

# ***Symbolic Expression of Asian Groups in International Sports Events from the Perspective of Visual Culture***

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**Abstract:** This study delves into the symbolic expressions of Asian groups in international sports events through the lens of visual culture. Against the backdrop of globalization and increased international exchanges, the engagement and display of Asian groups in global sports competitions have garnered significant attention. The research theme centers on utilizing the perspective of visual culture to comprehensively analyze the symbols employed by Asian communities during sporting events, aiming to unravel the cultural messages and identity conveyed through these symbols. It also highlights the crucial role of international sports events as platforms for showcasing culture. The study adopts the methodologies of literature review and case analysis, approached from the perspective of Nicholas Mirzolf's visual culture theory. The findings underscore the distinctive role of these symbols in conveying cultural identity and values while emphasizing the significance of international sports events in facilitating cross-cultural exchange. In conclusion, this study emphasizes the cultural significance of symbolic expressions within international sports events, providing novel theoretical and practical support for the fields of cultural communication and cross-cultural research.

**Keywords:** symbolic expression, Asian groups, international sports events, visual culture, cultural identity

## **1. Introduction**

With the deepening of globalization and international exchanges, the participation and cultural expression of Asian groups in international sports events has become a prominent research topic due to their unique cultural identity [1]. In these events, Asian groups convey their distinctive cultural identity and values through a variety of visual elements and symbols. As a form of expression, visual culture is an external presentation and a reflection of history, tradition, and cultural significance. However, despite the high level of attention, research on these symbols' deeper meanings and cultural connotations remains relatively limited.

Influenced by Nicholas Mirzolf's visual culture theory, this study offers a unique perspective by delving into the analysis of visual symbols as a medium to explore the cultural aspects that Asian groups aim to showcase in international sports events [2]. The goal is to reveal the role and significance of these symbols in conveying cultural information, shaping identity, and displaying cultural uniqueness. Through a comprehensive analysis of these symbols can better understand how Asian groups utilize visual cultural means to showcase their distinctive cultural identity and values

in international sports events. This also contributes to a deeper understanding of the significance of international sports events as platforms for cultural communication.

The research methodology will encompass literature review, case analysis, and theoretical integration. Building upon previous research, study recent cases of visual symbols used by Asian groups in international sports events, aiming to explore the cultural significance behind these symbols in shaping identity and facilitating cross-cultural communication.

In conclusion, this study adopts a visual culture perspective to analyze the ways and impact of symbolic expression by Asian groups in international sports events, expanding cross-cultural research and understanding. The research provides substantial theoretical support and practical guidance for the fields of international sports events and cultural communication.

## 2. Method

The study employs a variety of research methods to delve into the symbolic representation of Asian groups in international sports events, aiming to uncover the embedded cultural information and impact. Firstly, the literature review method provides a theoretical foundation and real-world context for the research. By collecting relevant academic literature, research reports, and media coverage, researchers comprehensively analyze and summarize the symbolic expression of Asian groups in international sports events. This process facilitates an understanding of the theoretical framework of visual culture and symbolic representation, as well as the current status and trends in this research field.

On the theoretical front, the study draws inspiration from Nicholas Mirzolf's visual culture theory. As outlined in his work on *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, visual culture research constitutes a fluid interpretive structure aimed at comprehending individuals' and groups' responses to visual media. It is defined by the questions it poses or attempts to address [3]. In the context of study investigate the underlying culture that individuals perceive upon encountering visual symbols presented by Asian groups in international sports events. As Mirzolf suggests in his writings, one of the most remarkable features of new visual culture is the increasing tendency to visualize things that are inherently non-visual [3]. For instance, in the case of Chinese F1 drivers explore the blue-and-white porcelain pattern on their helmets. While this pattern is a simple blue-and-white color scheme, it effectively visualizes China's historical porcelain culture.

Furthermore, the study also employs a case analysis approach, selecting specific international sports events or particular events involving Asian groups as the subjects of investigation. Through the analysis of visual elements such as images, photographs, and videos, researchers deeply interpret the symbolic expression of Asian groups in international sports events from a visual perspective. This method allows researchers to thoroughly dissect the cultural information conveyed by visual elements such as team colors, emblems, and flags, as well as the influence of these symbols on Asian groups' identity and cultural dissemination.

