

## **INHERITANCE OF THE RICH TRADITIONAL CHINESE CULTURE: CHINA'S STORY IN THE NEW ERA**

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**Abstract:** Culture is both national and universal. The excellent traditional Chinese culture has nourished the Chinese nation and provided Chinese wisdom for constructing "a community with a shared future for mankind." This article analyzes the significance of inheriting and innovating China's outstanding traditional culture. Culture serves as the "root" and "soul" of the Chinese nation and should be rejuvenated in the new era. The article also explores the current challenges in cultural communication and the need to find new ideas to help traditional culture break free from its current constraints. It is essential to develop traditional culture by selecting the best elements and discarding outdated aspects. Applying ideas such as polyphonic communication, technology empowerment, equality, and mutual understanding to the communication system can further enhance the reach of excellent traditional Chinese culture. China's discourse power and global standing can be elevated by using Chinese narratives effectively. This will contribute to a stronger voice for China and its rich cultural heritage on the world stage.

**Keywords:** Excellent traditional culture; technology-enabled; Multi-subject communication; Transcultural communication

### **1. Introduction**

Chinese culture boasts a rich and profound history, representing a deep-rooted civilization. The excellent traditional Chinese culture serves as both the spiritual home of China and a global heritage. By thoroughly understanding traditional culture's past and present aspects, we can better ensure the continuity of cultural lineage and build a powerful socialist cultural foundation. Cultural confidence is essential in carrying out our mission and responsibilities. Through this confidence, we can showcase the power of the Chinese nation's great rejuvenation in the new era. By embracing and promoting our cultural heritage, we can demonstrate the strength and uniqueness of Chinese civilization to the world.

### **2. Continuation of Cultural Lineage: Preservation of Cultural Roots**

#### **2.1. Significance of Inheriting Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture**

Chinese culture has always played a significant role in the prosperity and strength of the nation. Throughout history, traditional Chinese culture has been presented in various forms, expressing rich humanistic and geographical connotations while conveying deep values rooted in local customs.

For example, the poet Meng Haoran describes a scene where he drinks and rejoices with his friends, highlighting the warmth and companionship of gatherings. Bai Juyi's famous phrase, "Hand carrying a bowl of tea without any reason, just send this emotion to the people who love tea," expresses a pure and simple sentiment to tea lovers, emphasizing the desire to share a heartfelt connection. These cultural references, centred around wine and tea, are integral to Chinese traditional culture and have persisted throughout the ages as the preferred means for socializing.

From the Kaiyuan era to the Tianbao era, Chinese literature experienced its heyday. Poets such as Li Bai, Du Fu, Wang Wei, and Meng Haoran emerged, adding vibrant colors to the chapter of Chinese poetry, which remains an important part of the country's excellent traditional culture.

The ancient and profound Chinese traditional culture has nourished the Chinese people, influencing their aesthetic taste, thinking patterns, value systems, ideals, and beliefs. It serves as the foundation and soul of the entire nation. Even in this highly developed era of human civilization, the outstanding culture of the Chinese nation continues to satisfy people's spiritual pursuits and guide their development path.

## ***2.2. Innovation of the value of Chinese outstanding traditional culture***

The Book of Rites suggests that each day is new and signifies new beginnings. Bai Juyi, a Tang Dynasty poet, emphasized the importance of writing for the times and composing poetry for events, highlighting the responsibility and mission of understanding the voice of the era, capturing its pulse, and progressing with it. The best way to carry forward history is to create new history, paying tribute to human civilization by creating new forms of it.

A Dream of Red Mansions, one of China's four great masterpieces, tells the story of the rise and fall of four prominent Qing Dynasty families: Jia, Shi, Xue, and Wang. This novel has made remarkable contributions to Chinese literature due to its dynamic characterization and compelling plot. In 2021, the Jiangsu Grand Theater adapted the story into a folk dance drama, incorporating various plant and flower symbols to characterize the characters. The dance metaphorically represents both sorrow and happiness through the blooming and fading of flowers. The main cast consists of outstanding representatives of the new generation of Chinese dancers, and the costumes draw inspiration from Ming and Qing paintings, Beijing and Kunqu Opera. The music blends folk instruments with Western orchestration, and the entire choreography is designed to resemble ancient paintings from the Ming and Qing dynasties. The performance immerses the audience in the dreamlike atmosphere of the Red Mansion.

