



The Role of Dunhuang Culture in the Context of "One Belt, One Road"

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Abstract. The "One Belt, One Road" concept was born as a new type of regional cooperation structure to promote the multi-faceted and coordinated development of countries along the route. Dunhuang assumes an important historical role in promoting the "One Belt, One Road" construction. Dunhuang culture is an important part of the "One Belt, One Road" concept. This paper analyses Dunhuang culture in a number of dimensions to further collate the historical role it has played and could play in the "One Belt, One Road" process. The construction of "One Belt, One Road" is a dynamic process. This paper aims to explore and utilise Dunhuang culture to enrich the connotation of "One Belt, One Road" and promote its construction.

Keywords: Dunhuang culture; One Belt, One Road; Silk Road; historical role

1 Introduction

The construction of the "Belt and Road" provides a historical source for the continuation of the development of the Land Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road by using the historical symbols of the ancient Silk Road, tracing its roots, and promoting exchanges and development with countries along the route, ultimately forming a regional development community, led by historical friendship.^[1]

Dunhuang is the nodal city of the Silk Road. It was the "gateway" to the West from the Central Plains and a central node for trade between East and West. In the 21st century, Dunhuang is an inescapable part of the "One Belt, One Road" project, which is driving the surrounding area. As the "One Belt, One Road" project continues to receive good news and acclaim, and as the One Belt, One Road's circle of friends grows larger, it is time to look more closely at the Dunhuang culture that Dunhuang nurtures. This paper is a more in-depth study of the culture of Dunhuang. This study therefore dissects and analyses relevant documents and sources in an attempt to enrich the study of the historical mission of Dunhuang culture and its important role in promoting the Belt and Road.

2 Outline of "One Belt, One Road"

"One Belt, One Road" is the abbreviation of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road". The name "Silk Road" was proposed by the German geographer Richthofen in 1877 and is still used today. The Silk Road is divided into the Land Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road. As times changed, the Silk Road became the collective name for all the political, economic, and cultural routes between ancient China and the West.

In the 21st century, the restarting of this Silk Road is the historical inheritance of the Silk Road spirit of "peace and cooperation, openness and tolerance, mutual learning and learning, mutual benefit and win-win". By strengthening the partnership of connectivity with countries along the Silk Road, the "One Belt and One Road" focus on national cooperation at the macro level and people-to-people exchanges at the micro-level, so that people from all countries can share a better life. The Silk Road will be used as a link to bring people from all countries together in peace and cooperation.[1]

Dunhuang is located at the gateway to the Belt and Road, and its culture is a hub of communication between civilisations along the Belt and Road. There is a natural connection between the two. Dunhuang culture has enriched the cultural connotations and historical mission of the "Belt and Road", playing a role that will endure for years to come.

3 Construction of the "One Belt, One Road" and the role of Dunhuang Culture

"The One Belt, One Road" project has been underway for more than four years since it was launched on 28 March 2015. In these four years, the "Belt and Road" project has continued to open up new directions and establish new cooperation, going further and further afield. More and more organisations, institutions and individuals have been involved in the project, achieving fruitful results one after another and building a deeply embedded cooperation platform with distinctive Chinese characteristics. [1]

3.1 The "One Belt, One Road" is a broad, long and eternal path of development

The "One Belt, One Road" has developed into 65 member countries, basically linking Europe and Asia and building a joint development path for landlocked developing countries and developed European countries. It has created a new type of regional cooperation in which all countries can share the fruits of development, complement each other's development and cooperate for the benefit of all.[2]

3.2 An example of "People-to-people: the exhibition of Tubo artefacts at Dunhuang

The Dunhuang Academy and the Pritzker Foundation for Artistic Cooperation jointly organized the "Cultural Exchange on the Silk Road: Treasures of Art from the Tubo Period" exhibition in Dunhuang, which included the collections of many cultural and museum institutions from home and abroad, whose cooperation made it possible for so many treasures to come together. The exhibition is the first of its kind in the world to focus on the Tubo period, with more than 120 sets of rare artifacts from home and abroad providing a vivid and three-dimensional picture of the art and culture of the Tubo period and the interaction of related civilizations. The exhibition focuses on the intermingling of cultures. For a brief period, the area around Dunhuang was under the jurisdiction of the Tubo. The Tubo artifacts featured in this exhibition focus on the life of the Tubo aristocracy and, through this, the intermingling of Tubo culture with the cultures along the Silk Road.^[3]

The location of the exhibition in Dunhuang is a restoration of history and has resonated greatly with the people of the countries along the route. The Silk Road linked the countries along the route by a single road, which was never a simple, cold trade exchange, but rather a warm connection that focused on culture and religion in many ways.

