

# *The Theoretical Evolution and Local Practice of Symbolic Anthropology*

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**Abstract:** This paper systematically sorts out the developmental context of symbolic anthropology, covering its theoretical origins, core theories, later expansions, and localized practices in China. In terms of international research, it traces the ideological foundations of symbolic anthropology in multidisciplinary fields such as philosophy, sociology, and psychology, focuses on explaining Victor Turner's ritual process theory, Clifford Geertz's "thick description" method, and Mary Douglas's classification theory, and outlines its new developments in political symbolism and the integration of practice theory. For domestic research, following the main line of "theoretical introduction, local verification, and innovative breakthrough," it analyzes the specific practices of symbolic anthropology in the fields of traditional Chinese ritual studies, ethnic minority rituals, material culture, and contemporary symbolic changes, demonstrating its adaptability and innovation in interpreting Chinese culture. Finally, the paper summarizes the theoretical value of symbolic anthropology in explaining cultural meanings and proposes future directions such as emphasizing practical relevance, standardizing meaning interpretation, expanding analytical dimensions, and promoting the construction of local theories, aiming to provide references for the sustainable development of this field.

## 1. Introduction

In the long history of anthropological theoretical evolution, symbolic anthropology has changed the academic understanding of the essence of culture since its emergence in the 1960s. Unlike classical evolutionism, which regards culture as "survivals" of linear evolution, or functionalism, which views it as "components" for maintaining social operation, symbolic anthropology proposes that culture is actually a "web of meanings" actively woven by humans. Within this network composed of symbols, rituals, and metaphors, every gesture, artifact, and celebration embodies the collective memory and survival wisdom of a specific society.

The rise of symbolic anthropology stems from reflections on the early research paths of structural-functionalism and structuralism. The former focuses on the operation mechanism of social systems but fails to explain behaviors in rituals that go beyond practical purposes; the latter centers on the deep structure of thinking but ignores the emotions and subjectivity of practitioners. With "meaning" as its core, symbolic anthropology has promoted anthropology from the description of external forms

to the interpretation of internal logic, reestablishing the central position of “humans” in cultural creation.

In today’s world where globalization and cultural diversity coexist, symbolic anthropology demonstrates unique theoretical value and practical significance. It not only provides analytical tools for interpreting rituals, symbols, and practices in different cultures but also advocates understanding the internal logic of local knowledge from the emic perspective of cultural insiders, building a bridge for cross-cultural dialogue.

Following the main line of “theoretical origins, local practice, and future prospects,” this paper systematically sorts out the development of symbolic anthropology in international and Chinese contexts. It first reviews its multidisciplinary theoretical foundations and the construction of classical theories, then focuses on how Chinese academic circles have absorbed and transformed symbolic anthropology theories to explore their interpretive power in Confucian ritual studies, ethnic minority cultures, material symbols, and contemporary social changes. Finally, based on summarizing the disciplinary contributions, it puts forward constructive research directions to promote the sustainable development of symbolic anthropology in both theoretical and applied aspects.

## 2. International Research on Symbolic Anthropology

### 2.1 Ideological Origins: Theoretical Foundations from a Multidisciplinary Perspective

The theoretical system of symbolic anthropology is not built in a vacuum but rooted in the ideological soil of multiple disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, and psychology. As early as the 19th century, Western academic circles had begun systematic exploration of symbolic phenomena, laying important theoretical groundwork for the formation of this discipline.

In philosophy, the philosophy of symbolic forms proposed by German philosopher Ernst Cassirer is pioneering. In *An Essay on Man*, he argues that humans are not “rational animals” but “animals of symbols.” Humans construct their understanding of the world through symbolic forms such as language, mythology, and art, among which symbols are the most representative form<sup>[1]</sup>. This view elevates symbols to the height of the essence of human existence, laying a philosophical foundation for the core proposition that “culture is a symbolic system.”

In sociology, the “collective representation” theory of French sociologist Émile Durkheim provides important inspiration for symbolic anthropology. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, through his study of totem worship among Australian aborigines, Durkheim proposes that religion is not blind belief in supernatural forces but “the sanctified projection of society itself”<sup>[2]</sup>. Durkheim’s view that directly links symbols to social structure lays the foundation for the “functional-structural” analysis of later symbolic anthropology.