## 3. Case Studies

This study adopts cases from the participating countries in the Summer and Winter Olympic Games of the past decade, as well as Asian athletes featured in prominent professional sports events in Europe and America.

### 3.1. Symbolic Expression of Asian Groups in International Events

Taking the example of Kyrgyzstan's attire during the opening ceremony of the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics, a visual analysis reveals common symbols used by Asian groups, including clothing, national flags, and cultural accessories, each incorporating visual elements such as colors,

patterns, and logos [4]. Kyrgyzstan's delegation athletes raising their national flag at the opening ceremony of an international sporting event is a powerful symbolic gesture encompassing multiple layers of identity, national honor, and unity [5]. This act serves as a means of expressing identity, declaring one's presence and affiliation to the global audience. It signifies a shared sense of identity between the athletes and their nation, enabling them to proudly showcase their identity on the international sports stage. The act of raising the national flag, which is a representation of the country, symbolizes Kyrgyzstan's determination to earn honor and reputation for the nation [6]. It represents a commitment by the athletes to their country, while also conveying a message to the nation's people and the global viewers. The act of raising the flag also exemplifies the unity and cohesion of the nation. This gesture represents not only the efforts of individual athletes but also symbolizes the support and unity of the entire nation, reflecting the collective strength of the people of Kyrgyzstan. Additionally, it serves as a means of conveying the country's values and culture. The colors, patterns, and elements on the national flag represent specific national values, and through this symbolic act, Kyrgyzstan conveys its cultural distinctiveness to other nations and audiences.

The choice of predominantly white attire by the Kyrgyzstan delegation at the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics holds profound and unique symbolic significance within the context of their rich cultural and environmental background. This selection transcends mere visual representation, serving as a deliberate presentation of Kyrgyzstan's history, culture, and societal values. Firstly, white is widely recognized as a symbol of friendship, peace, and unity, often associated with goodwill and positive attitudes [7]. This symbolic representation of societal values is closely intertwined with the hospitable and harmonious nature of the Kyrgyzstan people. Opting for predominantly white attire may aim to project an image of Kyrgyzstan as a friendly nation to the world, showcasing its cultural values of peace and unity. Secondly, situated in the mountainous region of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan experiences a cold climate, making white clothing practical and functional. The strong mountain sunlight reflects off white garments, aiding in retaining body warmth and reducing sunlight absorption in hot weather, thereby maintaining a cooler body temperature. This practical consideration aligns closely with the everyday needs of the Kyrgyzstan people, demonstrating the functional aspect of white attire selection. Additionally, the Kyrgyzstan population predominantly practices Islam, wherein white is revered as a symbol of purity and piety [8]. The choice of wearing white attire by the delegation may stem from a gesture of religious respect and expression, conveying an inner attitude of devout faith and purity.

In conclusion, the Kyrgyzstan delegation's choice of white attire is a carefully thought-out symbolic expression, integrating societal values, practical considerations, and religious beliefs. This choice not only presents Kyrgyzstan's unique cultural identity to the world in terms of outward appearance but also reflects the multi-dimensional cultural facets they coalesce with the environment, faith, and society. Furthermore, the Kyrgyzstan delegation's men don the "Kalpak" a traditional felt hat, which holds a wealth of cultural symbolism [9]. This ancient headpiece encapsulates Kyrgyzstan's historical identity and cultural heritage, bridging memories from their nomadic past to the present. The design of the felt hat incorporates ethnic traits, representing regional identity and infusing the delegation's presence on the international stage with distinct cultural characteristics. This action also conveys respect for family, community, and traditional values, highlighting Kyrgyzstan's unique cultural identity.

### 3.2. Differences in Symbolic Expression

There are differences in symbolic expression across different events and contexts. Contrasting with the attire chosen by Kyrgyzstan at the opening ceremony, visual symbols in various sports events

and contexts take on distinct forms, intertwining with the essence of the sport itself to showcase unique attributes.