Continuing the lineage of culture involves developing the future by inheriting excellent traditional Chinese culture. This means aligning the spiritual benchmarks found within traditional culture with the core values of contemporary society, leading the development of the times. By combining the inherent aesthetic quality of culture with contemporary aesthetic values, we can construct a new cultural wave that resonates with the present.

## ***2.3. Cultural "Loners" who innovate in the context of inheritance***

"Without a high degree of cultural self-confidence and the prosperity of culture, there will be no great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."<sup>[1]</sup> The inheritance and innovation of Chinese culture can only be achieved by preserving history. However, it is equally important to have dedicated individuals who commit themselves to this cause. These individuals can endure solitude, maintain their original purpose, and devote their lives to preserving traditional culture.

One such notable individual is Fan Jinshi, the honorary president of the Dunhuang Research Institute. Over 60 years ago, she arrived at the institute after graduating from university. Despite the challenges of the harsh Gobi Desert and limited resources, Fan Jinshi found solace and inspiration within the Mogao Grottoes. Her unwavering dedication and focus have earned her the "Daughter of Dunhuang."

Regarding her work, Fan Jinshi expressed, "Dunhuang is a dream of my youth, and I consider it extraordinary. My life's purpose has been singular—to safeguard and study the Mogao Grottoes, ensuring that these ancient caves shine with the brilliance of their time." Similarly, numerous cultural guardians and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage throughout China dedicate their lives to creative transformation and the innovative development of China's exceptional traditional culture. Their commitment preserves and propels cultural heritage forward.

### **3. Exploration of the Challenges of Culture in the Present**

#### ***3.1. The Lack of Innovative Ideas in Breaking through the Constraints of Excellent Traditional Culture***

Mr. Qian Liquan, a renowned contemporary humanities scholar, eloquently stated in *Why We Should Read the Classics* that "the essence of the spirit of every nation and every age coalesces within them."<sup>[2]</sup> Traditional culture is deeply intertwined with Chinese civilization, and it is fair to say that without the support of traditional Chinese culture, the Chinese nation would not be what it is today. While many people read poetry and history in books, appreciating their essence and the rise and fall of events, they often miss out on experiencing the cultural treasures passed down through generations in a comprehensive and immersive manner. Additionally, many cultural aspects with profound meanings struggle to find suitable avenues for public presentation.

In ancient China, people effectively utilized "literary language" to record their thoughts. However, as times changed, the "vernacular language" emerged. This led to a division between advocates of the two styles as they debated which was more suitable for communication. Hu Shih, a prominent figure in the New Culture Movement, engaged in an in-depth discussion. Ultimately, he proved that the "vernacular language" was slightly more effective. This exemplifies traditional culture progressing with the times.

In the new era, exploring how new technologies, ideas, concepts, and modes can enable a more vibrant presence of outstanding traditional Chinese culture is crucial. We should strive to bring this culture to the forefront of public consciousness, allowing people to experience its unique charm and fostering cultural confidence. This requires carefully considering utilizing these new resources to communicate traditional culture to a broader audience effectively.

#### ***3.2. The lack of new ideas for "international communication" of outstanding traditional culture***

Promoting Chinese culture to the world is important, as it allows for disseminating Chinese values, spirit, and wisdom. Literature is a powerful tool in spreading these messages and educating people about Chinese culture. By explaining and promoting Chinese culture with its distinct characteristics, we can showcase the richness of the Chinese spirit and its wisdom.

The international spread of Chinese culture has existed since ancient times. Examples include Zhang Qian's mission to the Western Regions, Zheng He's voyages to the West, Xu Fu's journey eastward, and Xuan Zang's pilgrimage to the West. Throughout history, the Chinese nation has contributed to the world with the splendor of the Silk Road, the cultural exchange facilitated by traders and explorers across vast distances, leading to the flourishing Tang Dynasty when multiple countries paid tribute.

In the new era, it is essential to revitalize and promote the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, conveying new values through new media. Contributions a country or nation makes to human society extend

beyond material creations to the dedication of spiritual civilization. The international communication of Chinese culture should operate on a transcultural dissemination system, embracing the concept of "equality, exchange, and sharing." By practicing cultural exchange within the framework of "a community with a shared future for mankind," China can contribute to a more unified and interconnected world.

