Visual Representation and Historical Memory Communication in the Documentary *If Treasures Could Talk*

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Abstract: With the development of digital media and audiovisual technologies, historical documentaries have become important channels for presenting cultural heritage and communicating collective memories. As a documentary series focusing on representative Chinese cultural relics, *If Treasures Could Talk* explores the relationship between material objects, historical knowledge, and contemporary audiences through distinctive visual techniques and accessible forms of expression. By combining close-up photography, digital reconstruction, animation, sound design, and narrative interpretation, the documentary transforms static cultural relics into visual representations of historical events, social practices, artistic achievements, and cultural values. These visual presentations do not simply reproduce the physical appearance of historical objects but also provide audiences with ways to understand the historical contexts and cultural meanings behind them. This article examines the documentary's visual representation strategies and their role in communicating historical memory. It discusses the presentation of material objects, the combination of visual and auditory elements, the reconstruction of historical scenes, and the relationship between individual artifacts and collective cultural identity. It further considers the limitations of visual reconstruction, historical simplification, and symbolic interpretation. The article argues that the communication of historical memory through documentaries depends on a balance between visual accessibility, historical accuracy, and cultural interpretation. By connecting the physical characteristics of cultural relics with the historical experiences and social values they represent, *If Treasures Could Talk* demonstrates how audiovisual media can provide contemporary audiences with a more accessible understanding of the past.

Keywords: *If Treasures Could Talk*; visual representation; historical memory; documentary communication; cultural heritage

1. Introduction

Cultural relics are important material records of human civilization. They preserve information about historical periods, social structures, production techniques, artistic achievements, religious beliefs, and everyday life. Unlike written historical records, which primarily communicate through language and textual interpretation, cultural relics provide material evidence of the societies in which they were created and used. Their shapes, materials, decorative patterns, inscriptions, and production techniques can reveal aspects of the past that might otherwise remain difficult to understand. However, the historical meanings of cultural relics are not always immediately recognizable to contemporary audiences. A bronze vessel displayed in a museum may attract attention because of its impressive appearance, but understanding its social function, historical background, and cultural significance requires further explanation.

The development of audiovisual media has created new possibilities for communicating historical information through cultural relics. Television documentaries, digital exhibitions, online videos, and interactive museum platforms allow historical objects to be presented through images, sounds, narration, and digital technologies. These forms of communication can establish connections between physical artifacts and the historical environments in which they originally existed. Through visual presentation, audiences can observe details that may be difficult to notice during an ordinary museum visit. Through narration and historical reconstruction, they can also understand the relationships between objects and the people, events, and social practices associated with them.

The documentary series *If Treasures Could Talk* represents an important example of this development. The series consists of 100 episodes, each approximately five minutes long, and covers a historical span of approximately eight thousand years, from prehistoric civilizations to the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. Its production involved numerous museums, archaeological research institutions, and archaeological sites, creating a broad visual presentation of Chinese material culture (CCTV.com, "If Treasures Could Talk"). Rather than following a conventional chronological explanation of Chinese history, the documentary organizes its content around individual cultural relics. Each object becomes the starting point for introducing a particular historical period, cultural practice, or artistic achievement. The Jiahu bone flute, for example, provides an opportunity to discuss early musical creativity, while the bronze vessel He Zun connects an ancient inscription with the historical development of the concept of China. The Zenghouyi chime bells reveal the relationship between ancient musical instruments and the development of musical culture. Through these objects, the documentary presents historical information in a form that is relatively direct and visually accessible.

Visual representation is particularly important in this process because cultural relics are primarily encountered by contemporary audiences through their visible physical characteristics. The camera determines which details become prominent, digital technologies reconstruct features that are difficult to observe, and visual editing connects objects with historical environments. These techniques influence not only how audiences see cultural relics but also how they interpret the historical meanings associated with them. Gillian Rose argues that visual images should not be understood as transparent reflections of reality. They involve particular ways of presenting and interpreting the world (2–3). Therefore, the visual presentation of cultural relics is also a process of selecting and organizing historical meanings.