Taking the example of symbolic expression in figure skating, costumes play a remarkably significant role. The design of figure skating attire represents an art that harmonizes aesthetics and functionality, meticulously fusing athletes' skills, performances, and personalities with their clothing to create a visual spectacle for the audience. These intricately designed costumes go beyond being mere components of stage performances; they serve as potent tools for athlete identity affirmation and cultural representation.

The design of figure skating attire emphasizes stage presence and visual impact. Through vibrant colors, fluid lines, and unique cuts, costumes enhance the skaters' performance, making their on-ice presence even more dazzling. Designers often incorporate symbols, patterns, and decorations that convey culture, emotions, and themes, enriching the depth of the performance [10].

Furthermore, costume design holds significant importance in figure skating for identity affirmation. Skaters' costumes can reflect their national, regional, or personal identity and cultural background. For instance, in the image, the Japanese skater at the PyeongChang Winter Olympics chose elements such as the pentagram symbolizing the yin-yang concept and the hunting garment from the Heian period, tightly weaving them into the theme of the performance and showcasing the uniqueness of Japanese culture. Costume design transforms skaters into not only athletes on the ice but also carriers and representatives of culture.

Most importantly, figure skating costume design creates a unique visual narrative for skaters, aiding them in expressing emotions and themes more effectively. The patterns and symbols on the costumes are not mere embellishments; they serve as bridges of emotional resonance between the skaters and the audience. Through these elements on the costumes, the audience gains a deeper understanding of the emotions and stories the skaters aim to convey, elevating the artistry and emotional expression of the performance.

### 3.3. The Elements on the Helmet

In Formula 1 racing, helmets serve not only as safety equipment for drivers but also as essential tools for showcasing personality and cultural uniqueness. Against this backdrop, the Chinese driver of the Alfa Romeo Racing team adopted a distinctive design concept for his helmet, adorning it with patterns reminiscent of blue-and-white porcelain.

This helmet design conveys profound cultural significance. Blue-and-white porcelain, as a representative of traditional Chinese ceramics, carries a rich history and unique artistic value. By displaying blue-and-white porcelain patterns on the helmet, the driver introduces not only China's distinctive traditional culture to the world but also integrates personal racing gear with national culture, highlighting a sense of identity and pride.

Such symbolic expression has garnered widespread attention and discussion within the F1 racing arena. Through this unique helmet design, the Chinese driver successfully blends personal style with Chinese culture, presenting distinct visual elements on the international stage of racing. This creative symbol expression not only enriches the diversity of F1 racing but also establishes deeper cultural connections and identity for drivers on a global scale.

### 3.4. The Elements on the Jacket

In international sports events, Asian groups have vividly showcased their diverse cultural features through symbolic expression. Taking the example of the Japanese team at the 2016 Rio Olympics during the awards ceremony, the red cherry blossom patterns adorning their jacket became a distinct cultural symbol, deeply emphasizing the remarkable status of cherry blossoms in Japanese culture.

Cherry blossoms are a radiant gem in Japanese culture, symbolizing beauty, transience, and the cycle of life. Integrating cherry blossom patterns into the awards jacket on this global stage is not just a symbolic representation of the nation [11]; it is also a continuation and promotion of traditional Japanese values. Throughout history, cherry blossoms have held a significant place in Japanese arts such as literature, painting, and music, earning the title of “Japan’s flower.” [12]. Their brilliant bloom and fleeting fall epitomize the beauty of moments and the impermanence of life, profoundly encapsulating the reverence and contemplation of life. Through the visual expression of cherry blossoms, the Japanese team conveys profound sentiments and respect for their native culture to a global audience. This symbolic expression is not merely visual aesthetics; it exudes cultural confidence and pride. Representing themselves through the motif of cherry blossoms, the Japanese team eloquently narrates their unique cultural values, presenting an image of their nation that is poetic and charming.

In conclusion, the use of red cherry blossom patterns on the Japanese team’s awards jacket not only strongly reflects national distinctiveness but also highly praises the elevated position of cherry blossoms in Japanese culture. Through this symbol’s expression, the Japanese team successfully conveys their distinctive understanding of beauty, life, and tradition, allowing the world to gain a deeper insight into and respect for the essence of Japanese culture.

