

# *Underpinning China's Confidence in Its Culture*

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**Abstract:** The confidence of a nation and its people in their culture represents their awareness of their culture. There are three elements underpinning China's confidence in its culture. First, China boasts a solid foundation for its fine traditional culture. This is an advanced culture with a long history and is profound, far-reaching, full of vitality and highly influential. It is an integration of diversities sharing the same root, which gives the culture its energy. On the one hand, it is continually absorbing other cultures; on the other hand, it always binds the nation together with the same spirit. In addition, traditional Chinese culture passionately puts people first, reflects the common grounds of human cultures, represents the common aspirations of human cultures, and as a result, its advanced nature and social values are recognized worldwide. Second, adherence to Marxism is a source of effective guidance for China's cultural development. Marxism is a crystallization of advanced human culture. It reveals culture's nature, characteristics, structure, functions and development patterns and provides the well-conceived methodology guiding cultural development. In terms of worldviews, methodologies and values, it offers a reasonable premise upon which people can understand, handle and carry out cultural development. In addition, it keeps examining and criticizing these premises and restructuring them. This makes cultural development, continuous, standard, pioneering and creative. Third, people's creativity is a source of strength for their confidence in their culture. The people are creators of culture and their practice, and creation boost cultural development. The Chinese nation is creative and is highly capable of cultural creation. The great practice of building socialism with Chinese characteristics is an inexhaustible source of the people's cultural creation. To maintain their confidence in Chinese culture, the Chinese people must emancipate their minds, develop new concepts, analyze new developments, review their fresh experiences, and keep creating and developing socialist new culture.

**Keywords:** confidence in culture; traditional culture; Marxist guidance; people's creativity

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To develop socialist culture and increase China's cultural soft power, the Communist Party of China and the Chinese government work hard to promote cultural development. Especially since the 18th National Party Congress in 2012, the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at the core has stressed that to rejuvenate the Chinese nation, it is essential to develop the socialist culture in China. Xi Jinping has emphasized on several occasions the need to keep to the orientation of developing an advanced socialist culture, stay confident in Chinese culture, become more aware of our culture, and accelerate cultural reform and development. In the speech he delivered on July 1, 2016, Xi made a complete and profound analysis of the relations between confidence in Chinese culture and confidence in the Chinese path, system, and theory, elaborating on confidence in our culture. China's fine traditional culture was born out of more than 5,000 years of civilization. Its revolutionary and advanced socialist culture was born out of the great struggles of the CPC and the people, and the deepest aspirations of the Chinese people, representing a unique symbol of our nation. This unique culture of ours deserves our pride and confidence. Thanks to the effective guidance of Marxism, the rich and great practice of China's reform and opening-up, and the limitless creativity of the Chinese people, Chinese culture has been developing continuously. "Having created a culture with a long history, the Chinese people will definitely make new achievements in Chinese culture" (Xi, 2014, p. 92).

## 1. Fine traditional culture: A solid foundation of confidence

The confidence of a nation and its people in their culture represents their awareness of their culture, symbolizes the people's respect and love for their culture, and indicates their firm belief and

faith in their culture's social value and vitality for growth. The Chinese people's confidence in their culture is a historic topic as well as a topic catering to the features of our times. This issue has been raised based on a review of Chinese culture with a history of several thousand years and the forging and tests Chinese culture has experienced since modern times. Major changes have taken place in the destiny of the Chinese nation, China has become increasingly strong, and it has started to play a more and more important role as a major country since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, especially since the reform and opening-up. Therefore, to have a better understanding of the Chinese people's confidence in their culture, it is vital to start from the long historical traditions of China and deepen the understanding of our fine traditional culture. This culture was created in China's civilization with a history of several thousand years. In the democratic revolution, Mao Zedong (1991) stated, "Our national history goes back several thousand years and has its own characteristics and innumerable treasures" (p.533). China "created a splendid old culture" (p.707). This is a treasure of our nation. Recently, Xi Jinping (2016) also stated, "The Chinese nation has a deep cultural tradition, with a characteristic system of thinking, which reflects the knowledge, wisdom and rational cogitation accumulated by the Chinese people over thousands of years. This is China's unique advantage." All this serves as the solid foundation of our confidence in Chinese culture.