The dissemination of excellent cultural values should be viewed as the growth of a plant. Just as solid roots provide nourishment, lush leaves signify vitality, and beautiful flowers create beauty, the dissemination of Chinese culture should contribute to the beauty of the world and the unity of humanity.

### ***3.3. Aesthetic Pandering in the Wave of Pan-Entertainment Thinking***

Cultural researcher Neil Postman suggested in "Amusing Ourselves to Death" that public discourse increasingly takes the form of entertainment, leading to a cultural ethos where our politics, journalism, sports, education, and commerce are all subservient to entertainment. This shift has transformed us into an "entertainment-to-death" species.<sup>[3]</sup>

Pan-entertainmentism is a prevailing phenomenon characterized by pandering content, sensationalized form, fragmented communication, and nihilized values. Fragmented and nutritionless entertainment programs and funny videos dominate various platforms, catering to the fast-paced reception preferences of the audience.

The values promoted by pan-entertainmentism often contradict China's mainstream ideology. The content selection, packaging, and value construction of these entertainment products are permeating all aspects of social life, with audiences embracing what was once considered "kitsch" as a trend. Additionally, people are trapped in "algorithmic black boxes" and "information cocoons," only seeking accessible, thought-free, and personally interesting content. This occurs because excellent culture can be obscure and esoteric, requiring effort and skill to appreciate, while low-grade entertainment provides easy amusement and an immediate thrill.

Drawing a parallel to Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World," people do not necessarily feel unhappy as they substitute laughter for thought. The problem is not understanding why they are laughing or have ceased to think critically. It raises questions about the potential consequences of prioritizing entertainment over thoughtful engagement with significant ideas and culture.

## **4. The mission is new, and the soul of culture is renewed**

### ***4.1. Science and technology empower cultural communication and strengthen the discourse function of cultural communication***

Negroponte's concept of "digital survival," envisioning a future where humans live in a virtual and digitized space, has become a reality in our present era. AI technology is now utilized in various aspects of our lives, transforming how we learn, communicate, produce, and disseminate information.

A recent example demonstrating the integration of AI technology with traditional culture is seen in the 2023 Henan TV's Tanabata Gala. The dance troupe of Henan Song and Dance Performing Arts Group presented the captivating performance "Love - Red House." Employing AI scene-building technology, the program seamlessly transitioned between real stage performances and a wondrous ancient court panorama. This innovative application of AI technology is not an isolated occurrence, as Henan TV has consistently empowered the development of China's outstanding traditional culture. Previous successes include productions such as "Luoshen Shui Fu" and "Tang Palace Night Banquet." Netizens have responded enthusiastically, expressing pride and confidence in the deep exploration and dissemination of traditional culture, showcasing China's beauty.

In this era of deep mediatization, "digital survival" and "video survival" have become major trends in communication and are more aligned with audience expectations for content reception. It is important to recognize that ordinary cultural programs may need help engaging and inspiring audiences. Therefore, exploring how to use "AI+4R+4K/8K" technology to create immersive cultural experiences is necessary. This calls for profound reflection and consideration on adapting and presenting traditional culture in ways that captivate and resonate with modern audiences.

#### ***4.2. Collaborative communication among multiple actors to enhance the international communication discourse system***

Despite the rise in the share of cultural programs and the increasing emphasis on cultural attributes in productive life, China still needs to form an international discourse that matches its comprehensive national power. However, the excellent traditional Chinese culture still faces the dilemma of "being unable to speak with reason and not being able to pass on after speaking." Relying on local Netflix IP to promote traditional culture is only one aspect, and there is a need to promote the Internet platform overseas and even encourage "foreign eyes to see China, foreign mouth to say China." This requires multi-majority synergistic communication to disseminate Chinese wisdom, promote the Chinese spirit, refine the Chinese logo, and tell compelling Chinese stories, thus spreading the Chinese voice.

The Propaganda Department of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee has been developing a 100-episode series of integrated media products called "Foreigners Tell Stories." In the 73rd edition, the program invited David Edwards from Australia, who serves as the principal of Shanghai Xihua Expatriate Children's School. During the discussion on education, David Edwards mentioned the spirit of the Twentieth National Congress, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing education development, building a strong education system, and comprehensively improving the quality of independent talent training. He has consistently shown dedication to passing on and promoting Chinese culture, stating, "We help children go out into the world, and we also make them ambassadors for spreading Chinese culture."

