On the Chinese Culture Transmission and Strategies

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With the development of economy and international communication, Chinese culture is going out of the country and is known by the world. The paper analyzes the historical and present Chinese culture overseas transmission and the strategies of the transmissions. The paper has three parts: The first part is the history of Chinese culture transmission, the second part is the present Chinese transmission, and the third part is the strategies of Chinese culture transmission. And in the conclusion, it is made clear that everyone going abroad or in front of the foreigners is transmitting Chinese culture in one way or another. In order to make Chinese culture popular, some methods should be taken for Chinese visiting or going to other countries.

Keywords: Chinese culture, transmission, strategies

Introduction

Nowadays, culture has been absolutely considered a power of productivity. More and more countries have paid more attention to the transmission of culture. In the whole world, every country takes opportunities to get the culture known, understood, and accepted. China is a country with a long history, even with a long history of cultures transmission. But because of some particular reason, China has fallen behind of other countries in culture transmission especially among the Asian countries. In the new epoch, with the development of Chinese economy and culture, China tries best to take part in the different activities in the world, and gets the world familiar with Chinese culture. The paper is to make some researches about Chinese culture, the history of Chinese culture, and some strategies on the transmission of the Chinese culture.

Understanding the Definition of Culture

About the definition of culture, of course, different people have their own understanding of culture. But American anthropologist, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, explained in his book Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions (1952), there are more than 160 different kinds of definitions about culture.1 Culture is a floorboard for knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, and habits. According to the Baidu definition of culture, “culture” refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. To be more exactly:

Culture is the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people.
Culture is communication, communication is culture.

1 See http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=IJMhsTp6iT1Iez8J7OzP43O85-QV9PaDBEYc5_8XO-9GfsSaYBNh_mh1YO4YGLNh.
Culture in its broadest sense is cultivated behavior; that is the totality of a person’s learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behavior through social learning.

A culture is a way of life of a group of people—the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.

Culture is symbolic communication. Some of its symbols include a group’s skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and motives. The meanings of the symbols are learned and deliberately perpetuated in a society through its institutions.

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action; on the other hand, as conditioning influences upon further action.

Culture is the sum of total of the learned behavior of a group of people that are generally considered to be the tradition of that people and are transmitted from generation to generation.

Culture is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.

Cultural differences manifest themselves in different ways and differing levels of depth. Symbols represent the most superficial values and the deepest manifestations of culture, with heroes and rituals in between.

Symbols are words, gestures, pictures, or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognized by those who share a particular culture. New symbols easily develop; old ones disappear. Symbols from one particular group are regularly copied by others. This is why symbols represent the outermost layer of a culture (see Figure 1).

Heroes are persons, past or present, real or fictitious, who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture. They also serve as models for behavior.

Rituals are collective activities, sometimes superfluous in reaching desired objectives, but are considered as socially essential. They are therefore carried out most of the times for their own sake (ways of greetings, paying respect to others, religious and social ceremonies, etc.).

The core of a culture is formed by values. They are broad tendencies for preferences of certain state of affairs to others (good-evil, right-wrong, natural-unnatural). Many values remain unconscious to those who hold them. Therefore, they often cannot be discussed, nor can they be directly observed by others. Values can only be inferred from the way people act under different circumstances.

Symbols, heroes, and rituals are the tangible or visual aspects of the practices of a culture. The true cultural meaning of the practices is intangible; this is revealed only when the practices are interpreted by the insiders.

![Figure 1. Layers of a culture.](image-url)
So culture is the total way of a nation's living and thinking; it is in a nation anyway and everywhere; it is with the person in the culture what he wears, what he speaks, what he eats, what ways of living he has, and what kinds of ideological ways of thinking he has.

With the definition and understanding of culture, it is defined as that culture is really a notion for broad study. Chinese culture is always considered to be multi-faceted. In China, it is even broad, profound, and refined. It includes benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, faith, loyalty, filial piety, Ti, festival, will, courage, let; fancies of men of letters, 360 rows, the four great inventions, folk taboo, patriotism, natural health, bamboo, ballads, loess, the Yangtze River, the Yellow River, red, the moon; 12 animals: cattle, tiger, rabbit, rat, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, chicken, dog, pig; peasant, the peasant uprising, hoe; the royal palace official, palace, imperial school culture. They represent the ancient philosophers, lyre-playing, chess, calligraphy and painting lute-playing, chess, calligraphy, and painting—an accomplishments of a scholar of the old school; traditional literature, traditional holidays, Chinese drama, Chinese architecture, Chinese characters in Chinese traditional Chinese medicine, the philosophy of religion, folk handicraft, the Chinese martial arts, regional culture, folk custom, and dress. With the advances, advantages, and varieties of Chinese traditional culture, and with the fast development of Chinese modern culture, sharing these cultures with the whole world is necessary and urgent.