### 1.1 Fine traditional Chinese culture has a long history and is profound, far-reaching, full of vitality and highly influential.

In the history of human development, Chinese culture finds its greatest strength in its long history, profound and far-reaching nature, and long-lasting character. It has always been exerting important influence in human society.

More than 5,000 years ago, the Yellow Emperor of the Chinese nation created Chinese civilization. On January 1, 1912, Sun Yat-sen became the provisional president of the Republic of China, and in March of the same year he sent a delegation to pay tribute to the Yellow Emperor in Huangling County, Shaanxi Province and wrote an elegiac address. According to the address, "China was founded 5,000 years ago by the Yellow Emperor. He invented the south-pointing chariot and quelled the rebellion of Chi You to create a civilization before other nations did" (Xu, 2016). As is commonly known, in human history there have been the ancient Egyptian civilization, Babylon civilization, ancient Indian civilization, and Chinese civilization. These civilizations have exerted major historical influences. However, the cultures represented by the first three civilizations were integrated with other cultures due to foreign invasions or the nations representing them became colonies and their cultures were thus terminated due to domestic upheavals. During the Chinese culture's history of development of more than 5,000 years, China was also subjected to foreign aggression many times, was ravaged by war, was split for short periods of time, and suffered severe natural disasters. As a result, Chinese culture developed in a tortuous way, but it remained intact all the way through. Today, with more than 1.3 billion people who live on this vast land of more than 9.6 million square kilometers are the descendants of those ancient Chinese who created a civilization. We are still benefitting from the culture accumulated by the Chinese nation over long years of hard work. This imposing culture makes it possible for the Chinese people to come together and provides a big stage, a solid historical foundation, and a powerful source of confidence for us to blaze our own path forward. The reason why we are confident in the path, theory, and

system of socialism with Chinese characteristics is partly because we are confident in our culture. "The Chinese people's confidence in their culture will provide them with a more fundamental, profound and long-lasting force" (Xi, 2016).

Chinese culture finds its strength in its long history and long-lasting character and more importantly, in its profound and far-reaching nature. Based on a review of all sorts of knowledge, the relationship between humankind and nature, the experiences in China's historical development, and the wisdom of the Chinese nation, ancient Chinese sages produced Chinese cultural classics exemplified by the *Four Books*, *Five Classics* and *Tao Te Ching*. These classic works were theoretically creative, making discoveries that had not been made before and providing approaches that had never been tried before. These sages pondered common questions relating to the universe, society and life, including, for example, the relationships between Heaven and people, between yin and yang, between thinking and what is thought of, between the Tao and things, between righteousness and propriety, between right and wrong, between knowledge and action, and



the Four Books

the realms of life. These were of common concerns through the ages and were universal and everlasting topics. In answering these questions, the classics provided a philosophical and open-ended approach to thinking, not empirical solutions or closed-ended dogmas. Therefore, they have remained eternal and have time and time again played an enlightening role. Because these cultural classics are theoretically creative, they have become a source of Chinese culture, thought, and values, their theories are extensive, profound and deeply rooted so that they have served as nutrition for Chinese culture, have made it possible for Chinese culture to survive the tortuous process of development over the past more than 5,000 years, keep being enriched and developing and exert an influence today. Just as General Secretary Xi Jinping stated at a seminar with Peking University teachers and students on May 4, 2014, “The Chinese civilization has a history of several thousand years and its unique system of values.... Today, we advocate and carry forward the core socialist values through absorbing the rich nourishment of Chinese culture, to invigorate its vitality and broaden its influence. Here are some quotations from ancient classics that I’d like to share with you today: ‘The people are the foundation of a state,’ ‘The harmony of Nature and man,’ ‘Harmony without uniformity,’ ‘As Heaven changes through movement, a gentleman makes unremitting efforts to perfect himself,’ ‘When the Great Way prevailed, a public spirit ruled all under Heaven,’ ‘Everyone is responsible for his country’s rise or fall,’ ‘Govern the country with virtue and educate the people with culture,’ ‘A gentleman has a good knowledge of righteousness,’ ‘A gentleman is broad-minded,’ ‘A gentleman takes morality as his bedrock,’ ‘Be true in word and resolute in deed,’ ‘If a man does not keep his word, what is he good for?’ ‘A man of high moral quality will never feel lonely,’ ‘The benevolent love others,’ ‘Do things for the good of others,’ ‘Don’t do