Marcel Mauss further deepens the research on the relationship between symbols and social relations in *The Gift*. By analyzing the “kula” exchange in Polynesia and the “potlatch” of the Kwakiutl people in North America, he points out that gifts are far more than economic behaviors but a kind of “total social fact.” The “hau” (the spirit of the gift) contained in gifts symbolizes the obligation and honor relationships between people<sup>[3]</sup>. This analytical path that binds material exchange with symbolic meanings and social ethics directly influences Bourdieu’s later theory of symbolic capital.

In psychology, Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory provides a micro-perspective for symbolic anthropology. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud links totem symbols of primitive tribes to the “Oedipus complex” in individual unconsciousness, arguing that symbols are products of humans’ repression of instinctive desires<sup>[4]</sup>. Although later scholars criticize his neglect of social and cultural contexts, concepts such as “the condensation of symbols” and “unconscious symbols” proposed by Freud still provide important ideas for understanding the polysemy of symbolic signs in rituals.

In addition, Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology also exerts a profound influence on symbolic anthropology. In *The Savage Mind*, he argues that culture is essentially a logical system of symbolic signs, and humans organize symbolic meanings through the thinking structure of binary opposition. For example, in the "eagle-bear" totem classification of the Bororo people in South America, the eagle represents "sky-male-hunting" and the bear represents "earth-female-farming." The opposition and complementarity between the two maintain the social balance of the tribe<sup>[5]</sup>. This approach that emphasizes the determination of symbolic meanings by deep structures provides a rigorous analytical tool for early symbolic anthropology.

These ideas from different disciplines converge into the "river" of symbolic anthropology like multiple tributaries. Together, they promote the academic shift from "function" and "structure" to "meaning" and "symbol," laying a theoretical foundation for the rise of symbolic anthropology in the 1960s.

## 2.2 Core Theories: From Ritual Analysis to Cultural Interpretation

From the 1960s to the 1980s, symbolic anthropology entered a mature stage of theory construction, with a group of landmark scholars and works emerging. Although these scholars have different research perspectives, they all focus on the core question of "how symbols construct cultural meanings."

### 2.2.1 Victor Turner: Symbols and Anti-Structure in the Ritual Process

British anthropologist Victor Turner, based on his fieldwork among the Ndembu people in Zambia, constructs a complete analytical framework for ritual symbols in works such as *The Forest of Symbols* and *The Ritual Process*.

Turner pays attention to the dynamics of the ritual process and proposes the theories of "polysemy of symbols" and "social drama." Taking the Mukanda initiation ritual of the Ndembu people as an example, he points out that white clay, as a condensed symbol, represents ancestral protection, the purity of life, and social boundaries simultaneously, integrating meanings at the religious, social, and individual levels<sup>[6]</sup>. Turner further divides the ritual process into three stages: pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal, with special emphasis on the significance of the liminal stage as a state of "anti-structure." In this stage, the social structure is temporarily dissolved, and individuals experience identity confusion and reconstruction before regaining their social identities<sup>[7]</sup>. Turner argues that this anti-structure strengthens individuals' identification with the social structure through temporary equal experiences, making individuals more consciously return to their social roles after the ritual.

Turner's contribution lies in regarding rituals as a dynamic process of social regeneration and cultural renewal, emphasizing that symbols are not only carriers of meanings but also forces driving social actions and emotional mobilization.

### 2.2.2 Clifford Geertz: Thick Description and the Interpretation of Culture

American anthropologist Clifford Geertz is the core figure of the "cultural interpretation school." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, he expands symbolic anthropology from ritual analysis to the overall interpretation of culture and proposes the famous "thick description" method for ethnographic writing.

Quoting Max Weber, Geertz argues that humans are "animals suspended in webs of significance they themselves have spun"<sup>[8]</sup>. In his view, culture is not an external social structure but a meaning system constructed by individuals through symbolic practices. Anthropologists need to understand the local meanings of symbols from the "emic perspective of cultural insiders."

"Thick description" is not a simple description of cultural phenomena but an exploration of the

meaning context behind phenomena. Taking the Balinese cockfighting ritual as an example, Geertz points out that the fight between roosters corresponds to the status competition between their owners, and the amount of bets represents the owners' emphasis on honor<sup>[8]</sup>. Through the thick description of the cockfighting ritual, Geertz reveals the value of "status supremacy" in Balinese culture and the way people cope with anxiety in daily life through symbolic practices.

