

Research on the Path of International Communication of Chinese Calligraphy in the Age of Digital Intelligence

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Abstract

Calligraphy, as a treasure of traditional Chinese culture, has a profound historical accumulation and cultural connotation in China. In the context of globalization today, Chinese calligraphy, as a carrier of Chinese character writing, has become a powerful entry point for China's cultural exchange with the outside world. The overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy has significant value for enhancing the country's cultural soft power. In the era of digital intelligence, the rapid development of artificial intelligence and big data has provided opportunities and challenges for the innovative dissemination of Chinese calligraphy. The overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy has also received increasing attention from the academic and artistic fields at home and abroad. In this context, conducting research on the dissemination path of Chinese calligraphy overseas is of great research value for enhancing the influence of Chinese civilization and promoting the internalization of Chinese culture through exchange and mutual learning. Based on this goal, this article first analyzes the value and research significance of Chinese calligraphy, and then establishes a research framework based on Harold Dwight Lasswell's 5W communication theory and Edward T. Hall's cross-cultural communication ideas, exploring new paths for the overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy in the digital age from multiple dimensions such as the subject, content, methods, audience, and effects of communication. Under the background of globalization, the overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy is showing a diversified development trend of digitization, popularization, sustainability, and innovation. Strengthening the construction of the main body of Chinese calligraphy overseas dissemination, optimizing dissemination content, expanding dissemination channels, and meeting the needs of precise audiences are effective strategies for achieving the globalization of Chinese culture through exchange and mutual learning.

Keywords

The Age of Digital Intelligence; Chinese Calligraphy; Oversea Communication; "5W" Model; Intercultural Communication.

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of continuous globalization, the international reputation of Chinese calligraphy is becoming increasingly prominent, and it has become an important carrier for showcasing China's cultural soft power and cultural confidence. In the era of big data, the overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy faces new challenges and opportunities. It is urgent to make good use of the tools of the digital age such as artificial intelligence, big data technology, and new media platforms to explore new paths for the overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy.

2. The Connotation and Value of Chinese Calligraphy

2.1. Originating from Chinese National Culture Chinese Calligraphy is the Art of Chinese Characters

Chinese calligraphy is a highly recognizable and representative symbol of traditional Chinese culture. Some scholars define Chinese calligraphy as “a special form of art based on the writing of Chinese characters” (Jin Meng, 2022). With its unique writing style, Chinese calligraphy symbolic expression and ink style, integrates people’s thinking about nature, society and life, and also shows the unique way of thinking and spiritual connotation of Chinese people. Not only that, Chinese calligraphy is both an important link in maintaining the aesthetic appreciation of Eastern art, and a spiritual symbol of the continuity of the tradition and culture of the Chinese nation.

2.2. Chinese Calligraphy is a Representative of the World’s Intangible Cultural Heritage

On September 30, 2009, after review by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO, Chinese calligraphy was approved to be included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity under the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. At the expert symposium on the tenth anniversary of the successful inclusion of Chinese calligraphy in the United Nations list of representative works of intangible cultural heritage of mankind held in Beijing, all the experts agreed that the success of the application of Chinese calligraphy for the World Intangible Cultural Heritage Project marked the further recognition of Chinese calligraphy in the international arena, which also meant that the research on the tradition, art theory, and aesthetics of world art history had been more comprehensive and important supplemented by the addition of Chinese calligraphy. The success of calligraphy’s application for World Heritage status is of special significance. It marks that with its unique charm Chinese calligraphy has gained recognition and attention not only from Chinese calligraphy community and the country, but also from people around the world. It provides a new starting point and prosperous opportunity for “promoting the most representative calligraphy art of Chinese culture to the world, facilitating the exchange and cooperation of Chinese calligraphy and various ethnic cultures around the world, and increasing the diversity of world cultures” (Xu Hongming & Lu Na, 2009).

3. Overview of Overseas Dissemination of Chinese Calligraphy

3.1. The History and Current Status of Overseas Dissemination of Chinese Calligraphy

The overseas dissemination of Chinese characters played a fundamental role in the dissemination of calligraphy culture overseas. In a broad sense, the dissemination of Chinese calligraphy includes all art forms, cultural content, and dissemination activities related to calligraphy. Essentially, communication is the exchange between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Edward Hall put forward a classic discourse on cross-cultural communication regarding the exchange between different cultural groups, titled “Restoring the Practice and Reflection on the International Communication Path of Chinese Calligraphy” (Zhou Bin, 2021).

