

# Religious Metaphor in the Game World: An Analysis of the plot of Penacony Planet in the Adventure Strategy Game Honkai: Star Rail

**Jie, Zheng**

Shanghai International Studies University,  
the School of Journalism and Communication  
NO.1550, Wenxiang Road, Songjiang District, Shanghai  
+ 86 18359779069  
0243100466@shisu.edu.cn

## Keywords

religious metaphor, textual analysis, video games

## INTRODUCTION

As the anime-style mobile game market shifts to content orientation, games' cultural and social significance has grown (Li, 2024). The blockbuster Honkai: Star Rail incorporates rich religious symbols in the Harmony and Order Aeon systems on Penacony, which carry distinct spiritual and social meanings (Huizinga, 1950).

From the perspective of critical analysis of religious narratives, this paper focuses on religious texts, rituals, and spiritual indoctrination, integrating game narration's formal and content elements to explore the religious metaphors and their socio-cultural connotations in Penacony's Aeon systems (Duan, 2004).

The study indicates that through the setting of the two Aeon systems of Harmony and Order, Penacony mirrors the complexity of order construction and power dynamics in real societies (Wei, 2019). Religious texts adapt elements from the Bible, revealing the tension between the sanctification of authority and popular resistance (Turner, 1967). Rituals strengthen social identity through sensory experiences and symbolic signs, yet imply the false legitimacy of power-based oppression (Eliade, 1981; Smith, 1991). Spiritual indoctrination, embodied in the utopian vision of Sunday, criticizes totalitarianism for stifling social freedom and the diversity of human nature (Young, 1992). This paper reveals how game narratives explore the dialectical relationship between order and freedom via religious metaphors, emphasizing that genuine harmony must be grounded in pluralistic coexistence (Durkheim, 1912; Geertz, 1973). This paper provides a theoretical framework for understanding religious narratives in games, as well as a critical perspective for interpreting the interaction between religion and power in reality.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Duan, Y. M. 2004. *Taishang Ganying Pian*: A model of interaction between religious texts and society. *Social Sciences in Yunnan*, 2, 67–72.

Proceedings of CDiGRA 2025

© 2025 Authors & Digital Games Research Association DiGRA. Personal and educational classroom use of this paper is allowed, commercial use requires specific permission from the author.

- Durkheim, É. 1912. *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse [The elementary forms of religious life]*. Alcan Publishing.
- Eliade, M. 1981. *A history of religious ideas*. University of Chicago Press.
- Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Culture*. Basic Books.
- Huizinga, J. 1950. *Homo Ludens: A study of the play-element in culture*. Beacon Press.
- Li, H. C. 2024. Integration, variation and communication of multiculturalism: A brief analysis of the cultural significance of domestic ACG games. *Journal of the School of Chinese Language and Literature Nanjing Normal University*, 2, 37-44.
- Smith, H. 1991. *The world's religions*. Harper One Press.
- Turner, V. 1967. *The forest of symbols*. Cornell University Press.
- Wei, F. J. 2019. Functional changes of folk religious rituals in the context of religious secularization. *Journal of Original Ecological National Culture*, 11(1), 99–105.
- Young, E. 1992. *The book of Isaiah*. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

### **Game References**

miHoYo. 2023. *Honkai Star Rail*. 2.6 version. Windows, iOS, Play Station4, Play Station5, Xbox Series X/S, HarmonyOS NEXT. Shanghai, China: miHoYo.

### **BIO**

Jie Zheng pursue both undergraduate and master's degrees in Advertising at Shanghai International Studies University. Her research focuses on new media communication and video games marketing. She have a solid theoretical foundation in advertising, communication and marketing, mastered basic academic research methods, and paid close attention to the integration trend of new media technology and brand marketing, striving to combine academic research with industry practice.