Geertz's theory shifts symbolic anthropology from "social function analysis" to "cultural meaning interpretation," making anthropology a "science of interpretation." His "thick description" method also exerts a wide influence on later fields such as cultural studies and literary criticism.

### 2.2.3 Mary Douglas: Purity, Classification, and Social Order

British anthropologist Mary Douglas takes "dirt and purity" as an entry point and reveals how humans construct social order through symbolic classification in works such as *Purity and Danger* and *Natural Symbols*.

Douglas points out that purity and dirt are not inherent attributes of things but products of human classification systems<sup>[9]</sup>. When a thing cannot be classified into the existing system, it is regarded as dirty or taboo. For example, the prohibition of eating pigs and camels in *Leviticus* of the Bible is not due to hygiene considerations but because they do not conform to the ancient Hebrews' classification standard for terrestrial animals as "cloven-hoofed and ruminant," thus becoming abnormal things<sup>[9]</sup>.

Douglas further points out that symbolic classification is closely related to social order. For instance, the Lele people in Africa equate the integrity of the body with social solidarity, and physical disability symbolizes social chaos. When social conflicts arise, purity rituals rebuild social order by eliminating abnormal factors<sup>[10]</sup>.

Douglas's theory incorporates daily practices such as body symbols into the analytical scope, revealing how symbolic classification serves as a practical tool for maintaining social structures and providing an important foundation for the development of body anthropology and cognitive anthropology.

## 2.3 Later Developments: Theoretical Expansion and Interdisciplinary Integration

After the 1980s, symbolic anthropology entered a stage of theoretical expansion. Scholars combined symbolic analysis with issues such as politics and power and engaged in dialogue with cross-field theories such as post-structuralism and practice theory, forming a diversified research pattern.

### 2.3.1 Political Symbolism Research: The Symbolic Expression of Power

British anthropologist Abner Cohen is a representative figure in political symbolism research. In *Power Structures and Symbolic Symbols*, taking the Salafi movement of the Hausa people in Nigeria as an example, he analyzes how symbols are used for political mobilization. Cohen finds that the Hausa people united different social classes under the banner of opposing colonial rule by reconstructing Islamic symbols, promoting the development of social movements<sup>[11]</sup>. Cohen's research shows that symbols are not neutral carriers of meanings but weapons in power struggles. Different groups strive for the right to interpret symbols to achieve their political goals.

In *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, American anthropologist David Kertzer analyzes coronation ceremonies and revolutionary celebrations in European history and points out that ritual symbols are the source of political legitimacy. For example, during the French Revolution, revolutionaries held the Festival of Reason, replacing traditional Christian symbols with the symbol of the Goddess of Reason to construct the legitimacy of the new regime<sup>[12]</sup>. These studies expand symbolic anthropology from cultural interpretation to political analysis, providing a new perspective for

understanding the symbolic operation of power.

### 2.3.2 Dialogue with Practice Theory: Symbols and Daily Practices

In the 1980s, Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory exerted an important influence on symbolic anthropology. In *The Logic of Practice*, he proposes the concept of "habitus," arguing that culture is not an abstract symbolic system but embodied cognition embedded in daily practices. Through repeated practices such as diet and etiquette, people internalize symbolic meanings into unconscious habits<sup>[13]</sup>.

Inspired by this, the research focus of symbolic anthropology shifted from "meaning interpretation" to "practice process." In *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, American anthropologist Daniel Miller analyzes the furniture arrangement and clothing choices of the working class in London and finds that material symbols are not static carriers of meanings but actively constructed by people through daily practices. The working class can symbolically express their recognition of equality and practical values by choosing simple furniture<sup>[14]</sup>.

This practice turn makes symbolic anthropology pay more attention to symbols in daily life, emphasizing that symbolic meanings are products of continuous negotiation and reconstruction by ordinary people in daily practices. This view injects new vitality into symbolic anthropology and makes it more in line with the cultural reality of contemporary society.

## 3. Domestic Research on Symbolic Anthropology in China

### 3.1 Theoretical Introduction and Localization Exploration: From the West to China

Research on symbolic anthropology in China began in the 1980s. Early scholars, based on translating Western classical works, gradually combined symbolic anthropology theories with Chinese cultural practices, forming a research path with both international perspective and local characteristics.