The overseas dissemination of calligraphy can be traced back to the ancient Silk Road period. In the 2nd century BC, with the opening of the ancient Silk Road in China, economic and cultural exchanges between China and countries around the world became increasingly close and

frequent. Calligraphy, as one of the important carriers of Chinese culture, also began to spread to West Asia, Europe, and other places.

Japan, a neighboring country separated by a narrow strip of water from China, has a deep and inseparable cultural connection with China. The introduction of Chinese characters and calligraphy art to Japan can be traced back to the first century AD (Zhu Tianshu, 2023). During the Sui, Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, Japan and China had already had very close and distinctive exchanges in calligraphy. The Nara period was a time when Japan dispatched a large number of envoys to Tang Dynasty to fully absorb Chinese culture, and it was also the true beginning of Japanese calligraphy history. At that time, the dissemination of Chinese calligraphy to Japan was mainly through two channels: one was through the Tang people's eastward migration, and the other relied on Japanese personnel such as Tang envoys, students, and scholars to study in Tang and then return home. Today's Japanese calligraphy art is developed on the basis of Chinese calligraphy, by integrating the culture and aesthetics of the Japanese nation.

Compared to Japan, Chinese calligraphy and characters had already spread to the Korean Peninsula during the Han Dynasty. At that time, the calligraphy style of the Korean Peninsula was in line with that of the Han Dynasty in China. For example, a large number of Han Dynasty seals, metal objects engraved with inscriptions, and other burial objects were unearthed in the Lelang County area, on which the writing styles all showed the characteristics of Han Dynasty calligraphy, solemn and heavy (Zhu Tianshu, 2023).

On the other hand, since the 13th century Chinese calligraphy gradually entered the Western vision. The dissemination of Chinese calligraphy theory to Europe and America can be roughly divided into two stages. The first stage was from the 16th to the 19th century, mainly focused on the dissemination of Chinese character theory. The second stage was after the 20th century, with the dissemination of calligraphy theory as the main focus. At the beginning of the 20th century, Western sinologists began to translate, introduce, and import Chinese calligraphy knowledge and literature, initiating the process of Western Chinese calligraphy research. At the same time, with the accumulation and enrichment of knowledge, literature, and historical materials on Chinese calligraphy in the Western academic community, Chinese calligraphy has appeared in various exhibitions in Western countries, in the collections of major museums and other public institutions, and even been included in private collections by Western enthusiasts of Chinese calligraphy. Under the unremitting efforts of Western scholars, especially Western missionaries for generations, the collection, exhibition, and academic research of Chinese calligraphy in the Western world reached a peak after the 1970s. Famous American collector John M. Crawford commented on Chinese calligraphy and painting as follows: "They are the soul of the world's oldest and still ongoing Chinese civilization - because they express the essence of Chinese culture"

Since entering modern times, with the acceleration of globalization, cultural exchanges between China and countries around the world have become increasingly close. As a typical representative of Chinese culture, calligraphy has gained increasing popularity among overseas people and attention from the Western academic community. The overseas dissemination of calligraphy has ushered in new opportunities for development. Many calligraphers and scholars have gone abroad to hold calligraphy exhibitions, lectures, and teaching activities, promoting the overseas dissemination of calligraphy culture.

3.2. Difficulties and Challenges in the Overseas Dissemination of Chinese Calligraphy

The Belt and Road Initiative and the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind have created a more favorable environment of "extensive channels, abundant resources, and mature system" (Yu Han & Zhou Jingjing, 2022) for promoting the overseas dissemination of

Chinese calligraphy. Despite significant achievements in the overseas dissemination of calligraphy, the translation and dissemination of Chinese calligraphy has always been a challenging and valuable research topic.

Firstly, Chinese calligraphy is not just an external writing technique, but an art based on Chinese culture and characters. Chinese calligraphy uses Chinese characters as a special carrier and unique brush and ink as a means of expression, containing rich Eastern aesthetics and philosophical connotations of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, all of which represent the core essence of Chinese culture. On the one hand, due to cultural differences, language barriers and other factors, especially the limited understanding and acceptance of Chinese calligraphy by overseas people in Europe, America and countries and regions along the the Belt and Road Initiative, it is quite difficult for Westerners to appreciate Chinese calligraphy. By comparison, the flow of Chinese calligraphy in countries such as Japan, South Korea, and North Korea, which also belong to the “Chinese character cultural circle”, has been smooth.

