

# Analysis on the Current International Communication of TCM Culture

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**Abstract**—The international communication of TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) culture is of great significance for expanding the international influence of Chinese culture and enhancing China's cultural soft power. This paper starts with the status quo of the international communication of TCM, then focuses mainly on its problems and challenges, and eventually puts forward effective strategies to further promote its international communication from the aspects of national policy, communication, platform, personnel training and so on.

**Keywords**—TCM culture; International communication; Status quo; Strategies

## I. INTRODUCTION

As a cultural and medical treasure with unique Chinese characteristics, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has always been an important carrier for Chinese civilization to the world. Its unique medical theory system, rich cultural connotation and magical diagnosis and treatment effects are increasingly being followed with interest by more and more people in the world. With the increasingly growing global recognition of TCM, the Chinese government has been actively adopting various measures to promote the TCM internationalization in recent years. Especially since the "One Belt, One Road" initiative was put forward, the Chinese government has successively issued a series of policies and regulations, aiming to comprehensively promote the international exchange and cooperation of TCM.

The TCM international exchange and cooperation, in essence, mainly refers to the international communication of TCM culture, which is, through the spread of TCM culture to the outside world, to enhance the international community's recognition of the basic concepts and methods of diagnosis and treatment of TCM, and then make them believe in the TCM culture and willingly apply the TCM diagnosis and treatment methods to their daily health care activities, which can finally help TCM truly go abroad and benefit more people in other countries [1]. Therefore, it is of great significance to deeply understand the necessity of international communication of TCM culture, rationally analyze the current situation of TCM culture's international communication, and positively explore effective strategies to further promote the international communication of TCM culture. Only in this way can we better speed up the internationalization of TCM and make it work better for the benefit of all mankind.

## II. THE STATUS QUO OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION OF TCM CULTURE

The international communication of TCM culture has a long history, which can be traced back to the beginning of the Western Zhou Dynasty. In the following thousands of years of development, the external spread and exchange of TCM culture has never been interrupted, and accompanied by the ancient Silk Road and the development of navigation, its communication has gradually expanded from Asian neighbors to Europe and Americas. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the central government has also attached great importance to the international communication of TCM culture, and introduced a series of policies and regulations to support the inheritance and communication of TCM, striving to make TCM take root in more and more countries.

The emphasis and support of the central government has brought unprecedented development opportunities for the international communication of TCM culture. Especially since the implementation of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, the intensity and breadth of TCM culture's external spread and exchange has been greatly enhanced, and also achieved fruitful results. For example, according to the statistics of the White Paper on Traditional Chinese Medicine in China, TCM has been spread to 183 countries and regions around the world, among which more than 30 countries and regions have opened a couple of hundred TCM schools to train their native TCM workers. In addition, two TCM classic works-- the *Huang Di Nei Jing* (Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon) and *Ben Cao Gang Mu* (Compendium of Materia Medica) have been listed in the Memory of the World Register, and TCM acupuncture and moxibustion have been included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO [2]. Although the current international communication of TCM culture has achieved fruitful results, it still faces some difficulties and challenges, which are as follows:

Firstly, the international identity and awareness of TCM culture is not high. Due to the cultural differences between China and foreign countries and the long-term influence of Western cultural centralism and cultural hegemonism, people in many countries know very little about TCM culture, and also have a very low sense of recognition of the philosophy, values, ethics and logic of thinking reflected in TCM culture. Even if some people are willing to believe in TCM, most of them only accept its medical attributes, and they are not willing to explore the cultural attributes it contains. The lack of cultural identity will undoubtedly restrict the promotion and communication of

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This paper is a research finding of the project "Study on the Inheritance and External Communication Strategy of TCM Culture from the Perspective of "One Belt, One Road" Strategy" (Project Number: 2016ZZX028). The project is sponsored by the 2016 Qingmiao Program of Hubei University of Chinese Medicine

TCM in the international community. Yang Jinsheng, director of the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine to the Taiwan-Hong Kong-Macao TCM Exchange and Cooperation Center, also pointed out that “the fact that people from all over the world, including the new generation of overseas Chinese, do not have a comprehensive understanding of TCM culture and their acceptance of TCM culture is not sufficient, to a certain extent, has restricted the international development of TCM” [3].

Secondly, the international communication platform of TCM culture is relatively simple. At present, the main body of TCM culture communication in the international community mainly includes first-line clinical TCM Practitioners and TCM educators. Although they can play an active role in the international communication of TCM culture, they do not belong to professional communication groups, and their work is mainly based on TCM research, education and clinical application. The relatively single body of communication has made it difficult for TCM culture to form a systematic communication system in the process of international communication, which also results in the relatively simple international communication platforms. Specifically speaking, because there is no specialized international communication organization for TCM culture, the current international communication of TCM culture mainly depends on the medical institutions, educational institutions, research institutes and industry associations to which TCM practitioners and TCM educators belong, which makes it difficult to use other countries’ mass communication platforms to carry out systematic propaganda of TCM culture for ordinary people.