Historical memory provides another important perspective for understanding the documentary. Cultural relics are not simply preserved objects from earlier periods. They can serve as material connections between contemporary society and the past. Through documentary communication, the historical information contained in these objects is reorganized into narratives that can be understood by contemporary audiences. The process allows

individual artifacts to participate in the construction and communication of collective historical memory. Existing studies have examined the visual expression, audiovisual symbols, narrative strategies, and cultural identity construction of *If Treasures Could Talk*. Zhang Zhuo and Zhang Bin discuss the relationship between the visual characteristics of national treasures and the modern communication of traditional culture, emphasizing the role of documentary images in making cultural objects more accessible to the public (18–25). Li Min and Li Zezhong examine the audiovisual symbols used in the second season, highlighting the relationship between visual and linguistic expression in cultural documentaries (90–91). Liu Yang further discusses the different dimensions of museum collection interpretation and the relationship between artifacts and contemporary audiences (104–09). Chen Ning, Deng Qian, and Yang Yang analyze the documentary's narrative characteristics and its combination of different expressive techniques (935–38). These discussions provide important foundations for understanding the documentary's communication characteristics.

Building on these perspectives, this article focuses on the relationship between visual representation and historical memory communication. It examines how the documentary transforms material objects into historical images, how audiovisual techniques establish connections between the past and the present, and how cultural relics become carriers of collective memory. It also considers the limitations of visual reconstruction and the importance of maintaining historical accuracy in documentary communication.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Visual Representation and Historical Memory

2.1 Visual Representation in Documentary Communication

Visual representation refers to the process through which images present and construct meanings about people, objects, events, and social realities. In documentary communication, visual representation involves more than recording what exists in front of the camera. Camera position, framing, lighting, editing, visual effects, and the relationship between images and narration all influence the information presented to audiences.

Gillian Rose emphasizes that visual materials should be examined in relation to their production, appearance, and circulation. Images are produced within particular cultural and institutional contexts, and their meanings are influenced by the ways in which they are presented and interpreted (Rose 2–3). This perspective is relevant to the study of cultural documentaries because the appearance of a historical object on screen is not an entirely neutral presentation. The documentary selects particular objects, emphasizes certain visual features, and provides explanations that guide audiences toward specific interpretations.

Bill Nichols also explains that documentary representation is organized through particular modes, conventions, and rhetorical strategies. Documentaries establish relationships with the historical world through the selection and arrangement of images, narration, and evidence (32–75). Although documentaries are associated with factual representation, their presentation of reality still involves interpretation. The relationship between historical evidence and audiovisual expression therefore deserves careful consideration. In *If Treasures Could Talk*, visual representation is closely connected with the physical characteristics of cultural relics. The documentary frequently emphasizes the shapes, materials, patterns, inscriptions, and production details of individual objects. These visual elements provide audiences with direct information about the objects themselves. However, the documentary also uses digital animation, historical imagery, and explanatory narration to extend the meaning of these visual details. The decorative patterns on a bronze vessel, for instance, may initially appear to be artistic elements. When they are connected with explanations of ancient religious beliefs, political authority, or social organization, they acquire additional historical meanings. The visual

presentation thus moves from the recognition of physical characteristics toward the interpretation of cultural significance.

2.2 Historical Memory and Material Cultural Relics

Historical memory refers to the ways in which societies understand, preserve, and communicate their relationships with the past. Unlike personal memories, which are based primarily on individual experiences, collective historical memory develops through shared cultural symbols, historical narratives, social practices, and forms of public communication.

Jan Assmann distinguishes between communicative memory and cultural memory. Communicative memory develops through everyday interaction and is generally limited to the experiences of living generations, whereas cultural memory can be maintained over longer periods through cultural forms, symbols, and institutional practices (109–18). Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka further explain that collective memory is closely connected with cultural identity because shared historical references provide groups with a sense of continuity (125–33).