unto others what you don’t want others to do unto you,’ ‘Care for each other and help one another,’ ‘Respect others’ elders as one respects one’s own, and care for others’ children as one cares for one’s own,’ ‘Help the poor and assist those in difficulty,’ ‘Care less about quantity and more about quality.’ These thoughts and ideas all displayed and still demonstrate distinctive national features, and have the indelible values of the times. We have updated them in keeping abreast of the times, while carrying them forward in an unbroken line” (Xi, 2014, p. 7). This indicates that glorious Chinese culture is profound and extensive and has made these thoughts and ideas remain eternal and continue to play a significant role as time goes by.

### **1.2 Chinese culture is an integration of diversities sharing the same root, which always keeps the nation together with the same spirit.**

Chinese culture is a diversified integral whole. First, as a combination of the cultures of all ethnic groups of China, Chinese culture is shared by these ethnic groups. From its very beginning, Chinese culture was diverse. During its long development process, the Han ethnic group has constantly integrated with other ethnic groups and China has developed into a large family of 56 ethnic groups. During the integration of these ethnic groups, their original cultures included the farming culture of people living in the Yellow and Yangtze river valleys that had a long history as well as nomadic cultures of ethnic minorities. As ethnic groups integrated with each other, the cultures of different regions and ethnic groups came into contact, got together and assimilated each other. This integration did not mean one culture swallow up another; on the contrary, with Han culture as the core, all ethnic cultures supplemented and absorbed each other to eventually become an integrated, diversified Chinese culture. Thereafter, in the development process of Chinese culture, there was war and separation, new cultural

elements were added to Chinese culture, but not a single ethnic culture got independent of Chinese culture. The integrated, diversified Chinese culture has always remained complete and stable.

Second, the integrity of Chinese culture is also exemplified by the fact that during its long development process, it has absorbed or assimilated foreign cultures including India's Buddhism and Western science and technology, only to become a complete cultural system with rich content including religion, philosophy, history, literature, art, ethics, politics, economics, science, architecture, and technology that are interconnected. This complete system has naturally produced a systematic function and formed cultural energy. On the one hand, it can stay unaffected by outside factors and remain stable. Therefore, there were occasional foreign invasions, damages by war, and temporary falls, but Chinese culture eventually managed to repair itself and rejuvenate. On the other hand, as a complete systematic structure, Chinese culture keeps exchanging elements, information and energy with other cultures. During this process, it assimilates and absorbs foreign cultures to make them part of Chinese culture. It is because of this completeness that Chinese culture has always worked to exchange with and learn from other cultures to supplement each other and achieve common development.

Chinese culture is not only complete in content but its components also share the same root. From its very beginning, Chinese culture developed a spirit of worshiping ancestors and an ability to deify them and their achievements, and offered sacrifices to ancestors as gods in return for blessings. The Chinese people, from a family to a clan, and even to an ethnic group, all worship their ancestors as deities. This ancestral worship gives rise to an internal relationship based on kinship and plays an enormous

role in safeguarding culture and civilization. The foundation of ancestral worship is underpinned by Chinese culture, the root the Chinese people share. Sharing Chinese culture as the same root means "exploring, becoming identified with, respecting and returning to one's roots. According to Chapter 16 of the *Laozi*, 'All things alike go through their processes of activity, and (then) we see them return (to their original state).' According to 'Yuandao' in the *Huainanzi*, 'There are a variety of things, but they all cling to their roots.' Both quotations indicate the awareness of the root" (Biao, et al, 2006, p. 5). This awareness of the root makes it possible for Chinese culture to enjoy diversified development while always maintaining its rules, serving as the bond that keeps the nation together and cultivating the ethnic feelings of the Chinese nation. Today wherever a Chinese person is in the world, if he or she hears Laozi, Confucius, Mencius and "Man's nature at birth is good," and sees Chinese couplets on gates and the portraits of Guan Yu, he or she feels filled with identification with and pride of the Chinese nation.

