

Research on the Inheritance and Development Path of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture Based on the Concept of Cultural Confidence

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Abstract: Against the profound backdrop of multicultural integration and modern transformation, the inheritance of excellent traditional Chinese culture faces a dual test of concept and practice. Based on the core proposition of cultural confidence, this article systematically explores the inheritance dilemmas and development paths of traditional culture in contemporary society. Currently, although traditional culture has been widely disseminated in form, it still faces dilemmas in practice, such as ritualized performances leading to the loss of connotation, generational gaps in educational inheritance, and commercial deconstruction weakening the spiritual core. The deep-seated reasons for these problems lie in the separation between the traditional cultural value system and modern lifestyles, the fragmentation of the inheritance mechanism, and the relative weakness of the discourse power of cultural interpretation. Based on this, this article proposes a systematic path from concept reshaping and mechanism innovation to discourse construction. This comprehensive path aims to effectively integrate traditional culture into the spiritual world and daily life of contemporary people while maintaining its spiritual core, and to provide solutions with both theoretical depth and practical value for the modern transformation of traditional culture.

1. Introduction

In the fierce confluence of globalization and modernization, the inheritance and development of outstanding traditional Chinese culture are facing unprecedented historical opportunities and profound challenges. On the one hand, with the significant improvement of China's comprehensive national strength and the acceleration of the national rejuvenation process, the whole society's value perception and emotional recognition of traditional culture are returning and deepening. On the other hand, under the multiple impacts of industrialization, urbanization, and digitalization, the native soil and social structure of traditional culture have undergone drastic changes, causing its inheritance to fall into the predicament of formalization, superficiality, and fragmentation at the practical level, and gaps have appeared in the connection between the spiritual core and

contemporary life [1]. This study takes the concept of "cultural self-confidence" as its core perspective and fundamental principle, believing that cultural self-confidence is not only a firm belief in the value and vitality of one's own culture, but also an internal driving force and methodological guide for promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture. It requires us to break away from the binary opposition thinking of either blindly retro or completely Westernized, and to explore the path of integrated symbiosis between traditional culture and modernity with a dialectical attitude that combines "critical inheritance" and "creative development."

This article aims to systematically explore feasible paths for the inheritance and development of outstanding traditional Chinese culture based on the concept of cultural self-confidence. The article will first clarify the profound connotation of cultural self-confidence from a theoretical level, and explain its guiding significance for the inheritance of traditional culture; then, it will diagnose the current multi-dimensional real-world challenges faced by inheritance practices, and deeply analyze the structural causes behind it, such as the modernization transformation, mechanistic defects, and discourse power disadvantage; finally, it will try to construct a comprehensive development path system aimed at promoting the deep integration of traditional culture into contemporary life, activating its endogenous power, and enhancing its international influence. This study hopes to provide a theoretical reference and practical ideas with both thoughtfulness, systematicness, and operability for solving the contemporary issue of traditional culture inheritance.

2. The Connotation of Cultural Confidence and Its Guiding Significance for the Inheritance of Traditional Culture

2.1 Theoretical Origins and Multi-Dimensional Implications of Cultural Confidence

The concept of cultural confidence has undergone a profound theoretical evolution from "cultural awareness" to "cultural confidence".[2] Specifically, the connotation of cultural confidence can be interpreted from three interrelated dimensions, forming a stable cognitive and practical structure. First, the dimension of historical identity. This is the foundation of cultural confidence. It signifies a firm belief in the continuous and enduring vitality of the Chinese civilization over more than five thousand years. It is this profound historical continuity that provides a solid foundation for resisting cultural nihilism and deconstructing history and other erroneous trends of thought. Second, the dimension of value identity. This is the core content of cultural confidence[3]. It points to the full affirmation of the contemporary value and eternal charm of the philosophical thought, humanistic spirit, and moral concepts contained in outstanding Chinese traditional culture. This value identity transcends the static protection view that merely regards traditional culture as cultural relics or heritage. Instead, it regards it as a living spiritual resource that can be creatively activated in the dialogue, collision, and integration with modern values. Third, the dimension of innovation identity. This is the orientation of the times and the source of vitality for cultural confidence. It emphasizes that confidence is not about sticking to old ways and refusing to make progress, but about promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture with an open and inclusive attitude. Innovation identity is built on the basis of historical identity and value identity, and it is convinced that Chinese culture has a strong ability to acculturate and self-renew. "Confidence" without innovation identity is very easy to slide into cultural conservatism.