#### 3.1.1 Theoretical Introduction Stage (1980-2000): Building an Academic Foundation

In the 1980s, with the resumption of academic exchanges after the reform and opening-up, classical works of Western symbolic anthropology began to be systematically translated and introduced into China. Chinese translations such as Turner's *The Forest of Symbols*, Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures*, and Douglas's *Purity and Danger* provided theoretical references for domestic scholars. At the same time, domestic scholars began to write introductory articles to help the academic circle understand core concepts such as "symbolic classification" and "ritual process."

Although research at this stage focused on introduction, it already showed a sense of localization. For example, when introducing Douglas's pollution theory, scholars would connect it with the concept of purity in traditional Chinese culture, such as the ritual of "Pre-ritual fasting" in *Li Ji* (The Book of Rites), and initially explore the adaptability between Western theories and Chinese culture<sup>[15]</sup>. This comparative introduction laid a foundation for later localization research.

#### 3.1.2 Localization Exploration Stage (2000-2010): Focusing on Traditional and Ethnic Minority Cultures

After the 21st century, domestic scholars applied the methods of symbolic anthropology to the study of Chinese local culture, forming two major research directions: traditional ritual studies and ethnic minority rituals.

In the study of traditional ritual studies, Qu Ming'an points out that "li" (ritual) in Confucian ritual

studies is essentially a localized symbolic system in China. For example, in *Li Ji Jiao Te Sheng* (The Book of Rites), the emperor wears a “crown with twelve tassels” when sacrificing to heaven. The twelve tassels symbolize “twelve months,” the circular shape of the crown symbolizes “heaven is round,” and the square crown board symbolizes “earth is square.” The entire costume ritual constructs the legitimacy of “the emperor communicating with heaven and earth” through symbolic signs<sup>[16]</sup>. This interpretation breaks through the limitations of traditional textual research on ritual studies and reveals the cultural connotation of Confucian rituals from the perspective of meaning interpretation.

In the study of ethnic minority rituals, Bai Gengsheng analyzes the creation myth of the Dongba religion of the Naxi people and points out that the white conch and turquoise in the myth symbolize the order of heaven and earth, while bats and frogs symbolize reproductive power<sup>[17]</sup>. Qi Qingfu examined the symbolic meanings of auspicious motifs in Miao silver adornments, noting that the butterfly pattern represents the worship of primordial ancestors<sup>[18]</sup>. These studies combine local knowledge in ethnic minority cultures with symbolic anthropology theories, not only enriching the case database of domestic symbolic anthropology but also providing academic support for the protection of ethnic minority cultures.

### 3.1.3 Innovative Breakthrough Stage (2010-Present): Interdisciplinary Integration and Practical Concern

After 2010, research on symbolic anthropology in China showed a new trend of interdisciplinary integration and practical concern. On the one hand, scholars combined symbolic analysis with disciplines such as sociology, history, and art studies to expand the research boundary. Ma Jia analyzes traditional Chinese artifacts from the perspective of symbolic anthropology, pointing out that the ice-crackle patterns on Song Dynasty porcelain symbolize the integrity of literati, and the mortise and tenon structure of furniture in the Ming and Qing dynasties symbolizes family stability, realizing interdisciplinary dialogue between material culture and symbolic meanings<sup>[19]</sup>. On the other hand, research began to pay attention to symbolic changes in contemporary society, such as the reconstruction of Spring Festival rituals in the context of urbanization. Young people redefine the symbolic meaning of family reunion through WeChat greetings and video New Year greetings. The traditional family reunion dinner is no longer limited to physical gathering but transformed into a symbol of emotional connection<sup>[20]</sup>.

## 3.2 Core Research Fields: From Traditional Symbols to Contemporary Practices

Research on symbolic anthropology in China centers on the characteristics of Chinese culture, forming a number of core fields with local value. These fields cover both traditional cultural symbols and contemporary social practices, showing a rich research hierarchy.