Cultural relics can participate in this process because they preserve material traces of earlier societies. A bronze vessel, ancient musical instrument, or inscribed artifact may have existed long before contemporary audiences were born, yet its physical existence allows people to encounter historical information through direct visual observation. The relationship between cultural relics and historical memory is not automatic. An artifact does not independently explain its original function or historical significance. Its meaning becomes accessible through archaeological interpretation, historical documentation, museum presentation, and public communication. A documentary can therefore serve as an intermediary between material evidence and collective memory.

Liu Yang's discussion of museum collection interpretation identifies three dimensions of collection information: basic information about the object itself, related information connecting it with the external world, and derived information that establishes connections between the collection and contemporary society (104–09). This perspective is useful for understanding how cultural relics can move beyond their physical existence to become meaningful historical symbols. In *If Treasures Could Talk*, the presentation of an artifact generally begins with its physical characteristics, develops through explanations of its historical background, and finally connects its significance with broader cultural values.

3. Visual Representation Strategies in *If Treasures Could Talk*

3.1 Close-Up Photography and the Presentation of Material Details

One of the most important visual characteristics of *If Treasures Could Talk* is its attention to the physical details of cultural relics. Traditional museum displays often present artifacts within exhibition cases, where visitors can observe their general appearance but may have limited opportunities to examine small decorative patterns, inscriptions, or production details. Documentary photography provides a different viewing experience by bringing these details closer to the audience.

Close-up photography allows the camera to emphasize particular visual features, including surface textures, carved patterns, inscriptions, and traces of production. Such details can provide information about the materials and techniques used by ancient craftsmen. They can also reveal aesthetic characteristics that are difficult to recognize from a general view. Zhang and Zhang identify close-up presentation, moving camera techniques, and digital visual processing as important methods through which the documentary transforms cultural relics into accessible visual materials (20–22).

This technique is particularly meaningful when presenting artifacts with complex decorative structures. A bronze vessel may contain numerous patterns that are difficult to distinguish when

viewed as a complete object. By emphasizing selected details, the documentary allows audiences to examine the relationship between decorative elements and the overall design. The presentation of the Zenghouyi chime bells also demonstrates the importance of displaying both the overall structure and the individual characteristics of cultural relics. Their arrangement, shape, and physical composition provide information about ancient musical technology and the organization of musical instruments.

However, the purpose of close-up photography should not be limited to visual appreciation. Physical details become more meaningful when they are connected with historical explanations. A decorative pattern, for example, can be interpreted through its relationship with religious beliefs, political symbols, or artistic traditions. Without such explanations, visual details may remain attractive but historically incomplete. The documentary's visual approach is therefore most effective when close-up photography and historical interpretation complement each other.

3.2 Digital Reconstruction and the Transformation of Static Objects

Cultural relics are physical objects that generally remain static in museum collections. Their original functions, production processes, and historical environments may no longer be directly observable. Digital technologies provide opportunities to reconstruct some of these missing dimensions. *If Treasures Could Talk* uses digital visual techniques to present objects in ways that extend beyond conventional photography. Three-dimensional scanning, digital modeling, animation, and visual effects can reveal details of objects and demonstrate relationships between different historical elements.

Zhang and Zhang discuss the use of digital visual techniques and dynamic effects in the documentary, explaining how they allow audiences to observe the structures, dimensions, and decorative features of cultural relics from different perspectives (20–22). These techniques can also transform static visual elements into dynamic images. For example, the documentary uses digital processing to present inscriptions on the Shangyang square measure and to reconstruct information contained in the Liye Qin bamboo slips. These presentations help audiences understand historical systems and technical knowledge through visual examples (Zhang and Zhang 20–22).

The presentation of oracle bone inscriptions provides another example of how digital images can connect written evidence with historical imagination. At the documentary's premiere, the production team demonstrated how pictographic characters could be animated to reconstruct the daily activities of an ancient merchant. Through animation, written symbols were transformed into visual scenes that audiences could more easily understand (CCTV-9 Documentary Channel). This approach creates a connection between ancient writing and historical everyday life. Rather than presenting oracle bone inscriptions only as written materials, the documentary uses visual reconstruction to suggest the activities and experiences of the people associated with them.