2.2 Core Characteristics and Transformation Potential of Outstanding Chinese Traditional Culture

Under the perspective of cultural confidence, outstanding Chinese traditional culture is no longer a vague, general, or nostalgic collection. Its core characteristics and transformation potential are clearly revealed, providing specific objects and content for its contemporary inheritance. The core characteristics of outstanding Chinese traditional culture are first embodied in its profound humanistic spirit and ethical foundation. Different from some civilizations that focus on theocentric or material-centric approaches, Chinese culture has established the central position of "people" since the pre-Qin period [4]. However, its "humanism" is not an isolated, atomized individualism, but a "person" defined in a "relationship" network that emphasizes moral practice. This characteristic has profound reflective and regulatory value for remedying the individual atomization, interpersonal alienation, and moral relativism that modernity may bring. Secondly, it is reflected in the dialectical and unified holistic thinking and the state of moderation and harmony. Chinese culture tends to grasp the world from an overall, connected, and dynamic perspective. This way of thinking does not pursue the absolute opposition of either/or, but advocates seeking balance and harmony in contradictions. Furthermore, it is reflected in a strong orientation towards practical application and a worldly sentiment. The mainstream Chinese culture has always held a deep concern for the world and a sense of responsibility for transforming society. This characteristic makes it naturally possess the potential to participate in modern national governance and social construction. The key lies in how to effectively integrate its values with modern systems and technologies. It is precisely based on these core characteristics that outstanding Chinese traditional culture contains a wealth of potential for modern transformation. At the ethical construction level, traditional virtues can be integrated into civic morality construction and the cultivation of socialist core values through new education and socialization pathways.

2.3 The Logical Connection between Cultural Confidence and Inheritance Practices

The concept of cultural confidence provides fundamental methodological guidance and spiritual impetus for the inheritance and development of outstanding traditional Chinese culture, establishing a basic logic from "why inherit" to "how to inherit". First, cultural confidence constitutes the endogenous driving force and value axis of inheritance practices [5]. In the absence of cultural confidence, attitudes towards traditional culture easily tend towards two extremes: one is historical nihilism, which completely negates the past, viewing tradition as a burden that must be discarded in the process of modernization; the other is cultural revivalism, which is blindly arrogant and attempts to replicate the past in its original form, detached from the contemporary context. Both are essentially manifestations of a lack of rational understanding and belief in one's own culture. Cultural confidence, however, opens up a third path: it establishes the necessity of inheritance based on historical identity; it clarifies the essence of inheritance based on value identity; and it points out the modern way out for inheritance based on innovative identity. Second, cultural confidence establishes the methodological principle of unifying "critical inheritance" and "creative development". Cultural confidence does not mean accepting traditional culture in its entirety. True confidence is precisely reflected in the ability to be guided by dialectical materialism and historical materialism, adhering to an objective, scientific, and respectful attitude, to treat traditional culture "discriminately, inheriting it critically". This requires us to distinguish between the essence and dross of traditional culture, and to distinguish between its universal value and historical limitations. Finally, cultural confidence shapes an open and inclusive pattern of inheritance and an international perspective [6]. A confident culture is necessarily open. Inheritance based on cultural confidence is not an exclusionary "cultural isolationism," but rather possesses the breadth and ability to engage in

equal dialogue, exchange, and mutual learning with outstanding civilizations from all over the world while upholding its own subjectivity. It enables us to more calmly absorb the beneficial elements of human civilization to nourish and enrich ourselves. At the same time, it also prompts us to stand firm in the midst of global cultural interactions and contribute the wisdom of Chinese culture in solving contemporary human problems through effective international communication, thereby enhancing the international influence and discourse power of Chinese culture.