### 3.5. Differences and Connections in Symbolic Expression among Different Asian Groups

Distinct cultural features are evident in the symbolic expressions of various Asian groups, particularly highlighted through visual elements in international sports events. Taking the example of the dragon-patterned helmet worn by the goalkeeper of the Chinese women’s ice hockey team at the 2022 Winter Olympics, this symbol conveys a deep identification with Chinese dragon culture. In traditional Chinese culture, the dragon holds significant importance and influence.

In China, the “dragon” is a sacred symbol, while in the West, the “dragon” is portrayed as a fearsome monster. In Western culture, the dragon is associated with greed, malevolence, and cruelty, representing a vicious and malevolent creature [13]. However, in China, the dragon has long been revered as a divine being with attributes of nobility, extraordinary abilities, benevolence, and emotional richness. In Chinese folklore, stories like “Zhang Sheng Boil the Sea” depict a scholar marrying a dragon maiden, and “Liu Yi Delivers a Letter” narrates how a scholar delivers a letter to rescue a dragon maiden. In these stories, the dragon is endowed with a gentle, beautiful, kind, and emotional personality [14]. The cultural significance of the dragon in China essentially embodies the concrete manifestation and transformation of the Chinese people’s aspirations and desires, reflecting their values and the spirit of the Chinese nation. The depiction of the dragon not only instills self-respect and confidence in athletes but also fosters a sense of pride among the Chinese, representing the Asian community, on the international sports stage. This aids in strengthening their self-identity and serves as a visual symbol to convey China’s dragon culture to the Western world through the platform of international sports.

Korean speed skaters with helmets featuring tiger patterns display Korea’s unique tiger culture. The emergence of Korean tiger culture parallels China’s dragon culture, both stemming from ancient reverence for animals. Tigers have held a vital symbolic role in Korean history, from their role in founding myths to depictions in art and craftsmanship, all signifying the value and significance of tiger culture [15]. The use of tiger helmets communicates respect for nature, national spirit, and cultural traditions, encapsulating Koreans’ love and admiration for tigers in a personalized manner.

These symbolic expressions underscore the distinct emphasis different Asian groups place on cultural heritage, showcasing their unique cultural values on the international sports stage. Whether it’s Chinese dragon culture or Korean tiger culture, both profoundly embody the pursuit of mystery,



power, and hope, emphasizing national identity and pride. The presentation of these visual elements in international sports events goes beyond mere image display; it facilitates the transmission and exchange of culture, enriching the diversity and charm of Asian groups on the global stage.

### **3.6. Importance of Visual Symbols in International Sports Events for Asian Groups**

**Global Impact:** International sports events attract massive global audiences, providing Asian participants with the opportunity to showcase their local cultures through competitions and performances. This enables Asian values, traditions, and cultural elements to transcend borders and spread worldwide, enhancing global awareness of Asian culture.

**Cross-Cultural Exchange:** International sports events serve as bridges for different cultures to interact. Asian groups engage with athletes and spectators from other regions, promoting understanding and friendship among diverse cultures. This helps reduce cultural misunderstandings and biases, fostering respect for and coexistence of cultural diversity.

**Identity Display:** Asian countries and regions use visual symbols such as team colors, emblems, and symbolic logos in international sports events to exhibit their cultural identities. These symbols represent not only nations but also convey history, traditions, and ethnic identity, reinforcing the expression of indigenous culture.

**Cultural Heritage:** International sports events provide opportunities for Asian groups to preserve their native cultures. Through patterns, motifs, embroidery, and other visual elements, Asian athletes can integrate their cultural elements into the events, passing ancient traditions to the next generation and showcasing unique cultural charm on a global scale.

**Image Shaping:** International sports events become media focal points, and Asian groups' performances influence global media coverage. This helps build a positive cultural image, shape favorable cultural perceptions, and enhance international relationships. Utilizing various media platforms extends the influence of Asian cultural symbols to a broader audience, increasing global recognition of Asian culture.

International sports events play a significant role in showcasing the cultures of Asian groups. Through visual symbols that promote cross-cultural exchange and identity representation, Asian communities not only convey their cultural identities, values, and traditions to the world but also achieve cross-border cultural dissemination and exchange. Additionally, this contributes to cultural confidence, identity, social cohesion, and the enhancement of national image on an intrinsic level.