### **1.3 That Chinese culture puts people first is something shared by all other human cultures and represents the common cultural pursuit of humankind.**

Chinese culture moves on continually and its continuous development exerts important influence over human society. This is partly explained by the characteristic of Chinese culture that puts people first. Putting people first means people's awareness of themselves, that is, their awareness of their importance, position, and value in the universe. Chinese culture has always stressed the need to put people first. Guan Zhong, a thinker and philosopher of the Spring and Autumn Period, put forward the idea of "putting people first" when he stated that "to become a good king, one must put people first. If the people remained stable, the state will be



strong; otherwise the state will be in peril.”<sup>①</sup> Why did Chinese culture stress the need to put people first from the very beginning? Because ancient Chinese believed that between Heaven and Earth, people were the noblest. Early Chinese thinkers and philosophers discussed how important people were by explaining the relationships between people and Earth, people and deities. When discussed the relationship between people, Heaven and Earth, Laozi stated that, “The Tao is great; Heaven is great; Earth is great; and the (sage) king is also great. In the universe, there are four that are great, and the (sage) king is one of them. Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the Tao. The law of the Tao is its being what it is.”<sup>②</sup> According to Laozi, along with Heaven and Earth, people are of primary importance; they are not the same as things but higher than things. This fully affirms the idea that people are noble compared to things in the universe. Confucians further expounded on the idea of putting people first by analyzing the relationships between people and Heaven and Earth, and between people and deities. In “*Shuogua*” of the *Book of Changes*, Heaven, Earth and people were given prominence and it was held that people were not just as important as Heaven and Earth and could also assist the transforming and nourishing the powers of Heaven and Earth. According to Chapter 12 of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, “But given the sincerity, and there shall be the intelligence; given the intelligence, and there shall be the sincerity. It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can give its full development to his nature. Able to give its full development to his own nature, he can do the same to the nature of other

men. Able to give its full development to the nature of other men, he can give their full development to the natures of animals and things. Able to give their full development to the natures of creatures and things, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, he may with Heaven and Earth form a triad.”<sup>③</sup> In other words, people can give full expression to their nature; they are not only as important as Heaven and Earth but can also assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. From the perspective of people’s initiative, this affirms people’s position and value compared to Heaven and Earth. According to Mencius, “Of all (creatures with their different) natures produced by Heaven and Earth, man is the noblest” because people “enjoy the harmony between yin and yang and benefit from the five elements.” In the last years of the Warring States Period, Xunzi said, “Fire and water possess vital breath but have no life. Plants and trees possess life, but lack awareness. Birds and beasts have awareness, but lack a sense of morality and justice. Humans possess vital breath, life, and awareness, and add to them a sense of morality and justice. It is for this reason that they are the noblest beings in the world.”<sup>④</sup> Xunzi also developed the idea of “making the best use of Heaven,” believing that people can work to transform nature and make it serve humankind.

The Confucian concept that people are the noblest between Heaven and Earth was further developed in the Han Dynasty. Han master Confucian Dong Zhongshu touted people’s outstanding role in the universe and believed that along Heaven and Earth, people were the foundation

① *Hegemony Theory, Guanzi, Works of 22 Ancient Chinese Sages*. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1986.

② *Chapter 25, Laozi*.

③ “The Doctrine of the Mean, The Book of Rites,” *Thirteen Classics with Annotations and Commentaries*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1980.

