

Cultural Exchange and Interaction Between China and the West

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Differences in cultural background and context may result in misunderstanding and various attitudes toward dealing with historical issues, so we need to promote Chinese culture across the globe and explicitly explain China's development and changes to the international community. It is not only the mission of culture, but also our responsibility. At present, the world is a dynamic mixture of openness, integration, and competition, with cultural competition as its core. Upon the rise of China, spreading Chinese culture overseas has entered a new era. We must put Chinese culture into a new context and understand its characteristics and trends under historical and macro perspectives.

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China's contribution to the West is not only about science or technology, but also China's political, institutional, and ideological culture. While the world is embracing China with another angle, it needs a comprehensive understanding of Chinese culture. Only when Chinese culture is effectively interpreted and recognized, excellent Chinese stories and experience are shared, can the world better know about and understand China, and can the expectations of the era be met. To spread Chinese culture, we should establish a clear sense of culture-consciousness, culture-improvement, and culture-confidence.

The Early Western Spreading of Chinese Traditional Culture

Ideological culture is a product of political and economical realities in certain period, and advanced thoughts play an important role in social development. Civilizations progress through mutual learning. Nurtured by Confucianism and thoughts developed after Renaissance, Enlightenment Thought has dominated culture development in European's recent history. In the 18th century, French scholars pay high tribute to Confucius, describing him as a paragon. During Ming and Qing Dynasty (17th-18th century), European missionaries served as a bridge connect Chinese and Western culture. Despite difficulties, they managed to ship the principal ideologies, Confucianism and Cheng Zhu Neo-Confucianism, back to Europe, which contributed to their craze for Chinese culture over 100 years.

Considering the past, many researches has illustrated the positive impact of "Chinese ideology" on Enlightenment Movement. At that time, European scholars were fascinated by the East, which refers to Arab, Turkey, Persia, India, and China. They praised China as a country ruled by philosophy and a model for all Europeans (Leites, 1989). Furthermore, modern Western political system draws inspiration from Chinese

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culture. European thinkers like Voltaire, consulted the imperial bureaucratic system, its selection and management when designing modern political system.

Exchange and mutual learning between civilizations is an important factor in historical development. Enlightenment thinkers laid great emphasis on benevolent governance and unity from Confucianism because they were in favor of enlightened monarchs instead of feudal autocracy. In the new Cultural Movement, those who championed science, democracy, and Western Enlightenment thoughts made slogans like Down with Confucianism, and their critical thinking propped up China's modernization. After Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) came to China, he made efforts to learn how to speak and write Chinese, and how to wear traditional costumes. His expertise in Confucian culture made him easily adjusted into the community, making friends with both the common folks and big names. During their communication, he introduced Western science, technology, and ideology to lead people to appreciate the omnipotent God and the harmonious, perfect, and eternal world. His missionary work features expertise in Chinese traditions, contacts with the elites and combination of religion, science, and technology.

In 1898, Kang Youwei explained to a journalist that his proposal to conduct political reform could be attributed to works of Timothy Richard, a British missionary who came to China in 1870 and Young John Allen, an American missionary who came to China in 1860. After Hundred Days' Reform, he fled to Japan with the help of missionaries. However, the Western power treated religion as a tool to flex their muscles and expand businesses. Together with some incompatible differences between Western religion and Chinese traditional culture, Northern China saw the anti-colonial and anti-Christian movement Boxer Rebellion in less than a year. Christian promoted advanced science, technology, and ideology, which serve as a theoretical weapon, while it was also utilized for invasions and met protests from Chinese people.

In 17th and 18th century, ancient classics and Confucianism were widely spread and recognized among European scholars and elites through missionaries. They become the source of mental power for pioneers in Enlightenment such as Voltaire. Traditions including benevolent governance and unity become paragons for those supporters of enlightened monarchs.

The Cognitive Changes of Modern Western about China

In 19th century, Western attitudes toward China began to change. Since 16th century, there have been great changes in human civilization development, during which a vibrant Europe was on the rise while Chinese people were lost in the past glory. In the Age of Discovery, Europe progressed from feudalism to capitalism and connected the isolated continents to a unity. In view of the realities, China's answer was to politically concentrate the autocratic monarchy, and economically encourage agriculture rather than trade and embark on a long period of self-isolation. After the Opium Wars, natural economy broke down under the impact of industrial civilization. A set of modern enterprises were established, which propped up national capitalism, and many peasants flowed to cities, changing the social and economic structure.