The Overview of Chinese Culture Transmission

The History of Chinese Culture Transmission to the World

A country’s culture development connects with the culture transmission from a long run. In the 5,000 years, Chinese has formed the core culture based on the Confucius culture.

The Chinese transmission began with the Han dynasty, which is famous for the “The silk route”. Tang dynasty is at peak of Chinese culture transmission. Foreign mission came eagerly to Chang’an. Thousands of oversea students came to study culture in the imperial college to receive the authentic Chinese education. Chinese cultures at time greatly affected the Asia, and formed the culture circle based on Chinese culture. The Chinese characters and Confucius are followed in Asian countries, especially in Japan and Korean peninsula.

Another peak of Chinese culture transmission is at the time of Qing Dynasty. At that time the Chinese culture transmission is beyond Asia. It is around the world. The missionaries took the part of culture transmission. They translated many Chinese classic books, and introduced Chinese history, political system, literature, and art. All the culture activities infused oriental element for the renaissance.

Some important figures played vital role in the history of Chinese culture transmission. They are Zhang Qian, Jian Zhen, Zheng He, to name just a few.

In the past 30 years, with the development of Chinese economic changes, with the availability of the global cooperation, Chinese are more confident in the Chinese culture transmission.

The Present Situation of Chinese Culture Transmission

The 17th plenary session in China proposed to enforce the influences and inspiration of Chinese culture, and to keep the varieties of cultures. Beijing Normal University (BNU) chairperson LIU Chuan-sheng says at the forum that the total sum of import and export of cultural products in the country has reached $14.39 billion with a yearly increase of 9%, while the number for cultural services has reached $5.7 billion, increasing yearly by 19.5%.2

The first Confucius College started on September 21, 2004 in Seoul, Korea. The first Confucius television station started to broadcast on December 17, 2008. Till now there are over 700 Confucius colleges around the world, among which 70 are in the United States. The Confucius College is an effective way for Chinese culture transmission.

The Confucius colleges held more than 7,000 culture activities, with more than 200 million persons taking part in. In the past few years, some culture year were held around the world, centered on the “Old China”, “Colorful China”, and “Modern China”.

Many scholars wrote papers to explain the development of present Chinese culture transmission. In the article “The Study of International Transmission of the Chinese Traditional Cultures”, JIN (2010) talked about two main ways of Chinese culture transmission. They are literature channel with the Confucius classic works, which are the core of Chinese traditional culture; the activity channel, which combines the learning of Chinese culture in activities.

There are different transmissions for the Chinese culture. One is the traditional classics transmission. The others are modern works. MO Yan’s, JIA Ping-wa’s are representatives of the modern works. Their typical Chinese literatures have been translated and transmitted abroad.

In the modern time the most convenient and quick transmission is the movie series. “Legend of LI Xiao-long” has been screened in more than 10 countries in a week. The new “Three Kingdom” “took me to China”, shows the importance and influence of Chinese literature to the foreigners.

The Strategies of Chinese Culture Transmission

With the development of the Chinese culture and economy, China is taking active part in the world-wide activities. China is trying to show its culture with many methods, which were mentioned above. China has achieved such success in culture transmission. But there are more ways can be applied to the understanding and acceptance of Chinese culture.

The Chinese Governmental Level

At present, the Chinese government has different ways to get Chinese culture known in the whole world. The summit around the world is a best chance for the culture transmission. In the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in 2014, China shows the Chinese culture from different aspects, either the cruise or the architecture. Every time the top leaders of China visit abroad, they take the Chinese typical technology and culture to share with the people abroad.

Firstly, Chinese government has done a lot of work abroad to get the Chinese culture understood and accepted. The “Confucius Institute” and “China Year” are playing important role in the transmission of Chinese culture.

2014 is the 10th anniversary of the “Confucius institute”. In the Confucius China studies program more courses are designed, such as “Joint Research Ph.D. Fellowship”, “International Conference Grant”, “Young Leaders Fellowship”, “Ph.D. in China Fellowship”, and “Understanding China Fellowship”. All these programs provide chances for the overseas scholars in China and their participation in Chinese culture studies and transmission. Ministry of Education of China supports and sponsors the programs.

