

# Analysis of the Humanistic Connotation in Japanese Food Theme Movies and TV Series

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**Abstract.** Humanistic connotation emphasizes the attention to people, respect the value of person as a spiritual being. It mainly refers to the maintenance of human dignity value and fate of the pursuit and concern, is a universal human self-care. In the food theme films and TV series, food serves as a medium to externalize people's emotions. Through food, people can express their emotions, heal themselves and live symbiotically with the environment.

**Keywords:** Japanese; food theme films and TV series; the humanistic connotation.

## 1. Introduction

“People regard food as their prime want”, food is the basic substance on which human beings live, it meets the needs of human normal life activities and provides the basic energy to continue life. With the continuous enrichment and development of food culture, food has not only played a role in filling one's belly with food and clothing. In a sense, food has been permeated with human beings' higher understanding and pursuit of life. Especially the delicacy, combine objective ingredients with people's subjective initiative, combine the beauty of sight and taste to give mankind the greatest satisfaction. This satisfaction includes more than just basic satiety, it also includes visual satisfaction of being delicious and spiritual satisfaction of self-comfort. Strauss said that between raw and cooked, food as an indicator, it completes the distinction between nature and culture. In the process of cooking, human beings demonstrate the initiative of transforming nature into culture.

## 2. Food Theme Movies and TV Series and the Humanistic Connotation

Movies and TV series are one of the artistic means of human thinking, exploring and expressing their own value cognition. The food, with the human survival and life has naturally become one of the indispensable themes. We call movies and TV series about food “food themes movies and TV series”. Junzhen Nie (2012)said that start the story with a diet theme or a metonymy theme about the food, or use food as a clue to move the story forward, eating activities have an important impact on the lives of the main characters or play an important role in illuminating and deepening the theme. This type of movie is called a “diet movie”. Author thinks that these works that involve food include not only film, but also include TV series. So, we use the expression “food theme movies and TV series”. In the numerous food film and TV series, Japanese works on this theme are quite rich and eye-catching. Such as *An Autumn Afternoon*, *Kamome Diner*, *The Chef of South Polar*, *Midnight Diner*, *kodokunogurume*. Each has a distinct theme, thought-provoking and quite popular.

Food is the objective thing, of course. People pour their emotions into food, or use food to convey emotions. Food is an expression, also a bond. Food theme movies and TV dramas often express a kind of care and concern for people. In other words, this kind of film and television series contains rich humanistic connotation.

Humanistic connotation emphasizes the attention to people, especially to people's spiritual life, respecting the value of people as a spiritual being. It is embodied in the maintenance of human dignity, value, destiny, is a universal human self-care. Humanistic connotation is also the core content advocated in various literary works in recent years, as an important ideological connotation, in line with the scientific development concept of people-oriented core concept.

Next, from human emotional expression, “healing” function, man-environmental relations, three aspects explain the humanistic connotation of Japanese food films and TV dramas.

### 3. The Humanistic Connotation of Food Theme Movies and TV Series

#### 3.1 Food and Expression of Human Emotions

When modern people express their sense of importance, they often prepare delicious food. This suggests that humans transmit emotions through food. Food is made with the care of its maker and prepared with the care of its preparers. So, we often see a memorable moment in movies and TV series, people sitting around a table enjoying a meal, warm and happy. However, Japanese food movies and TV series express this kind of emotion more implicitly, this emotion is concentrated in the cook's emotion to the eater or cooking for the loved ones. For example, in the TV series *Sencha* named SEN is better to lose a cooking competition than to take care about the guests' physical condition, choosing foods that are healthy for the eater. This shows a kind of care for the consumers.

Also, what kind of food do people choose, sometimes it's not just about filling up, but also making a choice with a certain emotion. The choice of food also expresses human emotions.

For example, in the TV series *Midnight Diner*, when the high cold underworld group leader RYU go to the late-night dining hall every time, he always orders red sausage. An underworld group leader likes sausage, which is somewhat comic. But as the plot progresses, we finally understand that the red sausage is the memory of first love and youth of RYU.