The technique also changes the relationship between cultural relics and time. A written symbol is physically preserved on an artifact, but its meaning belongs to a historical environment that no longer exists. Animation provides a possible visual interpretation of that environment, allowing audiences to imagine how the symbol was connected with everyday activities. Nevertheless, digital reconstruction should be distinguished from direct historical evidence. Animated scenes are interpretations based on available information rather than recordings of actual historical events. Their value lies in explaining historical possibilities, not in reproducing the past with absolute certainty.

3.3 Color, Lighting, and the Combination of Visual and Auditory Expression

Color and lighting are important elements in the visual presentation of historical objects. They influence the atmosphere of a documentary and guide audiences toward particular aspects of an artifact. Different materials possess different visual

characteristics. Bronze objects may display dark surfaces, green patina, or golden decorative elements. Jade objects often attract attention through their color, translucency, and surface texture, while ceramic objects may reveal the relationship between glaze, firing techniques, and decorative patterns.

Appropriate lighting can make these characteristics more visible. It can emphasize the contours of an object, reveal small details, and establish a sense of depth. When used carefully, lighting helps audiences recognize the aesthetic qualities of cultural relics without separating them from their material characteristics. The visual presentation also involves the relationship between objects and their backgrounds. A relatively simple background can emphasize the artifact itself, while historical images and reconstructed environments can establish connections between the object and its original context. Zhang and Zhang argue that the documentary uses visual techniques to transform the physical characteristics of cultural relics into contemporary audiovisual forms, allowing traditional cultural elements to become more accessible to modern audiences (18–22).

Although the documentary focuses on visual representation, sound is equally important to its communication of historical memory. Sound can provide historical and cultural information that images alone cannot fully express. Traditional musical instruments offer a clear example. The Jiahu bone flute is not only a physical artifact but also an instrument associated with the early development of musical expression. Its historical significance cannot be fully understood through its shape and material alone. Hearing the sound produced by a similar instrument or an appropriate reconstruction can help audiences understand its function more directly.

The episode about the Jiahu bone flute explains that ancient people used the wing bone of a crane to create an early musical instrument, demonstrating the relationship between natural materials and human creativity (CCTV.com, "Jiahu Bone Flute"). The Zenghouyi chime bells provide another important example. The relevant episode uses an original recording of an individual bell made in 1986 through the cooperation of the Hubei Provincial Museum and China Record Corporation. This recording allows audiences to hear the actual sound characteristics associated with the historical instrument rather than relying entirely on narration (CCTV.com, "Zenghouyi Chime Bells"). The combination of sound and image creates a more complete experience: audiences can observe the instrument while also hearing its sound, making the historical object easier to understand as a functioning cultural artifact.

Li and Li's analysis of audiovisual symbols in the documentary emphasizes the relationship between visual, linguistic, and auditory elements in the presentation of cultural relics (90–91). The integration of these elements should be based on the characteristics of individual artifacts. A musical instrument may require a stronger emphasis on sound, while an inscribed bronze vessel may require more attention to written characters and historical interpretation. Contemporary music and sound effects can improve presentation, but they should not obscure the original characteristics of the cultural object.

4. The Construction and Communication of Historical Memory

4.1 Cultural Relics as Material Carriers of Historical Memory

The most important contribution of *If Treasures Could Talk* lies in its presentation of cultural relics as material carriers of historical memory. Each artifact is connected with a particular historical environment, and its physical characteristics provide evidence of the society in which it was created. The documentary selects individual objects as starting points for explaining different aspects of Chinese civilization. The Jiahu bone flute introduces early musical creativity, bronze vessels provide information about ancient political and ritual systems, and jade objects reveal the development of artistic expression and social beliefs.

This approach allows audiences to encounter historical information through recognizable material objects. Rather than beginning with an abstract description of an entire historical period, the documentary introduces a particular object and gradually expands the discussion toward its historical context. Liu Yang's study of museum collection interpretation provides a useful explanation of this process. The basic information of an artifact establishes the foundation for understanding its physical characteristics, related information connects it with the external historical environment, and derived information establishes its relationship with contemporary audiences (104–09). These dimensions allow a cultural object to become more than a preserved material item.