Such an exhibition uses cultural ties to evoke strong cultural resonance among people of different nationalities and colours, and leaves a deep cultural impression on people.

4 Interpreting Dunhuang

4.1 Overview

Dunhuang is located in the westernmost part of the Hexi Corridor, in northwestern Gansu Province, at the intersection of Gansu, Qinghai, and Xinjiang provinces, alias "Sand Island""Sand Capital". "Dunhuang is famous for its caves and frescoes and has been selected as one of the "Top 200 Charming Cities in China 2012", a national historical and cultural city.^[4]

4.2 History

The word "Dunhuang" was first explained by Ying Shao in the Book of Han in the Eastern Han Dynasty: "Dun means grand and Huang means magnificent and great." As we become more aware of Dunhuang's deep cultural heritage, a new understanding can be added to the term "grand or flourishing": Dun is also big; Huang is also bright. Dunhuang is also a great light.^[5] Dunhuang is such a "holy" place with a holy light and an unexplained reverence and worship.

Dunhuang's history begins early. At the end of primitive society, the three Miao people settled and prospered here.

Through the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties, the descendants of the San Miao - the Qiang and Rong - settled here as nomads. In the later Warring States, Qin and early

Western Han dynasties it remained an ethnic minority here. After Huo went on a campaign to defeat the Xiongnu in the western part of the river, Emperor Wu of Han then established the counties of Jiuquan and Wuwei in the western part of the river, which were soon split into the counties of Dunhuang and Zhangye respectively. The Great Wall and beacon towers were built there for defence purposes, and the Yangguan and Yumen Passes were set up, which both ensured the smooth flow of the Silk Road and contributed to its legacy. At the time, Dunhuang was so vast and expansive that it was known as "a capital city where the Chinese and the Japanese meet." [6]

Since then, Dunhuang has flourished. Despite the change of regime, the construction of the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang was not affected by the changes.

When the Jiayuguan Pass was closed in the third year of the Ming Dynasty, the Guazhou and Shazhou were slowly abandoned, so Dunhuang was left unestablished for the next two centuries, and with years of constant warfare and displacement of the people, Dunhuang gradually declined.

It was not until the Qing dynasty gradually recovered the vast area outside the Jiayuguan Pass in the late Kangxi period that Dunhuang gradually began to regain its former vitality.

After the founding of New China, more and more attention was paid to the construction of Dunhuang. It was only through continuous accumulation that the Dunhuang of today came into being.

4.3 The origins of Dunhuang and the Silk Road

In the first year of Emperor Wu's reign (140 BC), he sent Zhang Qian on a mission to the West in 138 BC to unite the Yuezhi and jointly attack the Xiongnu. Zhang Qian set out from Longxi but was captured by the Xiongnu halfway through the trip, and when he finally returned to Chang'an only he, his Xiongnu wife, and his guards were left. The first mission to the West was not successful, but it brought back a lot of information about various aspects of the West, which was of great interest to Emperor Wu.^[7]

In 121 B.C., when Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty completely repulsed the Xiongnu, the area round the Hexi Corridor was completely under the jurisdiction of the Han government, and the external obstacles to exploration to the west were completely removed. In 119 BC, Zhang Qian volunteered to make a second mission to the West, and it was on this occasion, the Silk Road to the West was successfully opened. The Silk Road started from Chang'an, passed through the Hexi Corridor, and finally reached Dunhuang, splitting into two routes north and south after the Yangguan and Yumen Passes. Since then, the Silk Road has been a major transport route to the West, and Dunhuang has become an important node city on the Silk Road. [7] Dunhuang was also the first city in Chinese history to open up to the world, a convergence point for trade and cultural exchange between East and West.

It was not until the Southern Song Dynasty that the Maritime Silk Road, centered on Quanzhou, developed, with the development of navigation technology and the emergence of large-scale organized fleets, and was first seen in Guangzhou. From this point onwards, the development of the Maritime Silk Road gradually overtook that of the Overland Silk Road, which gradually fell into disrepute.[7]

5 Dunhuang Culture and its Significance in the "one belt, one road"

5.1 The formation of the Dunhuang culture

Mr. Ji Xianlin said: "There are only four cultural systems in the world that have a long history, a vast territory, a self-contained system, and far-reaching influence: China, India, Greece, and Islam, and there is only one place where these four cultural systems converge: Dunhuang and the Xinjiang region. The study of cultural confluence has special significance in terms of the vision of human development. I am afraid that the best and best-equipped regions to study this confluence phenomenon and the laws of confluence are Dunhuang and Xinjiang."^[8]

Dunhuang is an important hub where Chinese and Western cultures have converged and mingled throughout history, shaping the unique Dunhuang culture.^[9] Dunhuang is a precious product of the long cultural exchanges that took place along the Silk Road.^[10] It is this unique historical and geographical position that has shaped the unique Dunhuang culture.

