the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Responsibility

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking precautions against potential situations • Taking responsibility when a negative situation arises and feeling moral discomfort 	
Uzornaya Skazka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping those in need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fighting for the freedom of someone whose freedom has been taken away • Feeling responsible for finding a solution to this situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility
Portret	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom • Friendship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making one's own choices and defending one's rights and freedoms • Engaging in behaviors that express affection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom • Love
Tri Hrabretsa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequences of not completing a task on time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequences of not adhering to societal rules • Fighting against the emerging situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility
Hromoi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of the weak • Distrust of strangers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in solidarity while practicing discrimination • Distrusting strangers based on prejudice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unity • Tolerance
Bodlivyi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dangers of anger to a person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being consumed by anger • Not experiencing inner peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance • Peace
Teatr Šuta Rustama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of art • Thinking while smiling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pleasure that art provides to people • Experiencing the happiness of laughing while also being thoughtful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness
Nochnoy Prikluchenie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child innocence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mother's tolerance towards her child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance
Pivusheye Yabloko	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consequences of being greedy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being overly ambitious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humility

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The harm this passion brings to others 	
Pletka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for nature • Animal right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling moral discomfort when a negative situation arises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility
Predanie Davnih Let	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The victory of goodness over evil • Love for animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The triumph of the good • Protecting living beings around them and helping in their care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace • Responsibility
Jadnyi Pauk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consequences of greed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not knowing one's limits • Being excessively ambitious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humility/Modesty

When examining the values presented in Soviet Kyrgyz animated films, it can be seen in Table 3 that values such as unity/solidarity, love for animals, helping those in need, the consequences of not completing a task on time, freedom, love for friends, the harms of anger to individuals, the importance of art, thinking while laughing, childhood innocence, the consequences of greed, respect for nature, the triumph of good over evil, the exclusion of the weak, and distrust of foreigners are conveyed. Among these values, the exclusion of the weak is portrayed negatively in the narrative of the animated film *Hromoi*. When looking at the correspondence of these values to universal values, it is observed that the value of responsibility is emphasized the most. However, it has been found that there are no narrative patterns in animated films that correspond to the universal values of honesty and simplicity.

4 Conclusion

As a result of the study, it has been determined that the animated films produced during the Soviet era in Kyrgyz cinema contain significant social and cultural values related to both Soviet ideology and Kyrgyz national culture. The analysis revealed that visual cultural codes included Kyrgyz national costumes, *boz-üy* (traditional dwelling) as the living space of the Kyrgyz, national motifs used in their living areas, and symbols representing national musical instruments. The dialogues and main themes in the films reflect the socialist ideology of the period. Social messages such as unity and solidarity, helpfulness, and distrust of foreigners are prominent. At the same time, as the influence of Soviet ideology gradually diminished, more universal themes such as animal rights, freedom, friendship, and the importance of art in human life were included. When examining the values presented in the animated films concerning the universal values defined by UNESCO, the value of responsibility appears most frequently. The inclusion of the value of responsibility in the animated films aligns with the communal fabric of Soviet society. However, the absence of a narrative structure corresponding to the values of honesty and simplicity indicates that the animated films produced during this period were limited in conveying universal ethical principles.

When considering the findings in terms of the reflection of the ideologies held by the administration, it can be seen that the production of animated films in Kyrgyz cinema, which began in 1978, coincides with the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev. The commencement of animated film production during the Brezhnev era reflects the steps taken to financially support art and artists during this time. The inclusion of representations of Kyrgyz culture in

the visual codes of the films is a result of the relatively free environment inherited from Nikita Khrushchev continuing into the Brezhnev period. However, although there was relaxation in the fields of art and literature during this time, criticisms related to socialist ideologies had not yet been addressed in the media. Consequently, the idea of unity and togetherness following the socialist ideology has been a central theme in animated films. Over time, as a result of a shift away from Stalin's doctrine of socialist realism, artists began to view art not as a means of constructing an ideology, but as a tool to address the issues of daily life. This perspective has allowed for the inclusion of values such as love for animals, respect for nature, animal rights, freedom, and love for friends in the animated films.

Overall, influenced by the relatively free period that began during Khrushchev's era and continued thereafter, the increase in faith related to religion and the focus of art on society led to a heightened interest among the Soviet nations in their own national traditions and cultures, which is reflected in the animated films produced in Kyrgyz cinema. In conclusion, the animated films produced in Kyrgyz cinema have served as an important tool for conveying values that align with both Soviet ideology and Kyrgyz national culture to children. This situation demonstrates that art is utilized for ideological purposes on one hand while also serving to preserve national identity and cultural heritage on the other.

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