3. Contemporary Predicaments and Deep-seated Causes of the Inheritance of Outstanding Chinese Traditional Culture

3.1 The Multi-dimensional Real-world Challenges of Inheritance Practices

The challenges currently encountered in the practice of inheriting traditional culture are multi-dimensional and multi-layered [7]. Their manifestations are complex and diverse, but they can be summarized into the following core problems:

The first is formalism and hollowing out, that is, the disconnection between ritual performance and spiritual connotation. This is the most common and prominent predicament at present. Driven by multiple forces such as commercial capital, tourism development, and policy assessments, a large number of traditional cultural projects have been rapidly packaged into consumable, displayable, and quantifiable cultural products and festive activities. Although this "formalized inheritance" enhances the visibility of traditional culture in the short term, it empties its core spiritual value and meaning in life, leading to the "hollowing out" of inheritance. Public participation often remains at a superficial sensory experience, making it difficult to achieve deep cultural identity and value internalization.

The second is the fragmentation and discontinuity of educational inheritance, that is, the imbalance between knowledge imparting and practical training. The current situation of school education, as the main channel of cultural inheritance, is not optimistic. At present, although traditional cultural education in primary and secondary schools has been generally introduced into the curriculum system, it mostly presents a tendency of "knowledge points." In terms of teaching methods, emphasis is placed on knowledge lecturing rather than practical experience, and emphasis is placed on classical texts rather than contemporary interpretation. This makes it easy for traditional culture to be labeled as "outdated" and "useless" in the minds of young people, making it difficult to evoke emotional resonance and value identity. In higher education, traditional cultural research is often limited to specific professional fields such as literature, history, and philosophy, and has not effectively carried out interdisciplinary integration research and general education. This disconnection and fragmentation of educational inheritance makes the cultural transmission chain between generations fragile.

The third is the reconstruction of the media landscape by consumerism, that is, the dissolution of traditional meanings and the alienation of symbols. With the collusion of modern mass media, especially new media and commercial capital, traditional culture is being transformed on a large scale into "media landscapes" and consumer symbols that can be quickly disseminated and attract traffic. While Hanfu (traditional Han clothing), ancient-style music, and Chinese fashion designs have promoted the popularity of traditional cultural elements to a certain extent, there is no shortage of phenomena that unilaterally, spectacularly, and even mockingly treat traditional symbols. Deep, slow cultural connotations that require quiet contemplation are squeezed and diluted in the communication logic of pursuing "traffic is king" and "rapid iteration." Traditional spiritual values and aesthetic conceptions are simplified into visual spectacles and consumer labels, and the seriousness and profundity of cultural inheritance face the risk of dissolution in entertainment and fragmented communication. While expanding coverage, this "consumerist inheritance" may also

foster a superficial "cultural exoticism" mentality, rather than promoting a deep understanding and inheritance of the true value of culture.

3.2 Structural Analysis of Deep-Seated Causes

The real-world challenges of inheriting and carrying forward China's outstanding traditional culture do not exist in isolation. Intertwined with them are profound structural contradictions and shifts in cultural logic within the modernization process. These can be primarily attributed to the following three levels of deep-seated causes.

The first is the tension of cultural identity and value alienation under the impact of modernity. China's social transformation since the modern era has been a profound process of modernity centered on industrialization, urbanization, and rationalization. While this process has brought tremendous material progress, it has also profoundly reshaped social structures, concepts of time, and the world of meaning. The foundations of traditional culture in rural society, clan organizational structures, and associated systems of meaning have been greatly weakened in modern urban life. Individuals in fast-paced, highly mobile modern life are more likely to feel alienation and estrangement from traditional values that arose in relatively stable, slow-paced social contexts, finding them "out of touch" or "outdated." This structural tension between modern life experiences and traditional value systems is the fundamental social ground for inheritance difficulties.

Second, the systematic inheritance mechanism lags behind and there is a lack of innovation carriers. Effective inheritance relies on a sound ecosystem and innovative forms of carrying forward. Currently, the difficulties at the mechanism level are mainly reflected in: The first issue is the failure of coordination among actors. A coordinated mechanism with consistent goals, shared resources, and complementary advantages has not yet been formed among the diverse inheritance actors such as the government, academia, the education sector, the cultural industry, and civil society groups. The second issue is the insufficient supply of innovative carriers. Inheritance relies too heavily on traditional classics, lectures, performances, and other inherent forms, failing to fully integrate contemporary technology, artistic language, and aesthetic elements of life to create new cultural products, new cultural spaces, and new cultural experiences that can both carry the essence of tradition and possess strong contemporary appeal and infectiousness. Without innovative carriers, traditional culture cannot truly integrate into the daily life and spiritual world of contemporary people.