In the movie *The Chef of South Polar*, in the extreme cold, where even bacteria don't grow, Chef Nishi Mura does his own work fulfill his duty. Every day, different ingredients are used to make delicious dishes for the team members. For the team members, food is a kind of expectation every day. The best thing for Nishi Mura is watching the team munch on food. Where there is good food, there is hope. When Nishi Mura was dispirited by the loss of his daughter's baby teeth, the team members in turn tried to cook for their chef. Though they were clumsy, and the food was awful, but they let Nishi Mura very moved. It makes them feel more deeply about each other. The emotions people express through food are simple and sincere.

So, from this point of view, food can often be a direct link of human emotion expression and output. Choose a certain dish at a certain time, maybe the best emotional sustenance of the chooser. Expressing emotions through food is a human concern for self. This caring can give people an outlet of expression for the other people. It can also give others a little boost.

#### 3.2 The Healing Power of Food

The word "healing" comes from Japanese. It refers to a series of things that soothe the soul and give a person a constant, continuous feeling of ease. (Siqi Han 2010) Japanese food theme film and TV series always tend to be slow. Characters are often people who are at a low point in life or have a story. They use food to connect with others, at the same time they heal themselves, whether SACHIE in the *Kaoma Diner* or RINKO who is lovelorn in the *Rincos Restaurant*, they are all so.

In the movie *The Chef of South Polar*, eight members of the scientific research team in Antarctica, not only have to endure the cold of a world of ice and snow, but also endure the loneliness of being far away from their hometown and relatives. In a monotonous life, everyone is extremely vulnerable. Thanks to the delicious food is prepared for them by chef Nishi Murein distant places, eating delicious food is a comfort to the taste buds of each expedition member, and to their soul. Finally, when they return to normal life, only to find that the original ordinary life is the most valuable. The food in the extreme environment brought inner healing to the expedition members.

Protagonist of TV series named *Kodokunogurume* is a businessman who deals in imported groceries. Because of work demands, he often walks the streets alone. When work is over, he is very hungry. He would obsessively search in the streets for restaurants that looked good. Fortunately, he always finds a restaurant that brings him comfort. The satisfaction after eating the delicious food is enough to calm the confusion and annoyance brought by work. It's a good cure.

In this process, people find their own value and pursue dignity. It can be said that food plays an important role in this process.

### 3.3 Food Guides People to Live with Their Environment

When a person is in a particular extreme situation, it's easy to become dependent on something that would be commonplace under normal circumstances. This point is evident in the film *The Chef of South Polar*.

*The Chef of South Polar* is set in a specific environment at the South Pole. It is well known that Antarctica challenges not only human physical limits, but also human spiritual limits. Freezing temperatures of dozens of degrees below zero, polar night environment where the sun is absent for most of the year. It has loneliness, miss for family, also has the pain after breaking up with lover here. But anyway, the expedition members have delicious food as the Comfortis Mura chef played by Masato Sakai cooks for the expedition team every day. He used all his ingredients to make a delicious meal for the expedition team: European cuisine, hand-pulled Noodles, fried shrimp, sushi, rice and vegetable roll, foregrips and so on. When the wind whipped up a blizzard outside, it is the time for the expedition team to enjoy a day of delicious food. The harsh environment outside is in sharp contrast to the delicious food on the dining table inside. They are also in the same space at the same time. People live with such an environment without violation. Food plays an important role in it. It's hard to imagine life in Antarctica without food.

This contrast is also reflected in other food TV series. For example, in *Midnight Diner*, the bustle outside the diner is often contrasted with the quiet of the diner. The street is very busy and people are coming and going. But the late-night dining hall is so different. As the soul of the dining hall, each time the boss listens to the conversation between the diners and their stories quietly, while making the dishes for the guests. Occasionally casual a few words touch the heart of the guests, which giving them strength and courage. Even if the world is warm or cold, because of the care from food, people will always get warm, get courage.

## 4. Summary

Humanistic connotation especially emphasizes the inner concern of human beings, and food can often be a medium for this inner focus. Through food, people can express their feelings for others, they also can find comfort from food. And the food theme film and TV series on this theme make a good interpretation, so be loved and had attention by many people.

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