### **3.7. The Role of Visual Symbols**

To further enhance the role of visual symbols in international sports events, a comprehensive approach to sports event planning and public relations is essential. Here are some beneficial insights and recommendations:

**Sports Event Planning:**

**Clear Cultural Communication Strategy:** Developing a clear strategy for cultural communication is crucial. Determine which symbols and elements best represent Asian culture and how to seamlessly integrate them into various aspects of the event. This requires a well-defined plan and objectives.

**Respectful Cultural Representation:** The design of symbols and elements should deeply respect and showcase the profound cultural significance of Asian cultures. Utilize appropriate visual designs, clothing, props, etc., to vividly convey cultural information.

**Public Relations Practices:**

**Global Audience Outreach:** Consider how to effectively convey Asian cultural symbols to a global audience. Utilize methods such as multilingual promotions, social media, cultural

explanations, etc., to help international audiences better understand and appreciate the unique aspects of Asian culture.

**Media Engagement:** Actively engage media to focus on the cultural elements of the event. Organize dedicated media activities, press conferences, etc., to introduce the stories and cultural meanings behind the symbols, enhancing the depth and breadth of media coverage [16].

**Cultural Exhibitions:** Set up cultural exhibitions and interactive zones within the event venue. Provide opportunities for attendees to gain a deeper understanding and experience of Asian culture. Examples include cultural workshops, traditional craftsmanship showcases, etc.

**Involvement of Local Artists:** Invite local artists to participate in the design of symbols and elements. This can bring richer creativity and perspectives to cultural expression while promoting the development of local artists.

**Athlete Involvement:** Encourage Asian athletes to actively participate in the design and dissemination of cultural symbols. Let them become advocates for cultural communication, enhancing the authenticity and emotional resonance of cultural expression.

**Long-Term Cultural Promotion:** Beyond the sports event, continue cultural promotion activities. Organize cultural exhibitions, touring performances, etc., to sustain and deepen the influence of Asian culture.

By implementing these strategies and practices, the cultural expression role of symbols in international sports events can be further amplified. This will strengthen the cultural identity of Asian communities, facilitate cross-cultural exchanges and understanding, and contribute to the dissemination and preservation of Asian culture on a global scale.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study delved into the realm of visual culture to explore the symbol expressions of Asian communities in international sports events, with the aim of uncovering the cultural information embedded within and their role in conveying cultural identity and values. Through thorough research and analysis, the following conclusions have been drawn.

Firstly, symbol expression by Asian communities in international sports events is a significant mode of cultural representation. Different Asian countries and regions skillfully showcase their cultural identities and traditional values through visual elements such as team colors, emblems, and cultural attire. Examples like China's dragon-patterned helmets and Japan's cherry blossom awards attire are rich in symbolic meaning, effectively conveying the unique characteristics and charm of their respective cultures.

Secondly, these symbol expressions wield substantial influence within international sports events. They not only capture the attention of a global audience but also foster communication and understanding among diverse cultures. Through the transmission of symbols, Asian communities showcase their distinctive cultural allure to the world, providing valuable opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges and interactions. This influence contributes to the expansion of the global impact and recognition of Asian cultures.

It can foresee that symbol expression by Asian communities in international sports events will continue to play a pivotal role. With the acceleration of globalization, intercultural exchanges will become more frequent and interconnected. Asian countries and regions have the opportunity to deepen international society's understanding and awareness of their cultures through symbol expression. Future research can explore more effective ways of utilizing symbol expression and enhancing the transmission of cultural values of Asian communities within international sports events.

In summary, within the framework of visual culture, symbol expression by Asian communities in international sports events is a significant means of cultural communication, possessing profound

influence and potential. Through the transmission of symbols, Asian communities can display their cultural identities and values, foster cross-cultural communication and understanding, and actively contribute to the dissemination and exchange of Asian cultures on a global scale. Future research and practice should further explore ways to optimize symbol expression in order to better showcase the cultural charm of Asian communities and propel the exchange and development of cultural diversity.

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