Thirdly, the talent team for the international communication of TCM culture is not fully developed. The international communication of TCM culture requires a team of high-quality talents with professional knowledge, high-level foreign language proficiency and strong intercultural communication ability. In the process of building such a high-level team, all the TCM colleges in the country undoubtedly shoulder important missions. However, from a realistic point of view, though most of the students majoring in TCM have high theoretical attainment of TCM, they are generally lack of comprehensive understanding and acquisition of the current TCM treatment situation at home and abroad, and the threats and challenges faced in the process of inheritance and communication of TCM culture at home and abroad. In addition, the foreign language proficiency and intercultural communication competence of these students are also generally low. As a result, they often encounter a lot of obstacles in the expression, understanding and communication when spreading TCM culture to the outside world, which undeniably will restrict the long-term overseas exchange and promotion of TCM culture.

Fourthly, A certain degree of language barriers in the international communication of TCM culture still exists. Because of the differences between Chinese and foreign languages and culture, in the process of spreading TCM culture to the outside world, we need first to use translation to effectively solve the problem of “language barriers”, which requires TCM translators to be proficient not only in ancient Chinese, modern Chinese and target language, but also in Chinese culture and target-country culture. Only in this way

can we ensure that they could timely perceive the language nuances in the process of translation, accurately find the right words in the respective languages to make precise language conversions, and finally overcome the problem of “language barrier” in the international communication of TCM culture [4]. However, at present, most of TCM translators are foreign language learners, not TCM majors, who lack systematic and comprehensive knowledge of TCM, and know little about TCM culture. This makes them often take the TCM terminology and medical theory too literally in translation and results in the emergence of multiple translated texts in the same content. Such kind of language barriers can definitely make the target country readers and listeners unintelligible, greatly reduce the accuracy and credibility of TCM translation works and eventually obstruct the international communication of TCM culture.

### III. STRATEGIES OF PROMOTING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION OF TCM CULTURE

The continuous advancement of cultural globalization in the current international community has brought unprecedented opportunities for the international communication of TCM culture. In order to effectively overcome the difficulties and challenges encountered in the present international communication of TCM culture and better promote the internationalization of TCM, we should now actively change our mindset, break the constraints of industry restrictions, and regard the international communication of TCM culture as an independent project which could be incorporated into China’s overall foreign strategic layout. Specifically, the following points need to be focused on in the future.

#### A. *Constructing an Integrated International Communication Project of TCM Culture*

The international communication of TCM culture is not just a matter for the TCM industry. It is a very complicated systematic project which requires cross-cooperation in different disciplines and different departments. In order to better promote the communication and exchange of TCM culture in all countries of the world, we need first to increase the participation of governments at all levels, and gradually build a holistic, multi-subject and multi-level international communication framework to break the current situation of single-handedness.

For one thing, the Chinese government needs to strengthen the top-level design of the international communication of TCM culture from the perspective of policies and regulations. Although the Chinese government has successively introduced a series of policies and regulations to promote the internationalization of the entire TCM industry, it has not yet introduced a programmatic policy dedicated to guiding the international communication of TCM culture, which has made it lack of strong policy guidance and macro control. Therefore, the Chinese government should actively promote the formulation of programmatic documents dedicated to guiding the international communication of TCM culture, and link it with the country’s overall development planning, the “One Belt, One Road” strategy, and the TCM development planning to construct an all-dimensional international communication

pattern, and set up a good framework for the orderly promotion of TCM culture in the international community.

For another, the Chinese government should encourage the construction of a multi-dimensional and interactive international communication mechanism of TCM culture from the institutional level. In this process, the Chinese government should vigorously support the TCM industry to take the lead, and let it actively strengthen cooperation and interaction with various fields, especially government departments, social sciences, mass media, computer networks, commercial operations, corporate management, cultural and creative industries, cultural education and language translation, and fully mobilize the superior resources and professionals in these fields to create a multi-lateral communication mechanism to guarantee TCM culture smoothly entering millions of households all over the world under such a benign mechanism.

#### *B. Enriching the Content of International Communication of TCM Culture*

The most important manifestation of the international communication of TCM culture is its content and connotation. There are great differences between TCM and Western medicine, which is the focus of international communication. From the content point of view, the biggest difference between TCM and Western medicine is that TCM is a combination of philosophy and science in ancient China. It not only has medical attributes, but also contains cultural attributes such as humanities, philosophy and art. It is based on the theory of holism, dialectics, yin-yang theory and five elements theory in traditional Chinese culture and has rich cultural connotations. Therefore, in the process of international communication, in order to make foreign people better understand and identify with TCM, we need to make great efforts to further explore the ideological resources and cultural connotations contained in TCM, so that the cultural concepts and connotations of TCM can be presented in a more diversified form of expression in the new era, which can help to constantly enrich the content of international communication of TCM culture [5].