The bronze vessel He Zun is a particularly significant example. It is not presented simply as an ancient ritual object. Its inscription connects the physical artifact with the historical development of the concept of China. The documentary explains that the inscription contains the phrase "Zhai Zi Zhongguo" (宅茲中国), which represents the earliest known written occurrence of the term "China" (CCTV.com, "He Zun"). The artifact thus becomes a material connection between an ancient historical context and a concept that remains significant in contemporary society. Its historical importance is communicated through the relationship between the physical inscription, its archaeological discovery, and its cultural interpretation.

4.2 Connecting Historical Periods with Everyday Human Experiences

The documentary's organization of cultural relics across different historical periods contributes to the communication of historical memory. Its 100 episodes cover a long historical span, from prehistoric civilizations to later dynastic periods. Although each episode focuses on an individual artifact, the overall arrangement allows audiences to encounter different stages of cultural development. The National Museum of China and CCTV describe the series as a visual presentation of Chinese civilization spanning approximately eight thousand years (CCTV.com, "If Treasures Could Talk").

The development of cultural relics can reveal changes in production techniques, artistic styles, social organization, and cultural beliefs. Early pottery, jade objects, bronze vessels, musical instruments, paintings, and ceramics represent different forms of material creativity. Their presentation allows audiences to recognize both the diversity and historical development of Chinese civilization. The fourth season's presentation of Guo Xi's painting *Early Spring* provides an example of how an individual artwork can become a point of entry into historical memory. The episode contrasts the changing seasons outside the painting with the preserved spring landscape within it, connecting artistic representation with the historical experience of the Song dynasty (CCTV.com, "Early Spring Painting").

Historical memory becomes more accessible when cultural relics are connected with the everyday experiences of the people who created and used them. A cultural object may survive for thousands of years, while the individuals associated with it have long disappeared. Its physical characteristics can nevertheless provide information about the activities, knowledge, and social relationships of earlier generations. The animated presentation of oracle bone inscriptions, for example, connects written records with the experiences of ordinary people. The presentation of the Zenghouyi chime bells connects an ancient musical instrument with performance practices and artistic achievements of its historical period. These examples demonstrate that historical memory is not limited to political events or major historical figures. It can also be communicated through the activities, skills, aesthetic preferences, and practical knowledge of ordinary people.

4.3 From Individual Artifacts to Collective Cultural Memory

Individual cultural relics can become symbols through which societies understand shared historical experiences. Their meanings often extend

beyond their original functions and become connected with broader cultural values. Jan Assmann and Czaplicka explain that collective memory is closely related to the formation of cultural identity because shared historical references provide groups with a sense of continuity (125–33). In this context, cultural relics can serve as material points of reference through which historical memory is maintained and communicated.

If Treasures Could Talk presents many objects that have acquired meanings beyond their original practical functions. The dragon and phoenix motifs found in ancient artifacts, for example, can be interpreted through their historical and cultural associations. These symbols have appeared in different forms throughout Chinese history and continue to participate in contemporary cultural expression. The documentary's presentation of He Zun is particularly significant because it connects an ancient inscription with the historical development of a concept that remains central to contemporary cultural identity. The words engraved on the vessel are not simply decorative inscriptions. They provide material evidence of how a particular expression was used in an ancient political and cultural context. The connection between individual artifacts and collective memory is also reflected in the documentary's broader selection of objects. Each artifact contributes a particular historical perspective, while the series as a whole constructs a larger picture of cultural development. Zhang and Zhang argue that cultural relics carry both material and symbolic meanings and that their visual presentation can connect historical objects with contemporary national and cultural imagination (22–23). The documentary's visual communication therefore involves not only the preservation of historical information but also the interpretation of cultural symbols within contemporary society.

However, collective memory should not be understood as a single interpretation shared equally by all audiences. People may understand the same artifact differently depending on their historical knowledge, cultural background, and personal experiences. The documentary provides a framework for remembering and interpreting the past, but its meanings remain open to further discussion and interpretation.