④ “On the Regulations of a King, Xunzi,” *works of 22 Ancient chinese sages*. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1986.

of all things. According to Dong, “Heaven creates things, Earth provides for them, and people make them work. People have morals and wisdom and can work on the strength of Heaven, so they are nobler than everything else and can make them work; nothing works without people.” Dong added that “people are above everything else and are the noblest in the world.”<sup>①</sup> Admittedly, Dong’s discussion of the relationship between Heaven and people derailed the Confucian idea of “harmony of Nature and man.” It was wrong for him to put forward the thinking of “interaction between Heaven and Man.” Nevertheless, he affirmed people’s position and value in the universe, which is reasonable.

Regarding the relationship between people and deities, thinkers in the early years of the Spring and Autumn Period, based on the then idea that Heaven was a deity, stated that, “The voice of the people is the voice of Heaven” and that “Heaven is dictated by the demands of the people.”<sup>②</sup> They also stated, “People are the masters of deities. Therefore, good kings attend to people before deities.”<sup>③</sup> Confucians were even more clearly opposed to putting deities first; they advanced putting people first. Confucius stressed destiny, but he was suspicious of ghosts and deities, always focusing on life in real society and placing the hope of solving social problems on people, not deities. This Confucian thought was later widely recognized in social development and creatively developed. The progressive thinker Zhong Changtong of the Eastern Han Dynasty stated that, “The problems of the people come first and the Tao of Heaven comes last,” embodying the cultural principle of putting people first.

The Chinese cultural idea of putting people

first is mainly represented by the Confucian concept of benevolence. Benevolence is at the core of Confucianism and the basic idea is that “the benevolent loves others.” This is the core of the Chinese cultural idea of putting people first. Its main content is as follows: First, the value of people, that is, the dominant position of people, which mainly stresses that valuable people should have moral integrity and noble characters. Confucians believed that benevolence is vital to people and that all people should be benevolent; people who are not benevolent are not good people. This gives a paramount position to moral integrity and is of important significance for people’s intellectual development and for the moral improvement of the nation and individuals. Following the guidance of this thinking, the Chinese nation has always practiced moral education in lieu of religious belief and placed moral integrity above religious coercion, thus greatly enriching the cultural principles of Chinese culture. Second, regarding the relationship between people, it is stressed that, “The benevolent love others”. To this end, Confucius stated, “Do as you would be done by” and “don’t do unto others what you don’t want others to do unto you.”<sup>④</sup> “Now the man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others.”<sup>⑤</sup> These are criteria for good people. Third, regarding the relationship between people, Heaven and Earth, and people and nature, it is essential to take care of all things in the universe. Confucians extended the principle of benevolence from love for one’s relatives to love for those close to them and all others, and from love for people to love for all things in the universe. This is

① “Heaven, Earth, Yin and Yang, Luxuriant Gems of The Spring and Autumn Annals,” *Works of 22 Ancient Chinese Sages*, Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1986.

② “Grand pledge,” *Thirteen Classics with Annotations and Commentaries*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1980.

③ “The Sixth Year of the Reign of Duke Huan of Qi, Zuo’s Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals,”.

④ Yan Yuan, *The Analects. Thirteen Classics with Annotations and Commentaries*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1980.

⑤ Yong Ye, *The Analects. Thirteen Classics with Annotations and Commentaries*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1980.

what Mencius said, “Respect others’ elders as one respects one’s own, and care for others’ children as one cares for one’s own,”<sup>①</sup> and “He is kind to people generally, and kind to creatures.”<sup>②</sup> This Confucian idea indicates uniformity between moral and natural rationality and represents the highest level of the Chinese cultural principle of putting people first.