The third is the weak discourse power and interpretive crisis in the global cultural power structure. In the global cultural discourse system where Western centrism remains strong, the traditional cultural values originating from non-Western civilizations often face marginalization, exoticization, or "Procrustean" interpretations based on Western theoretical frameworks. The core concepts, ways of thinking, and value systems of Chinese traditional culture often struggle to find fully equivalent terms in cross-cultural communication, easily leading to loss of meaning and misunderstanding.

The contemporary inheritance predicament of China's outstanding traditional culture is the result of the combined effect of superficial practical challenges and deep-seated structural contradictions. It is both an unavoidable cultural growing pain in the process of modernization and an exposure of our shortcomings in inheritance concepts, mechanism design, innovation capabilities, and discourse construction. Facing these difficulties and causes squarely is not to negate the significance and achievements of inheritance, but to clear cognitive obstacles and clarify the direction of tackling key problems with a more sober, rational, and pragmatic attitude in order to explore a truly effective path of inheritance and development based on cultural self-confidence.

4. Constructing a Development Path for Outstanding Traditional Chinese Culture Based on Cultural Confidence

4.1 Systemic Transformation from "Heritage Protection" to "Living Heritage"

The traditional "heritage protection" model focuses on the identification, recording, preservation, and restoration of cultural heritage. While necessary, this model's limitation lies in its tendency to objectify and museumize traditional culture, creating a disconnect between it and contemporary social life and meaning-making processes. Heritage rooted in cultural confidence requires us to promote a profound conceptual shift: from static "heritage protection" to dynamic "living heritage". The core of this transformation lies in viewing traditional culture as a living, participatory, and interactive system of meaning, creatively integrating it into all aspects of modern life, and rebuilding the organic connection between traditional culture and modern life.

A living legacy first and foremost means that ethical practices return to life. Confucian values such as "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness," as well as respect for parents and elders, and harmonious neighborly relations, should not exist merely as moral doctrines in textbooks. Instead, they should be transformed into tangible life practices through community building, family tradition construction, and social reward mechanisms. Second, Living heritage requires the daily infiltration of aesthetic experience. The beauty of "artistic conception", "spiritual rhythm" and "harmony" championed by Chinese aesthetics should not be confined to museum showcases or academic treatises. It should be integrated into urban landscapes, architectural spaces, home environments, everyday objects, and even digital interfaces through contemporary design, public art, and environmental aesthetics. Finally, the legacy of life depends on the deep integration of the education system. We must move beyond the "addition thinking" (simply adding course content) that is prevalent in current traditional culture education and shift towards "integration thinking". This requires systematically integrating the essence of traditional culture into all disciplines and aspects of education, from basic to higher education. Beyond language arts and history, mathematics and science courses can explore the holistic thinking and dialectical wisdom in traditional Chinese scientific thought. Art and physical education courses can deeply integrate the traditions of calligraphy, traditional Chinese painting, martial arts, and folk music, which cultivate the integration of body and mind. Moral education courses need to be deeply integrated with Confucian self-cultivation concepts and national sentiments.

4.2 Building a Collaborative and Technology-Enabled Heritage Ecosystem

Advanced concepts require sound mechanisms for support. Heritage rooted in cultural confidence must break through the limitations of a single entity and single model, and build an open ecosystem with multi-entity collaboration and multi-element linkage, guided by the government, driven by the market, with social participation and technology empowerment.

The core of this ecosystem is to establish an efficient collaborative network of multiple entities. The government should play a "meta-governance" role, shifting from directly running projects to formulating strategic plans, setting standards and norms, providing policy incentives, and building collaborative platforms. At the same time, we must vigorously cultivate and empower various folk cultural organizations, community inheritors, cultural volunteers, and community cultural centers, as they are the key nodes for maintaining cultural vitality at the grassroots level of society. And the universities and research institutions should be encouraged to establish practice-oriented applied research projects to provide academic support and talent reserves for heritage innovation.