In order to achieve the above objectives, we must dig deep into the components of Chinese medicine in the fields of health, economy, science and technology, culture and ecology, and constantly enrich the content and connotation of TCM culture from the origin of TCM culture, the clinical efficacy of TCM, the promotion of TCM culture, the inheritance and foreign exchange of TCM. For instance, When spreading TCM culture to the outside world, TCM culture abroad, we can combine the idea of "harmony between man and nature" in TCM culture with the construction of ecological civilization, and closely link philosophical concepts such as holism, syndrome differentiation and treatment in TCM culture with people's daily life to help them build a correct world outlook. With the means of integrating into the general public life, we can constantly enrich and perfect the content of international communication of TCM culture, which can help us better display the essence and charm of TCM culture, increase the affinity of TCM culture in the international community, and finally accelerate the progress of its international dissemination. communication.

#### *C. Creating Diversified International Communication Forms and Platforms of TCM Culture*

At present, the traditional indoctrination mode of communication based on propaganda and education has been unable to meet the needs of international communication of TCM culture, which requires us to mobilize our innovative consciousness and try to develop diversified forms of communication. For instance, in the process of communication, we may use physical objects, pictures or animations to transform the classical theories or terminology of TCM which the ordinary people cannot understand into vivid and easy-to-understand modern terms. This can not only increase the fun of communication, but also help the general public to better understand and accept TCM culture. Moreover, we should also attach importance to the development of experiential mode of communication, and let ordinary people better feel and understand TCM culture in close-quarter experience by holding activities such as TCM exhibition, free TCM physical examination and lecture series of TCM culture.

In addition, any form of cultural communication needs to rely on a certain platform, therefore, besides innovating the forms of communication, it is also of equal importance to build a diversified communication platform in the process of international communication of TCM culture. For instance, we may establish an educational platform on the basis of Confucius Institutes worldwide, in which curricula of TCM culture can be integrated with Chinese teaching to help local students better understand TCM. We may also establish a health institution platform by opening more TCM clinics, health care centers or TCM departments in local hospitals to impart TCM knowledge and culture to patients during treatment. Furthermore, we should never forget to establish an Internet platform for the International communication of TCM Culture. At present, Internet has become a main channel of cultural communication, especially the smart phone-based mobile internet, which has completely changed people's lifestyle, and their communication and learning methods [6]. Therefore, in the information age, we must take full advantage of the Internet platform, using portals, search engines, online forums and social media to introduce and promote TCM culture in the form of text, pictures, audio and video.

#### *D. Cultivating a Group of Talents to Spread TCM Culture to the Outside World*

In order to ensure the smooth progress of the international communication of TCM culture, we must rely on the education in TCM colleges, and strive to build a high-quality team of world-oriented TCM professionals. To this end, TCM colleges should conform to the requirements of the times, incorporate the cultivation of talents in the international communication of TCM culture into the personnel training system, and constantly optimize their curriculum. For one thing, TCM colleges should intensify the opening of courses related to traditional Chinese culture and TCM culture, so that students can accumulate a wealth of medical humanities knowledge, so that they can not only fully understand the long history and profound details of TCM culture, but also better explain the core values and thinking patterns of TCM culture to the outside world. For another, TCM colleges should also add courses such as TCM

English, Chinese and Western Medical Cultural Exchange, and Inter-cultural Communication to the talent training program to increase the training of TCM majors' foreign language ability and inter-cultural communication ability, so that these students can not only carry out effective daily communication and academic exchange activities in English, but also maintain a sober inter-cultural awareness to ensure that TCM culture could effectively break through the barriers of cultural differences in the process of international communication.

In addition, in order to effectively solve the problem of "language barriers" in the international communication of TCM culture, we also need to strengthen the training of TCM translators, and cultivate a group of excellent translators who are excellent both in foreign languages and TCM to gradually overcome the problems of taking words too literally, or giving multi-translations of one word in TCM translation, and ultimately achieve the unification and standardization of TCM translation. There are two main ways to achieve this goal. One way is to set up special classes for foreign language learning among TCM majors to attract students with high-level foreign language proficiency to join. By offering a series of bilingual or full foreign language TCM courses, students can not only systematically acquire TCM knowledge, but also greatly boost their TCM foreign language proficiency, which could gradually help them be qualified for TCM translation. Another way is to set up a foreign language major with TCM characteristics in some qualified TCM colleges, so that students can systematically acquire TCM theoretical knowledge while consolidating the foundation of foreign language and culture, and effectively link up the two through a series of TCM foreign language courses. As a result, such students can be proficient in both foreign languages and TCM, and will have the ability to engage in TCM translation after graduation.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

At present, with the continuous advancement of cultural globalization, strengthening the external communication and exchange of Chinese culture has become an inevitable requirement for China to deepen reform and opening-up in this new era, and has great significance on the boost of the international influence of China's cultural soft power and China's national image in the international community. As one of the most original and attractive contents of traditional Chinese culture, TCM culture is an important manifestation of China's cultural soft power and plays an important role in the strategic layout of China's external cultural communication. In order to make TCM culture better serve China's external cultural communication, we must emancipate our minds, keep pace with the times, and plan and coordinate actively with a strategic perspective to gradually build a three-dimensional multi-linkage mechanism for the international communication of TCM culture, so as to ensure its sustainable promotion.

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