The Chinese cultural principle of putting people first is not only the essential characteristic of Chinese culture but also reflects the common characteristic of human culture. First, the idea of putting people first is the same as the essential regulation of culture. Culture is about humanization. All cultures are about two aspects. One is humanization and the other is people’s education. Humanization is the process and result of people using their own measurement to transform other things, so culture is created by people’s goal-oriented activities. Second, the idea of people’s education is to use the achievements of humanization to educate people so that they make improvements. According to Fei Xiaotong, “Culture is man-made and is also for the people.” This is an explanation of humanization and people’s education. Culture is essential for the people. People create culture and culture represents the essential strength of people. Culture is used to educate people so that they can make progress, and people are the ultimate targets of culture. A modern famous Western philosopher, Ernst Cassirer, said in *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* that people are cultural animals. He said that human culture can be called a process of people constantly liberating themselves (Cassirer, 1985, p. 288). According to Cassirer, a prominent characteristic of people is work and it is work that creates culture. People can become true people only in these activities that create culture and acquire

people’s essential nature. Cassirer believes that human nature is not something substantial but is a process of people’s creation of culture. The true human nature is nothing but people’s limitless creative activities. It is based on these active creative activities that on the one hand, all cultural forms such as language, mythology, religion, art, science, and history were created and at the same time during this process people were shaped to what they should be. The nature of people and culture are combined by people’s creative activities and are uniform (Cassirer, 1985, p.6-7). Therefore, all human cultures are, in the final analysis, a unity of humanization and people’s education. When it comes to culture, first it means it is necessary to put people first in all things in the world and to respect and love people, everything should be done for people, people make efforts to solve all problems, and they are the center of all cultures. Therefore, whenever it comes to culture, it means that it is imperative to use culture to cultivate and educate people so that they make progress to become people of civility who keep pace with the times.

Second, putting people first is a common pursuit of human cultures. Putting people first is a basic characteristic of all cultures and a common pursuit of human cultures. Take Western cultures for example. Socrates, an ancient Greek philosopher said over 3,000 years ago, “Know thyself.” He made this his maxim. He criticized natural philosophers for their failure to pay attention to people themselves but to care about nature, which resulted in their failure to explain nature. He therefore said that the real target of philosophy is not nature, but people themselves, that is, to know the goodness in people. Protagoras of Abdera, a famous ancient Greek philosopher, claimed that, “Of all things the measure

① *King Hui of Liang (I)*, Mencius.

② *ibid.*



is Man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not” (Protagoras, 1966, p.138). These represent ancient Greek culture’s affirmation of people as the center of all things in the universe. Later, because of the rule of religion and the theology of religions, people were suppressed and lowered in terms of position. It wasn’t until the Renaissance in the 14th—16th centuries that people were opposed to the theology of religions as a fetter to their development, called for the liberation of people, stressed people’s free will and their superiority over nature, insisted that people should be made the criterion for measuring everything else, and gave prominence to the emotional idea of putting people first. In the late 18th century and early 19th century, German classical philosopher and enlightenment forerunner Immanuel Kant believed that there is, in all the things in the world, a complicated goal-oriented structural center, and the last and utmost goal is people. According to Kant, people are the last goal of creation, because without people, there will be no basis for accomplishing a full range of goals of which one is subordinate to another (Kant, 1964, p. 98). Kant said that people as the last goal does not mean other goals are conditions and that people are the source of the goals of all things. Kant’s idea of having people as the goal was further developed by the thinkers of the Enlightenment in the 18th century due to humanitarianism that prevailed following the Renaissance. As a result, there emerged a cultural trend that stressed liberty, equality and fraternity. This falls within the category of capitalist humanitarianism, but it is not unique to capitalism. Like China’s cultural idea of putting people first, humanism eulogizes people’s value, dignity and strength, stresses their position and role, values human nature and character, and is therefore recognized by the people all over the world.