### 3.2.1 Traditional Ritual Studies and Ethical Symbols

Confucian ritual studies are the core of traditional Chinese culture and a key field of domestic symbolic anthropology research. Scholars reinterpret the “Three Ritual Texts” (*Zhou Li*, *Yi Li*, *Li Ji*) from the perspective of symbolic systems, revealing the ethical order and worldview contained within. Qu Ming’an points out that the artifacts, actions, and spaces in Confucian rituals are all carefully designed symbolic signs. For example, the “tonglao and hejin” ritual in *Yi Li Shi Hun Li* (The Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial Wedding Rituals for Scholars): the newlyweds sharing the same sacrifice is called “tonglao,” symbolizing their integration as a couple; drinking from a gourd split into two cups is called “hejin,” symbolizing their unity despite being two individuals<sup>[16]</sup>. Wu Fengling analyzes the symbolic system of “respecting the right and humbling the left” in *Li Ji*: during sacrifices, the host stands on the right and the guest on the left, symbolizing the host’s respect for the gods;

during court visits, feudal lords stand on the right and senior officials on the left, symbolizing the hierarchical order<sup>[15]</sup>. These studies show that the symbolic system of Confucian ritual studies is not formalism but a practical tool for constructing social ethics through symbolic classification.

### 3.2.2 Ritual and Belief Symbols of Ethnic Minorities

The diverse cultures of China's 56 ethnic groups provide rich research materials for symbolic anthropology. In his study of ethnic minorities in southwest China, Bai Gengsheng finds that during the "sky-worshipping ritual" of the Naxi people, three sacred trees—pine, cypress, and chestnut—are erected on the altar. Among them, the cypress symbolizes "the uncle of heaven," the chestnut symbolizes "the father of heaven and the mother of earth," and the pine symbolizes "the ancestor of humans." The arrangement order of the sacred trees corresponds to the Naxi people's worldview of "heaven-earth-human"<sup>[17]</sup>. In his study of ethnic minorities in northwest China, Xue Yibing points out that during the Corban Festival of the Uyghur people, people gather in Id Kah Square and dance the "Sama dance" to music. The synchronized movements of tens of thousands of dancers symbolize ethnic solidarity, and the spinning movements in the dance symbolize respect for the gods<sup>[21]</sup>. These studies not only record the cultural practices of ethnic minorities but also reveal their ethnic identity and worldview through symbolic analysis.

### 3.2.3 Symbolic Systems in Material Culture

From traditional artifacts to daily necessities, symbolic signs in Chinese material culture are ubiquitous. In the study of food symbolism, Qu Ming'an points out that the ingredient selection, cooking methods, and banquet layout in traditional Chinese food all contain symbolic meanings. Eating dumplings during the Spring Festival symbolizes attracting wealth and treasures; eating red dates, peanuts, longans, and melon seeds (homophonic for "zaosheng guizi," meaning "early birth of a noble son") at weddings symbolizes the desire for reproduction; the arrangement of the "honored seat" at banquets symbolizes the hierarchical order of seniority<sup>[22]</sup>. In the study of costume symbolism, Deng Qiyao analyzes that the butterfly patterns on Miao silver ornaments originate from the ancestor myth, symbolizing the origin of the ethnic group; the black color of the Yi people's felt capes symbolizes the earth, and the tassels represent mountains and rivers<sup>[23]</sup>. These studies combine materials with meanings, turning ordinary daily objects into symbolic keys for interpreting Chinese culture.

### 3.2.4 Symbolic Changes in Contemporary Society

With the rapid transformation of Chinese society, the traditional symbolic system is also undergoing reconstruction. Scholars have begun to pay attention to the new forms of symbolic practices in the context of urbanization and digitalization, exploring the modern transformation of traditional symbols and the generation mechanism of new symbols. Qin Nana proposes that the symbolic form of the Spring Festival has changed significantly. Traditional practices such as pasting Spring Festival couplets and setting off firecrackers are being replaced by WeChat New Year greetings and electronic red envelopes, and the symbolic meaning of reunion has shifted from physical gathering to emotional connection<sup>[24]</sup>. Su Xing analyzes the "Guochao" (national trend) phenomenon, pointing out that young people transform traditional symbols such as dragon and phoenix patterns and Palace Museum cultural and creative products into symbols of personal expression and national confidence<sup>[20]</sup>. These studies show that symbolic practices in contemporary China are not a break with tradition but a reconstruction of meanings in a new context, and symbolic anthropology provides an effective analytical tool for understanding such changes.

## **4. Theoretical Value and Development Prospects of Symbolic Anthropology Research**

### **4.1 Theoretical Value: The Meaning Turn in Cultural Studies**

Symbolic anthropology has promoted an important shift in cultural studies from functional and structural analysis to meaning interpretation. Before the rise of symbolic theory, functionalism focused on the maintenance role of social systems, and structuralism explored the deep patterns of thinking. In contrast, symbolic anthropology turns to exploring the meaning systems behind cultural phenomena, revealing the collective memory and social values contained in practices such as the worship of “milk trees” by African tribes and the eating of dumplings by Chinese people during the Spring Festival.