“The China Year” under the leader of Ministry of Culture, P. R. China has done many contributions to the transmission of the Chinese culture transmission. “China-ASEAN Cultural Exchange Year, in Myanmar on December 18, 2014” is the latest activities.

“The China Year” is not confined between countries. Now the activity has taken place in the universities. For example, in Brown University, they have the “China and America: China and America Opening Doors, Opening Minds” with a slogan in Chinese to affirm that knowing a language is a first step to learn about a culture. For many, China is hidden behind a language difficult to pronounce, and even more difficult to read. Since ancient times, Chinese has been written in graphic forms, evolving from pictures and signs instead of from the sound-based alphabets that characterize so many other languages.

In order to publicize the Chinese culture, the calligraphy embedded in the logo begins with a character “({...})” recalling an arrow hitting a target’s bull’s-eye, a picture that came to represent the idea of “central”. The character represents a self-concept that China was “The Central Kingdom”, the focal point of the world. As the Chinese became acquainted with places beyond their traditional horizons, names were invented, often in ways that conveyed a flattering meaning while at the same time capturing a phonetic element of the place’s spoken name. The second character’s root meaning is “beautiful” ({{}}, and pronounced mei, as in America. The last two characters (“{{}}”) mean exchange or collaboration. In their ancient forms, they imply notions of flow and mutuality, intersections, and reciprocity, invoking the image of streams of water. The program “China Year in Russia” has ended, but the cultural ties between the two countries grow stronger. “China fever” ({{}}) continues in Russia.

On the other hand, China government has strengthened the culture education. More elements about Chinese culture are adopted into the primary and secondary school textbook. The 17th plenary session in China proposed to spread the Chinese culture, to build the spirit garden of the Chinese nations, to strengthen the Chinese good culture education, and to apply different methods to develop the Chinese culture resources. With the guarding line the old Chinese poems become an important part for the young students. For the annual college entrance examination, the Chinese has got more importance with more grades among the total. The purpose is to educate the children to be more culture aware. And in China there are more activities about Chinese culture.

**The Culture Transmission Based on the Students**

Firstly, the numbers and percentage of overseas students are large each year (see Table 1). There are many overseas students in China in 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continents</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>207,555</td>
<td>63.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>54,453</td>
<td>16.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>34,882</td>
<td>10.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>27,052</td>
<td>8.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>4,388</td>
<td>1.34</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There are 356,499 overseas students from 200 countries and regions in 2013, who are in different places of the countries. They are studying in the universities, institutions, or other educational institutions.
With the numbers of overseas students in China, the classroom influences are especially important for Chinese culture transmission. Consciously or unconsciously, the oversea students acquire the language with the culture. With the globalization, every oversea student is a culture transmission unit.

Secondly, the Chinese students studying abroad are also important for Chinese culture transmission. According to the statistics of Ministry of Education, there are 413,900 Chinese students going abroad for studying, and 3.58% increases over 2012. At present, China has begun to be the biggest country to export students. Till 2013, the total number amounts to 305,860. Every Chinese overseas student is spreading Chinese culture where they go. With their life and study abroad, they can influence their classmates with Chinese culture, and they can express their culture to their teachers. As the definition mentioned above, culture is everywhere and anywhere, so consciously or unconsciously they show the Chinese way of behavior, morality, and understanding.

The Culture Transmission Based on the Tourists

The tourists are playing important role in the Chinese culture transmission. China Economic Net reported that China has accepted 129.07 million tourists in China Inbound Tourism Development Annual Report 2014 (ZHAO, 2014). When they come to China, they experience everything in China. To involve them in the Chinese culture is a great topic for the Chinese culture transmission. On the other hand, the National Tourism Bureau released a message that China mainland citizen outbound tourism broke through 100,000,000 people for the first time on 3rd December, 2014. With such great number of persons going abroad, they really represent the images of the county, and they are conveying Chinese culture at any time. They can use their action to explain the spirits of Chinese culture.

Conclusion

The definition of culture is thoroughly analyzed in the paper. With the definition, Chinese culture is expounded with the exact elements. The paper made some researches of the history of Chinese culture and strategies of culture transmission are mentioned and suggested. Because the panorama of culture, everybody is a unit of a particular culture. With the development of China economy, rapid Chinese culture transmission is unavoidable. Among the strategies motioned above, of course, the government’s active promotion in the culture transmission is part and parcel; the involvement of the individuals is also important. Only with the individual’s sense and understanding can the Chinese culture be shared and appreciated in the whole world. In order to make Chinese culture popular, some methods should be taken for Chinese visiting or going to other countries.

References

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