Additionally, Chinese film and television works like "Beautiful Daughter-in-Law," "A Lifelong Journey," "Nothing but Thirty," and "Empresses in the Palace" have successfully expanded beyond China, reaching international audiences through accurate dissemination via secondary creation and translation. The Beijing Winter Olympics mascot, Bing Dwen Dwen, has also become beloved due to its cute image, triggering emotional connections and facilitating empathic communication.

#### ***4.3. Establishing an All-Media Communication System: Formation of a New Pattern of Mainstream Public Opinion***

China's mainstream media has always embraced the responsibility and mission of "promoting the main theme and spreading positive energy." Especially in today's prevalence of pan-entertainments, mainstream media must guide values and create more high-quality cultural programs. The construction of an all-media communication system aims to establish a mainstream media platform with "communication power, guiding power, influence, and credibility." It also aims to cultivate media professionals equipped with "intelligence, vision, mobility, and writing skills" to build a new mainstream media that is "networked, integrated, platformed, and intelligent." The 20th Party Congress emphasized the importance of strengthening the construction of an all-media communication system and shaping a new pattern of mainstream public opinion, with the core objective being the construction of a socialist ideology with strong cohesion and leadership.

The construction of all-media communication should adhere to the Party's control of the media and maintain the correct political direction. It should resolutely safeguard the central government's authority while emphasizing that the value rationality of cultural communication is of greater significance than instrumental rationality. It is important to remember that Chinese culture originates from the people and ultimately belongs to them. Therefore, it is crucial to be close to the people and create more masterpieces that resonate with them. The construction of all-media communication should prioritize guardianship and innovation, as perseverance ensures better inheritance, and innovation allows for a more profound narrative.

As a high-context country, many of China's cultural works may be obscure and difficult to understand, often requiring interpretation by experts and scholars with specific cultural expertise. In the video world's communication system, it is essential to consider spreading culture easily through a natural and dialogic approach, enabling mainstream value content to become the trendsetter of the times.

#### ***4.4. Transitioning from "Cross-Cultural Communication" to "Trans-Cultural Communication": Presenting a "Credible, Lovely, and Honorable" Image of China***

Intercultural communication, in the traditional sense, focuses on the diffusion and conquest of culture, where cultural content is forcefully delivered to the receiver, and the purpose of communication is achieved when the audience effectively accepts it. In contrast, "Transcultural Communication," proposed by Prof. Shi Anbin of Tsinghua University, places the core concept of "a community with a shared future for mankind" and emphasizes equal cultural exchanges and mutual understanding. Compared to intercultural communication, transcultural communication prioritizes softer, more equal, and dialogic communication, avoiding aggressive approaches that may be less acceptable to the audience.

An example of this approach can be seen in the dance "Tang Palace Night Banquet," an original work by the Zhengzhou Song and Dance Drama Theater. Inspired by the figurines of music and dance from the Sui Dynasty, the dance directors recorded the movements of a stationary figurine. They brought the dances of Tang Dynasty maidens to life on stage by organizing actors and rigorous rehearsals. This revitalization injected new "vitality" into the cultural heritage.

During the 2021 Henan Satellite TV Spring Festival Gala, the performance of "Tang Palace Night Banquet" broke out of the conventional boundaries, framing the history of the Tang Dynasty with a night banquet setting and catching the attention of many with its eye-catching cultural presentation. This innovative approach garnered positive feedback from netizens who expressed their desire for more cultural programs like this in the future.

In the case of the Tang Palace Night Banquet case, authentic historical artifacts inspired the dance, ensuring believability. The vivacious Tang Dynasty maidens added a playful element of cuteness to the performance. The relaxed stage setting deconstructed the grand historical chapters, allowing the audience to awe at traditional Chinese culture and experience cultural inculcation through dialogue with the works.

## **5. Conclusions**

Since the 18th Party Congress, "cultural confidence" has reached unprecedented heights. Through initiatives like "National Treasure," which brings cultural relics to life, and "Only This Green," which recreates the beauty of landscapes through dance, excellent traditional Chinese culture is becoming well-known worldwide. This solid cultural self-confidence enhances citizens' cultural literacy, strengthens the nation's autonomy in cultural development, counters "historical nihilism," and fosters a sense of connection and unity among the nation. In the

new era, building upon the sentiment of not forgetting our original intentions, we can ensure that our cultural classics endure for generations.

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