The emic perspective advocated by symbolic anthropology also provides an important methodological principle for cross-cultural understanding. This perspective emphasizes that symbolic meanings should be understood within specific cultural contexts. For example, the different symbolic connotations of dragons in Chinese and Western cultures are not a matter of right or wrong but a reflection of cultural differences. In the context of globalization, this approach helps avoid ethnocentrism and encourages researchers to deeply understand the cultural logic behind the ritual behaviors of different ethnic groups.

### **4.2 Development Prospects**

#### **4.2.1 Strengthening Application Orientation and Expanding Practical Dimensions**

Future research can strengthen the combination of symbolic analysis with practical social issues. For example, regarding the adaptation of traditional festival symbols to contemporary lifestyles, attention can be paid to how young people reconstruct the connotation of festivals through new forms such as electronic red envelopes and family fire-side gatherings. Such research not only helps understand cultural changes but also provides references for promoting intergenerational communication and activating traditional festivals. In the field of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) protection, symbolic research can focus on explaining the cultural meanings of traditional techniques and patterns and convey these symbolic connotations through modern media and creative design to enhance the communication and inheritance vitality of ICH projects.

#### **4.2.2 Standardizing Meaning Interpretation and Emphasizing Contextual Relevance**

To improve the accuracy of symbolic interpretation, it is necessary to strengthen the definition of the context in which symbols are generated. General assertions should be avoided, and symbolic meanings should be anchored in specific contexts. For example, the color red symbolizes joy in weddings but indicates warning in traffic signals; the difference in the amount of WeChat red envelopes also reflects different social relationships and emotional expressions. Establishing a corresponding framework between context and meaning is an effective way to avoid subjectivity in interpretation. During fieldwork, full respect should be paid to the local knowledge system, and local interpretations should be taken as the basis for understanding symbolic meanings.

#### **4.2.3 Based on Local Experience and Promoting Theoretical Innovation**

The rich traditions of Chinese culture provide important resources for the innovation of symbolic theories. For example, the concept of “harmony” is reflected in many symbolic practices: the “reunion dinner” resolves conflicts and pursues harmony through the ritual of sharing food; the Yi Torch Festival strengthens community harmony through collective dancing. This symbolic logic centered

on harmony can serve as an important conceptual foundation for constructing local theories. Attention should also be paid to the symbolic transformation in the cultural integration of China's multiple ethnic groups. For example, the Yunnan Water-Splashing Festival has developed from a Dai ritual of praying for blessings into a festive activity shared by multiple ethnic groups, and the act of splashing water has also been endowed with the new connotation of ethnic unity. Such phenomena of pluralistic coexistence provide unique Chinese experiences for global symbolic anthropology and have important value for theoretical innovation.

## 5. Conclusion

Since its emergence in the 1960s, symbolic anthropology has gradually established a systematic theoretical system and analytical path. From an international perspective, this discipline has gradually shifted from early attention to the relationship between symbols and social structures to diversified explorations of the mechanism of meaning generation, symbolic dynamics in practice processes, and interdisciplinary integration, showing sustained theoretical vitality. In the Chinese context, the research approaches of symbolic anthropology have been widely applied in fields such as traditional ritual studies, ethnic minority rituals, material culture, and contemporary social changes, gradually realizing the leap from theoretical introduction to local innovation. These studies not only expand the case horizon of international symbolic anthropology but also provide a unique perspective for understanding the deep structure of Chinese culture and the mechanism of social continuity. Looking forward, symbolic anthropology still has broad development space. As social changes and technological evolution continue to give birth to new symbolic practices, this discipline can deepen its ontological theories while strengthening its ability to respond to practical issues, further participating in discussions on cultural inheritance, ethnic identity, and social integration. In addition, extracting local concepts and theoretical paradigms based on Chinese cultural resources will also contribute Chinese wisdom to the global knowledge system of symbolic anthropology. In this process, symbolic anthropology is expected to continue to play the role of an academic bridge for cultural interpretation and civilizational dialogue, providing support for building a more inclusive pattern of humanistic research.

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