On the other hand, the channels and methods for overseas dissemination of calligraphy are relatively single, lacking innovation and diversity. Every year, China organizes calligraphy exchange teams to hold lectures, exhibitions, calligraphy performances, or calligraphy donations in the West. The forms of these activities are diverse, but the dissemination effect is limited due to a single and limited audience, which cannot form a complete communication chain. Moreover, with the rise and increasing strength of China, due to the narrow ideology and distinct Eastern and Western values of the Western world, Confucius Institutes, as the main battlefield for international dissemination of Chinese culture, have faced attacks and challenges from the Western world, which have brought difficulties and challenges to the dissemination of Chinese calligraphy and other Chinese cultures overseas.

4. Introduction to Relevant Communication Theories

4.1. 5W Communication Theory

The 5W Communication Theory, proposed by American political scientist Harold Dwight Lasswell in 1948, is a classic theory in the field of communication studies. In his book *The Structure and Function of Social Communication*, Laswell (2013) argues that the complex process of communication consists of five fundamental elements: the communicator (Who), the content of the communication (What), the communication channel (Which channel), the audience (To whom), and the communication effect (With what effect). These five elements present the complete path of propagation in a simple and clear manner. The overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy culture is about the dissemination of Chinese calligraphy and culture to international audiences, and the study of its dissemination mode can draw on international communication theories.

4.2. Edward Hall’s Cross Cultural Communication Thought

Edward Hall believes that communication is the foundation of all things. Hall divides human communication into three parts: text, matter, and behavior. He believes that in the world of communication, words are the medium of commerce, politics, and diplomacy. He thinks materials are usually symbols of status and power, and behavior is the feedback of people’s emotions, including techniques to avoid conflicts.

Edward Hall proposes an important discourse on high and low context cultures for the communication between different cultural groups, laying the theoretical foundation for cross-cultural communication. He believes that context is information about an event that is closely related to its meaning. By Hall the context referred to includes the content of communication, as well as the time, space, and methods of communication. Hall (1987) believes that this process is composed of five factors, namely the object of communication, the activity, the scene, the

social status of the speaker, the experience of communication, and culture, which collectively affect the dissemination of information, forming the content and context of communication.

According to the difference in the degree of dependence of communication on context, Hall (1977) divides communication into high context communication and low context communication. High context communication refers to the process in which the vast majority of information is already contained in natural contexts or stored in the brain. Low context communication is exactly the opposite, with the vast majority of information reflected in the encoding, appearance, and transmission of information. Hall pointed out that high context cultures have characteristics such as concealment, implicitness, and containing a large amount of nonverbal decoding; Low context culture is characterized by openness, directness, clear information encoding, and clear descriptive details.

For both Eastern and Western cultures, Chinese culture share the characteristics of implicit expressing, rich and profound meaning, which clearly belongs to high context culture. As the carrier of Chinese calligraphy, Chinese characters highlight the high context cultural nature of Chinese calligraphy. "The overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy should belong to the dissemination of high context culture to low context culture, which is inevitably a reverse input and will face many obstacles." (Yu Han, 2022). Zhou Bi (2021) believes that calligraphy, as an international communication medium, can restore high context Chinese culture into a form that is easily accepted by low context cultural groups due to its creativity, pictographic and artistic qualities. This is more conducive to the dissemination and sustainable development of traditional Chinese culture, thereby enhancing China's cultural soft power and international influence.

5. New Strategies for the Overseas Dissemination of Chinese Calligraphy in the Era of Digital Intelligence

In the era of digital intelligence, modern digital technologies represented by big data and artificial intelligence are rapidly integrating into various levels of human society with unprecedented momentum, reshaping the dissemination pattern of culture and art. On the one hand, digital technology has achieved seamless integration between humans and the virtual world, and the media and fields of information dissemination are no longer singular or one-way, realizing the interconnection and intercommunication of people, things, and information. On the other hand, the transformation of the dissemination of Chinese calligraphy from physical calligraphy works to digitalization has been achieved, and the transformation of the calligraphy dissemination environment from physical space to virtual space has also been realized. These deeply affect those engaging in calligraphy learning and research, such as calligraphers, calligraphy enthusiasts, and audiences who are interested in calligraphy, and promote the digital ecological construction of calligraphy dissemination elements.