The Silk Road linked numerous countries, large and small, and along with economic exchanges, cultures were exchanged in unobtrusive ways. From the smallest movement of plant crops from east to west, to the different nationalities of the Central Plains and the West constantly travelling between the two sides, Dunhuang exemplified his superior circulation and prophetic nature in every way. The Four Great Inventions were brought to the West by Arab traders through this long Silk Road and spread to Europe; Xuanzang travelled west to seek the true scriptures, and Dunhuang was able to perceive Buddhism before the rest of China; merchants, artisans, scholars and others were able to collide through this place to create newer technologies and learning.

Dunhuang culture, more than just a single culture, should be understood as a common symbol made up by many cultures. In this cultural milieu, we perceive the different colors of culture. Today, too, it is still possible to imagine how hot and vibrant Dunhuang and the Silk Road were in the past, and how much friendship and progress they witnessed.

5.2 The significance of Dunhuang culture in "One Belt, One Road"

For the people of the countries and regions along the Belt and Road, Dunhuang culture has deep cultural ties and rich emotional resonance, and this has become an important part of the spread of Chinese culture to the outside world. [11] Dunhuang culture is a platform for the development of Chinese culture, and through this platform, Chinese culture can freely and easily intermingle with foreign cultures, and Chinese culture can successfully 'go out and 'come in' in more colorful ways. This is also a reflection of the "peace and prosperity" concept. This also reflects the Silk Road spirit of "peace and cooperation, openness and tolerance, mutual learning and learning, mutual benefit and win-win".^[11] Therefore, it can be seen that the development of Dunhuang culture is the best choice to promote a people-to-people and regional common development model. We must truly value the role of Dunhuang culture in the One Belt, One Road project.

6 Dunhuang Culture's Mission in the Context of "One Belt, One Road"

6.1 Demonstrate Chinese cultural confidence and be a beautiful "Chinese name card"

Dunhuang culture has been nourished by a long history of Eastern and Western cultures, and it is difficult to cut it off in its entirety along Eastern and Western lines. But when we look at the Mogao Caves, with their exquisite frescoes, painted sculptures, operas, and other tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the majestic art includes Chinese images of bodhisattvas and monks; traditional Chinese techniques of painted sculpture, traces of itinerant artisans; operas with historical heroic stories sung in dialects, Dunhuang songs, and dances presented in traditional dance styles.^[12]

Dunhuang culture, which arose on the borders of China, contains the genes of excellent traditional Chinese culture, cultural ambition, and cultural confidence.^[13] Dunhuang culture is a window for Chinese culture to go global, and also an opportunity for the world's culture to enter China, through this silk road, transmitting a culture with temperature, attitude, and characteristics, the silk road can be more humane, more into the hearts of everyone.

Dunhuang culture is the most convincing, soft, and vivid form of culture on the "One Belt One Road". The company is a member of the Chinese government, and the culture of Dunhuang is a global one. It is the duty and mission of Dunhuang culture to showcase the best of Chinese traditional culture to the world, to better absorb and learn from foreign cultures, to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of Chinese traditional culture, and to promote cultural prosperity in the Silk Road.

6.2 Building a world cultural inclusiveness and being a distinctive "world card"

The first of its kind is the "internationalization" of Dunhuang, a place where the culture has flourished since the Han Dynasty, and where the Western world and Beijing and Luo must pass through the orifice of cultural exchange.^[14] Dunhuang has embarked on the road to internationalization.

The city of Dunhuang, for example, was an important city for the eastern spread of Buddhism, and the monks from the west brought with them not only Buddhist teachings and scriptures to build their temples here but also masters of the art, bringing with them talents in Buddhist statuary. Ancient Central Asian sculpture was highly sophisticated and focused on realism, and artisan painters from the West and even West Asia brought with them Buddhist painting styles and sculptural techniques, works with a distinctly national character that we can attest to in the objects that have been opened and then obtained.

Dunhuang's geographical location defines the cultural milieu in which it is located, and in the same way that it has been given a rich cultural milieu, it has also been given an inclusive character. Here, Dunhuang culture has enough volume to accommodate the best cultures from all over the world.