At that time, the West imagined China as a place flooded with opium where they could easily smuggle opium in against the incompetent government. There were so many people being addicted to opium, and thus China was thought to be an "opium country".

After Communist Party of China strengthened itself and succeeded in the Long March, China wielded

more influence. In January 1937, *Life* published a set of photos of Mao Zedong taken by Edgar Snow. *Red Star Over China* caused a stir in the West World back then.

In Harold Robert Isaacs's *Scratches on Our Minds: American Images of China and India* (1958), he categorized America's attitude toward China into six stages, namely: The Age of Respect (18th century), The Age of Contempt (1840-1905), The Age of Benevolence (1905-1937), The Age of Admiration (1937-1944), The Age of Disenchantment (1944-1949), and The Age of Hostility (1949-).

As for 21st century, the West treats the rise of China as a threat. China's economy has blossomed since reform and opening up, while America is losing its grip on economy under financial crisis. China's adherence to socialism seems contradicted to American ideology. Besides, China is making much presence on the international stage in the polarized world. These are all fictitious opinions for some supporters of so-called "China Threat". China is still a developing country, and China was, has been and will be an advocator of peaceful prosperity and a defender against hegemonism and power politics.

There are always two contradicting views on China in the history of China-US ties. Before 1784, America did not have direct contact with China. Despite this, it generated the first impression on China as a land of decorum, showing respect and admiration. After the ship *Empress of China* reached China in 1784, they began to explore and experience the land by themselves, but what they had was disillusion and disappointment. They used to learn about China through products including china, silk, and tea, people from European travelers, missionaries to merchants, and works from Enlightenment thinkers. However, *Empress of China* left them an arrogant, corruptive, and self-isolated government, some strange traditions and customs, and after all, a sense of disappointment.

During the Second World War, China became a reliable comrade with abundant manpower to America since its people were hardworking and ingenious and it would be generous enough to give great return... China took the opportunity to get rid of contempt and donation... People can still easily find influences of the war at present. China and America made concerted efforts to fight against Japan when the Pacific War broke out. China's support for America during the war, Chinese government's pro-US policy and qualities demonstrated in both Chinese soldiers and people all contributed to the better impression.

However, the Korean War reminded Americans of the belligerent heart especially Genghis Khan, so China's image got changed again, becoming puppets in the hands of Moscow and an ungrateful invader. The root cause went to the Cold War, China's one-sided foreign policy and China's stance in the Korean War. An American journalist, also the author of *American People and China*, Steele who once settled in China for many years made an explanation:

Crossfire between China and America in the battlefield led to heavy casualties among American soldiers, which changed its attitude toward China overnight. It used to enjoy superiority over China, but now it feels threatened and offended by China. This is a new feeling we have never had before. (Steele, 1966, p. 37)

Therefore, American's view on China varies across the time, but it is determined by American's practical needs instead of performance of Chinese government.

National image is the epitome of national ties with each other and is dependent on countries' overall strength, while the West toned down its impression on China.

How to Strengthen Cultural Exchange and Communication

At present, the world is a dynamic mixture of openness, integration, and competition, with cultural competition as its core. Upon the rise of China, spreading Chinese culture overseas has entered a new era. We must put Chinese culture into a new context and understand its characteristics and trends under historical and macro perspectives.

Reform and opening up injects more vitality into all social sectors, and the progress is still going on. At such a critical timing, theories and methods in social sciences shall be detected to analyze these changes. Differences in cultural background and context may result in misunderstanding and various attitudes toward dealing with historical issues, so we need to promote Chinese culture across the globe and explicitly explain China's development and changes to the international community. It is not only the mission of culture, but also our responsibility.

With increase in national strength, establishment and development of Confucius Institute in the 21st century, overseas spread of Chinese traditional culture takes another path different from missionary or Confucianism since it only revolves around culture itself. On the other hand, values and social system still vary across the globe; we cannot neglect academic cultural misunderstanding and pursuit of Western values during the process. It is necessary to bear in mind six foreign views of Chinese traditional culture, namely, Eurocentrism, Sinocentrism, Cultural Supremacy, Confucianism Centrism, Han Culture Suzerain Theory, and Han Culture Spread Theory.