Technology empowerment is a key lever for breaking through the limitations of time and space in heritage and innovating modes of expression. A cultural digitization strategy should be

systematically promoted, but it needs to move beyond the simple "digital archiving" stage and towards "digital twins" and "scene revival." Artificial intelligence technology can be used for intelligent indexing, semantic association, and cross-language translation of ancient books and documents, to unearth the wisdom in classics that has not been fully explored. The cultural industry should be upgraded with the enhancement of spiritual content as its core. The current rise of "Guochao" (Chinese trends) shows the huge potential of the market, but it needs to be guided to upgrade from the simple appropriation of traditional symbols to the deep interpretation and modern expression of cultural spirit. The cultural enterprises should be encouraged to cooperate deeply with research institutions and inheritors to jointly develop new cultural products and services that have both cultural depth, artistic beauty, and practical value.

4.3 Discourse Reshaping: Constructing a Modern Chinese Narrative System in Civilizational Dialogue

The inheritance based on cultural confidence should ultimately be embodied in the establishment of discourse power. This requires us not only to "inherit the past" but also to "interpret the present" and, more importantly, to "engage in dialogue with the world," constructing a modern discourse system that can accurately express the essence of Chinese culture and effectively communicate with the world.

The foundation of discourse reshaping is to extract the shareable values and universal propositions of Chinese culture. In the era of globalization, the influence of a culture depends on the unique wisdom and solutions it can provide for the problems that humanity faces together. We should focus on extracting profound ideas from traditional Chinese culture regarding the harmonious coexistence of humanity and nature, the balance between individuals and social relations, the peaceful coexistence of different civilizations, physical and mental well-being, and the meaning of life, and present them in a clear, contemporary manner. Secondly, it is essential to build an interpretation system that integrates academic and popular discourse. Currently, there is a disconnect where academic discourse is often too profound and obscure, while popular discourse tends to be superficial and entertaining. A group of scholars, writers, media professionals, and cultural envoys with both deep academic knowledge and modern expressive abilities are needed to engage in "translation" and "trans-creation." They should be able to use the language of modern philosophy, social sciences, and art theory to provide insightful and accessible interpretations of traditional cultural classics that resonate with the times; and they should be able to transform complex ideas into vivid stories, figurative metaphors, and communicable viewpoints. Ultimately, discourse reshaping should serve proactive international cultural dialogue and effective communication. We should rely on platforms such as the "Belt and Road" initiative, international academic organizations, cultural and art festivals, and bilateral cultural exchange years to carefully design dialogue themes and communication content. We should shift from the past approach of primarily showcasing "spectacles" to in-depth exchanges focused on ideas, values, and solutions.

The development path of outstanding traditional Chinese culture based on cultural confidence is a comprehensive construction process from concept to practice, from mechanism to discourse. It uses "living heritage" to root culture in the present, builds an "ecosystem" to activate the dynamics of inheritance, and promotes mutual learning among civilizations through "modern narratives." The exploration and practice of this path are not only related to the continuation of the national cultural bloodline but also to whether we can define ourselves and contribute wisdom in the modern world with a high degree of cultural subjectivity, ultimately realizing the modern revival and value manifestation of Chinese civilization.

5. Conclusion

The inheritance and development of outstanding traditional Chinese culture is a systematic project concerning the construction of cultural subjectivity and the way out of civilizational modernity. This study shows that the concept of cultural self-confidence lays a fundamental value foundation and methodological adherence for this project, enabling it to transcend the limitations of "protection" and "replication" and shift to a new paradigm of "activation" and "creation." To solve the current dilemma of inheritance, we must face the structural challenges brought about by modernity, promote the deep integration of traditional culture into contemporary ethical practice, aesthetic experience, and the education system, so that it can regain vitality in the lived world. We must build a multi-agent collaborative ecosystem of government, society, the market, and technology, and use institutional innovation to ensure the sustainability and innovative vitality of inheritance. We must extract the shareable values of Chinese culture in global dialogue, construct modern expressions that connect academia and the public, and master the autonomy of cultural interpretation. Only by adhering to the unity of historical identity, value identity, and innovation identity, and promoting it synergistically at the levels of concept, mechanism, and discourse, can traditional culture truly become a living source that nourishes the national spirit and contributes to human wisdom, and ultimately realize the modern revitalization of Chinese civilization based on cultural self-confidence.

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