"The culture of the Belt and Road can be poured into the hearts and minds of everyone here. The culture of Dunhuang can give an equal opportunity to the cultures of all countries along the route, and its vibrancy is the best depiction of the prosperity of the Belt and Road. Such a colorful culture can undoubtedly become a member of the world's cultural forest, with the "Belt and Road" as its mother, and become a unique world-class business card, proudly displaying the prosperity of the Belt and Road to all civilizations.

6.3 Establishing a blessed place on earth where religious cultures can coexist peacefully

Religion is an integral element of Dunhuang culture as a whole and is an important component of Dunhuang culture. The Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, the Western Thousand Buddha Caves, the Eastern Thousand Buddha Caves, and the Dunhuang painted sculptures, among others, are all widely influenced by Buddhism, which is still the dominant religion in Dunhuang.^[15]

As a major Silk Road site, Buddhism, Taoism, Manichaeism, Nestorianism, and Zoroastrianism all left a distinctive mark here [16], demonstrating the diversity of religious cultures along the Silk Road. A diverse religious history has shaped Dunhuang's moderate religious outlook.

With the prevalence of ethnic problems in today's world and the growing instability caused by religion, religion has deservedly become an important factor in shaping the world today and the future of international society. [17]

The "One Belt and One Road" connect 65 countries, including Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Catholicism, Islam, Christianity, and many other religions. The "One Belt, One Road" has to provide a backup solution to all potential problems to move forward. Dunhuang culture is certainly one of the best options.

Its inclusiveness can support its role as a place where religious issues can be reconciled. Building a place where religions can live together in peace is an act of respect for the beliefs of the people along the route, and a blessing where people along the route can share their hearts and minds. [15] Harmonious relations along the route provide a solid human foundation for the development of the Belt and Road, under which all other projects can be carried out, facilitating the development and construction of the Belt and Road.

6.4 The business of the future with the idea of passing on to the next generation

Since the emergence of "One Belt, One Road" and Dunhuang culture, the relationship between the two has become increasingly one of mutual achievement. When it comes to "One Belt, One Road", we can't get away from Dunhuang culture, and when it comes to Dunhuang culture, we also need "One Belt, One Road" as a resource.

Dunhuang culture has a long history of evolution, development, integration, and innovation. What we see and feel today is the result of generations of experience and beauty. Culture is never built overnight, and it needs to be guarded by people from

generation to generation to ensure its continuity. The baton of Dunhuang culture has been passed to us, and it is our unquestionable responsibility and mission to take it up in our generation.

The "One Belt, One Road" follows the trend of historical development and conforms to the objective law of development, and will inevitably continue to develop and build, promoting regional development, strengthening regional linkages and common development. One of the cultural foundations of the "One Belt, One Road" is the Dunhuang culture. Both are endeavors for the future and for the benefit of generations to come. Dunhuang culture is also bound to have a long-term goal of developing for the next generation and will continue to perpetuate the Belt and Road culture from generation to generation, incorporating a new common bloodline for the development of the "Belt and Road".

People along the "Belt and Road" will also benefit by not being limited by their immediate interests, but by taking a long-term view and adding the strength of our generation to the development of the world.

7 Conclusion

Dunhuang is located in the northwest desert, and its harsh, unforgiving natural environment has affected the heritage of Dunhuang culture, resulting in far less attention being paid to Dunhuang than to the number of people who do something for it. As a result, Dunhuang still needs to be sustained attention and attention. Dunhuang is the root of "One Belt, One Road", and has profound historical significance in promoting the construction of "One Belt, One Road". For this reason, we must explore the culture of Dunhuang in-depth, pass it on, and contribute to "One Belt, One Road".

This study analyses and refines numerous documents and books on Dunhuang culture and "One Belt, One Road", to gain a deeper understanding of Dunhuang culture and the "One Belt, One Road". It is the result of this study that Dunhuang culture plays an indispensable role in promoting the "One Belt, One Road" project. The study further analyses the historical mission of Dunhuang culture in terms of its cultural, religious, and heritage missions. It is also our generation's well-deserved responsibility to take up this mission.

In the course of this study, there are still several issues that have not been fully considered, and there is still a lot of immaturity in the logic and analytical approach due to the current level of academic research. In future research, the original intent of Dunhuang culture will not change, nor will the original intent of the "One Belt, One Road" project, but the circumstances will inevitably change, and it is hoped that this article will play a part in future developments. Likewise, as time goes on, the material will be updated, and there will be new logic and thinking on the subject that will continue to underpin the humanistic foundations of "One Belt, One Road".

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