Against a backdrop of glocalization, Chinese enterprises are left far behind in terms of integrating and spreading culture. Although there are many world-class events held in China and many enterprises have gone international, Chinese have not paid as much attention to glocalization as their foreign counterparts, be it theoretically or practically. Most of them are restricted to products and investment while ignoring the localization of overseas institutions. In view of this, the following aspects should be taken into consideration:

Seek for Resources With Universal Values

Since ancient times, China believes civilizations can co-exist under harmony in diversity. Only when civilizations embrace each other on the basis of trust can they be updated. Our core values ought to integrate the domestic, international, and contemporary picture, which is a product nurtured by traditional culture in this era. Without the belief that traditional culture can still be modernized, diversified and improved, contribution of culture in the national core values framework cannot be fully recognized. When people began to explore the world and understand themselves, they have been concerned about a shared future for mankind. Philosophers and thinkers, from East to West, are developing and constructing people's core values. New core values come into being underpinned by domestic and international realities at present, and the essence is concerns and responsibility for mankind's shared future. After the Second World War, Western values featuring democracy, freedom, legislation, human rights, equality, equity, and justice have been widely recognized throughout the world and pointed out the future of civilizations development. Yet one issue is noticeable, dialogue between universal values and other civilizations.

Set out Civilization Mode, Set up Cultural Consciousness

It marks formation of cultural consciousness when people start to ponder about their civilization development mode. Human intellectual creations evolve from thing-in-itself to self-consciousness, the key of

which, as the cultural subjects, and sharpen their capability of cultural introspection. In the meanwhile, cultural self-consciousness needs to be conducted repetitively in that it is based on conceptual knowledge of relationship between people's own culture and foreign culture, and the knowledge deepens with time.

As a result of sluggish social development and self-isolation policy, China suffered from two polarized morbid state, from cultural superiority to cultural inferiority. Confronted with national crisis and questioned by cultural modernity, Chinese began another round of cultural introspection. After the Opium War, advanced Western technologies and learning shook the Chinese, resulting in the conflicts and integration of two types of culture. Under the theme of salvaging China from subjugation, patriots were looking for a new development mode, starting from learning technologies, advanced systems like constitutional monarchy and democratic republic to refresh the social ideology with bourgeois culture, all with strong marks of anti-feudalism and anti-aggression.

Cultural communication and development are part of historical development. Since the Communist Party of China was founded, the great banner of Marxism has been held high and the Sinicization of Marxism has been deepened, during which theoretical guidance has been formed including Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, and the important thought of Three Represents and the Scientific Outlook on Development. Socialism with Chinese characteristics is the way Marxism is applied in China. President Xi Jinping once stressed, "The kind of governance system best suited for a country is determined by that country's historical heritage and cultural traditions, and its level of social and economic development, and it is ultimately decided by that country's people. Our current national governance system has been developed and gradually improved over a long period of time on the basis of our historied heritage, cultural traditions, and social and economic development". Now it is time to reestablish our cultural confidence and the priority is to conduct a comprehensive review, develop what is useful, and discard what is not. On 1 July 2016, President Xi emphasized in his speech that people should strengthen confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics and cultural confidence is the most essential one because it represents a fundamental and profound force that sustains the development of a country and a nation.

Make Proposals to Jointly Address the Global Challenges

China, one of the four cradles of civilization, boasts 5,000-year history and plays a unique role in human history. Chairman Mao once highlighted that China ought to make a greater contribution to humanity. Socialism with Chinese characteristics is a convincing example as Chinese civilization has found a unique development path best suited for China and capitalism is not the only path to realize modernization. Since reform and opening up, China's presence in economy, politics, and civilization communication has enriched the concept of modernization and spiritual life of mankind. Wide recognition of such experience requires finding bonding points between Chinese civilization and other civilizations. If we can refine wisdom featured by characteristics of China and the times, we can promote Chinese theories, viewpoints, and philosophy which other civilizations find approachable.

In a word, we should fully appreciate cultural transformation and communication between China and other civilizations. For strength and weakness embedded in East-Asian wisdom and Western wisdom, we also need to appreciate both similarities and differences. Only when we can supplement and complement each other across all

levels and cultural integration and acculturation are reached can we embark on the broad road of civilization development.

As a result of social transformation and economic globalization, there shall be a long-term communication, dialogue mechanism, and integration process between traditional Chinese culture and Western culture. It lies in the mission of culture and our responsibility to ponder about how traditional culture can realize self-integration and innovation through communication with other cultures including the Western culture and how traditional Chinese culture can better contribute to global peace and development. To achieve this goal, people must endeavor to improve culture accomplishment, spread traditional culture, and make contribution to international cultural cooperation and communication.

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