5. Communication Value and Existing Limitations

The communication value of *If Treasures Could Talk* is first reflected in its ability to improve the accessibility of historical knowledge. Traditional historical explanations may involve specialized terminology, complicated historical backgrounds, and detailed descriptions of archaeological discoveries. For audiences without relevant knowledge, these materials can sometimes be difficult to understand. The documentary reduces this difficulty by using individual artifacts as the central subjects of each episode. Audiences can first observe an object and then gradually receive explanations of its historical background, function, and cultural significance. The combination of images, narration, animation, and sound transforms abstract historical information into more recognizable forms.

The documentary also establishes emotional connections between contemporary audiences and historical objects. Cultural relics are not merely physical evidence; they are associated with human creativity, social relationships, aesthetic preferences, and collective experiences. When audiences learn how ancient people created musical instruments, developed production techniques, or expressed their understanding of the world through artistic objects, historical knowledge becomes connected with recognizable human activities. Zhang and Zhang emphasize that visual representation can reduce the distance between cultural relics and audiences by transforming static objects into more accessible and emotionally engaging images (20–22). This communication approach helps audiences recognize the human experiences behind material heritage.

Nevertheless, the documentary's presentation of historical memory inevitably involves selection. Only a limited number of cultural relics can be included in a series, and each episode has a

restricted amount of time. The selection of artifacts determines which historical experiences become visible and which receive less attention. A bronze vessel may be chosen because of its artistic quality, historical importance, or symbolic meaning. Other objects from the same period may receive less attention, even if they provide equally valuable information about different aspects of social life. The documentary therefore does not present the past in its entirety. Instead, it constructs a particular historical perspective through the selection and arrangement of material evidence. Roselló argues that nonfiction films represent the past through processes of selection, reconstruction, and interpretation, and that their images should be understood in relation to the ways historical memory is represented (55–67).

Another limitation concerns the relationship between visual reconstruction and historical authenticity. Digital technologies provide valuable opportunities for presenting cultural relics, but their use also creates questions about historical accuracy. Three-dimensional modeling, animation, and digital reconstruction can make invisible or damaged details easier to understand. However, not every reconstructed image is based on complete historical evidence. Some scenes involve interpretation, while others represent possible explanations of how an object was produced or used. Nichols emphasizes that documentary representation involves particular rhetorical and interpretive strategies rather than functioning as an entirely transparent reflection of reality (107–34). This principle is relevant to the use of digital reconstruction in cultural documentaries. When historical scenes are animated, audiences may not always distinguish between directly documented information and visual interpretations created by the production team. If these differences are not sufficiently explained, reconstructed images may appear more historically certain than the available evidence actually allows.

Excessive emphasis on visual appeal may also cause audiences to focus primarily on the appearance of objects while overlooking their original functions and social meanings. A bronze vessel may be presented as an artistic masterpiece, but its relationship with ancient ritual practices, political authority, or social hierarchy is equally important. Similarly, a jade object may be appreciated for its material quality without sufficient understanding of its historical use and cultural significance. Meehan's discussion of digital museum objects highlights the relationship between digital representation, materiality, authenticity, and cultural memory (417–34). Digital images can make artifacts accessible to more people, but they cannot reproduce every characteristic of the original physical objects. Visual communication should therefore remain connected with historical interpretation. The aesthetic characteristics of cultural relics are important, but they should not become substitutes for historical explanation.

6. Strategies for Improving Historical Memory Communication Through Visual Representation

Improving the communication of historical memory through cultural documentaries requires a stronger connection between visual details and historical context. A close-up image of an inscription, decorative pattern, or production detail should be accompanied by explanations of its historical significance. When a documentary presents a bronze vessel, for example, it can introduce not only its material and shape but also the social practices and historical circumstances associated with its production and use. The presentation of He Zun illustrates the importance of this approach. The inscription "Zhai Zi Zhongguo" becomes historically meaningful because it is connected with the political circumstances of the Western Zhou period and the development of the term China. This type of explanation allows audiences to move from recognizing an object to understanding its historical importance.