5.1. Utilize the Digital Media Technology to Protect and Inherit Traditional Chinese Calligraphy

In the era of big data, to promote the overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy culture, the first step is to use digital means to protect and inherit traditional Chinese calligraphy. For example, digital technology can be used to digitize precious inscriptions, classics, and works preserved in various places. Chinese calligraphy can be preserved in rich forms and accessed in the online world at any time. Secondly, we need to consider how to achieve the integration and innovation of traditional calligraphy and modern technology. For example, Chinese calligraphy elements can be integrated into works such as movies, animations, and online games to expand the audience of Chinese calligraphy, especially to create a visual impression of Chinese characters and calligraphy among non-Chinese character circle.

5.2. Enrich the Forms and Contents of International Exchange Activities of Calligraphy

With the deepening of globalization, Chinese calligraphy, as an important part of Chinese culture, is being understood and appreciated by a wider audience and at a faster pace through various international exchange activities such as calligraphy exhibitions and cultural exchange projects. Every year the Chinese Calligraphers Association organizes a series of calligraphy exchange activities between China and foreign countries, such as the project of “Beauty of Chinese Characters: Global Tour of Chinese Calligraphy”. Calligraphy exhibitions have been held in multiple countries, attracting numerous overseas visitors to appreciate the beauty of Chinese calligraphy and promoting the dissemination and promotion of calligraphy art. It is also possible to strengthen international exchanges and cooperation in calligraphy education and promote the international dissemination of calligraphy culture by establishing organizations such as the “international calligraphy education alliance”.

With the continuous development of digital technology, digital communication and new media applications have become new trends in the overseas dissemination of calligraphy. By using the Internet, social media and other platforms, we can break through the space restrictions and achieve the transnational dissemination of calligraphy. For example, calligraphy artists can hold online art exhibitions through the Internet, and use social media to interact and communicate with fans around the world; We can enhance the interest and recognition of calligraphy among overseas audiences by offering calligraphy courses, organizing calligraphy training courses and lectures abroad.

5.3. Maintain the Sustainable Development of Calligraphy

The cultural differences and language barriers between the East and the West are the main challenges facing the overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy. Due to differences in cultural backgrounds, aesthetic concepts, and language habits among different countries and regions, many overseas individuals have limited understanding and acceptance of Chinese calligraphy, which also affects the sustainable development of Chinese calligraphy overseas. To this end, we can strengthen the internationalization process of calligraphy education and promote its popularization and development worldwide. For example, by closely cooperating with foreign educational institutions and offering online international calligraphy courses, we aim to cultivate more overseas students who love calligraphy. At the same time, it can also strengthen international exchanges and cooperation in calligraphy education, jointly promoting the international dissemination and development of calligraphy culture.

The shortage and inadequate training of professional talents are also important factors restricting the overseas dissemination of calligraphy. At present, there are relatively few professional talents engaged in calligraphy education, research, and dissemination both domestically and internationally, and the training system is lacking in perfection. Both the government and universities should attach importance to the selection and cultivation of calligraphy professionals, establish a sound calligraphy talent training system and incentive mechanism, and attract more outstanding talents to participate in the dissemination of calligraphy at home and abroad.

5.4. Further Promote the Innovation and Development of Calligraphy

In the future, we should further promote the innovation and development of calligraphy art, injecting new vitality and momentum into the overseas dissemination of calligraphy. For example, by organizing international calligraphy exhibitions, competitions, and exchange activities, calligraphers can stimulate their creative enthusiasm and innovation ability. While strengthening cultural exchanges and cooperation in calligraphy between China and foreign countries, we should draw on and absorb excellent elements and creative inspirations from

other cultures, seek new ideas and development directions for the innovation of Chinese calligraphy, and achieve continuous innovation and development of Chinese calligraphy.

6. Summary

Calligraphy, as a treasure of traditional Chinese culture, has a profound historical accumulation and cultural connotation in China. In the context of globalization today, Chinese calligraphy, which uses Chinese characters as a carrier, has become a powerful entry point for China's cultural exchange with the outside world. The overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy is of great significance for enhancing the country's cultural soft power and strengthening the influence of Chinese civilization. In the era of digital intelligence, the rapid development of artificial intelligence and big data has provided opportunities and challenges for the innovative dissemination of Chinese calligraphy, and the overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy has also shown a trend of diversified development. In order to better showcase the artistic, cultural, and national spirit contained in Chinese calligraphy, innovative communication forms, optimized communication content, expanded communication channels, and took into account the common and personalized needs of the communication audience, the overseas dissemination of Chinese calligraphy retains both academic and interesting characteristics, reflects humanistic features and integrates science and technology, showcases Chinese characteristics and meets international recognition, and ultimately achieves the globalization of Chinese culture through exchange and mutual learning.

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