The use of digital technology should also be accompanied by clear explanations of its relationship with historical evidence. When animation or three-dimensional reconstruction is used, the documentary can indicate whether the

images are based on archaeological discoveries, historical documents, scientific analysis, or artistic interpretation. For example, the digital reconstruction of a damaged artifact can be accompanied by a brief explanation of the evidence used to restore its appearance. If a historical scene is reconstructed according to available research, the documentary can explain which elements are supported by evidence and which involve reasonable interpretation. Such explanations do not need to interrupt the viewing experience. Brief captions, visual labels, or supplementary information can help audiences recognize the status of different images. This distinction improves the credibility of historical communication while allowing digital technologies to retain their educational and aesthetic value.

Historical memory should not depend entirely on a single narrative voice. The interpretation of cultural relics often involves different forms of knowledge, including archaeology, history, art history, museum studies, and traditional craftsmanship. Archaeologists can explain the circumstances of discovery and the relationship between artifacts and archaeological sites. Conservators can introduce materials, preservation methods, and traces of production. Historians can explain the broader political and social background, while art historians can discuss the development of artistic styles and aesthetic traditions. The experiences of museum professionals and cultural practitioners can also contribute to the communication of historical information. Their perspectives may reveal aspects of an artifact that are not immediately apparent through visual observation. Multiple perspectives are particularly valuable when an object has different possible interpretations. Rather than presenting a single explanation as completely final, a documentary can introduce the available evidence and explain the differences between scholarly interpretations. Such an approach encourages audiences to understand historical knowledge as a process of investigation and interpretation.

The communication of historical memory should also make full use of the relationship between visual, auditory, and linguistic elements. Visual images are effective for presenting physical characteristics, while sound can communicate the sensory functions of musical instruments and other objects. Narration and subtitles provide explanations of historical information that cannot be understood through images alone. The Jiahu bone flute and Zenghouyi chime bells demonstrate the importance of auditory presentation. Their historical significance is closely connected with sound, and the use of original recordings or carefully explained reconstructions can help audiences understand their functions. The relationship between image and sound should remain historically appropriate. Contemporary music and digital effects can improve presentation, but they should not obscure the original characteristics of the cultural object.

Finally, documentary communication should be connected with museum resources and further cultural learning. A documentary can introduce audiences to museum collections, archaeological sites, digital archives, and related educational resources. Additional information about the objects can help viewers explore the historical background and cultural significance of the artifacts in greater detail. For example, an episode about He Zun can direct interested audiences toward the museum collection in which the vessel is preserved, while an episode about the Jiahu bone flute can provide supplementary information about archaeological discoveries and early musical practices. This connection between audiovisual communication and museum resources can establish a more continuous process of cultural learning. Digital images can make cultural relics accessible to people who cannot visit museums in person. However, direct encounters with physical objects also provide experiences that digital images cannot fully reproduce, including the perception of actual scale, material characteristics, and exhibition environments. The combination of documentary communication, digital archives, and museum experiences can therefore provide audiences with different ways of encountering historical culture.

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In conclusion, *If Treasures Could Talk* demonstrates how visual representation can contribute to the communication of historical memory through the presentation of cultural relics. By combining close-up photography, digital reconstruction, animation, sound design, and historical narration, the series transforms material objects into accessible audiovisual representations of earlier societies. Its visual strategies allow audiences to observe the physical characteristics of cultural relics while also understanding their historical functions and cultural significance. The communication of historical memory through the documentary involves more than preserving images of the past. It requires the interpretation of material evidence and the construction of meaningful relationships between historical objects, social experiences, and contemporary cultural understanding. Although visual selection and digital reconstruction may introduce limitations, these problems can be addressed through historical verification, multiple perspectives, and clearer explanations of the relationship between evidence and interpretation. Ultimately, the significance of the documentary lies in its ability to make historical objects meaningful within contemporary media environments. By presenting cultural relics as material records of human experience rather than merely beautiful objects from the past, it establishes a visual connection between historical civilization and contemporary society.

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