**1.4 The fine traditional Chinese culture is recognized the world over for its advanced nature**

**and social values.**

In his speech at the International Conference in Commemoration of the 2,565th Anniversary of Confucius’s Birth and the Fifth Congress of the International Confucian Association, Xi Jinping stated, “People of insight believe that the key to addressing these issues can be found in traditional Chinese culture and Confucianism. Such ideas include: ‘Dao follows spontaneity,’ ‘Man is an integral part of nature,’ ‘The world belongs to all,’ and ‘Great virtue carries all things.’ There are plenty more examples, such as ‘putting people first and making them live a secure, affluent, and happy life,’ ‘governing with moral principles and uprightness,’ ‘keeping innovation alive and advancing with the times,’ ‘staying down-to-earth and seeking truth from facts,’ ‘unifying knowledge and action,’ ‘practicing what one preaches,’ ‘drawing upon collective wisdom and absorbing all useful ideas,’ ‘being benevolent and loving,’ ‘being a man of moral virtue,’ ‘treating people with honesty, and advocating credibility and harmony,’ ‘maintaining clean politics and performing duties diligently and honestly,’ ‘being thrifty and refraining from extravagance,’ ‘seeking common ground while reserving differences and harmonious coexistence,’ and ‘bearing in mind perils in times of safety, destruction in times of survival, and adversity in times of prosperity.’ These traditional philosophical theories, humanistic values, educational ideas and moral visions will remain a source of inspiration for people to recognize and transform the world, to govern and rule their countries, and to improve their morality” (Xi, 2014). This is an important, complete analysis of how inspiring Chinese culture is to the people of other countries. Chinese culture reaches out to the world and has an impact on it, not on the strength of force, but on the strength of its influence. In the 17th century, Europe completed its transition to a modern society. Following its major

geographical discovery, it began to work on a major cultural discovery in the hope of finding an advanced culture to help European culture achieve self-criticism and enlightenment. They searched far and wide for such a culture in Africa, the Americas, and Asia, and finally decided Chinese culture was what they were looking for. They believed that Chinese culture valued rationality and that Chinese Confucianism was a rational religion with natural laws as its principle. They concluded that the Chinese “are the most rational of all” (Voltaire, 1995, p.216-217). Therefore they embraced Chinese culture and created a China fever in the 18th century. On the strength of Chinese culture, Enlightenment thinkers realized the movement of self-criticism and innovation in European culture by erecting the banner of liberty, equality and fraternity for future development in Europe. Back then many enlightenment thinkers thought highly of profound and extensive advanced Chinese culture with a long history especially for its focus on people. German philosophic forerunner and enlightenment thinker Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz stated that Chinese books of history were much older and much more accurate than those of all other nations (Piont, 2000, p. 387). He said that he benefited from China’s Eight Diagrams when he established the binary system. French Encyclopedist Francois Voltaire praised ancient Chinese culture for its properness. Through comparative studies of Confucianism and Christianity, he concluded that Chinese culture came before the Bible and was alien to it. He used the Chinese calendar to conclude that the Bible idea of God creating the world was a fantasy. He said that according to the Old Testament, the earth were created in 3716 BC, whereas the Chinese nation had lived and survived for more than 50 centuries.<sup>①</sup> According to Voltaire, there was nothing false or

fantasist in China’s historical records and from the very beginning the Chinese recorded their history rationally. He also commended China for its astronomic achievements and miracles, stating, “Among the people of the world, their historical annals have an uninterrupted record of solar eclipses and of planets. After verifying their calculations, our astronomers were surprised to find all their records true and reliable.” Voltaire also highly appreciated Confucius’ benevolence-based ethics. He said that the maxim, “Don’t do unto others what you don’t want others to do unto you” was something that the West had never had and that “there is no comparison whatsoever between the maxims of Western nations, no matter how educated they are, and this pure ethic. Confucius often stressed benevolence. If all people practice this ethic, there will be no war on earth” (Zhu, 1999, p.298). When Denis Derot, a core member of the Encyclopedistes worked on the entries “China” and “Chinese philosophy” in the encyclopedia, he believed that rationality was the basic concept of Chinese philosophy and admired Confucius’ doctrines for their preciseness and profoundness: “Only rationality and truth will be needed to govern the state and bring peace to all” (Zhang & Fang, 2004, p.102). It is the rationality of Chinese culture that helped Enlightenment thinkers develop a rational banner of critique and greatly liberated people’s thinking. Enlightenment thinkers also highly appreciated Chinese culture for its ethical politics that linked morality and law. Voltaire concluded that in addition to punishing crimes, Chinese law also rewarded people for good deeds. When a highly moral event occurred, it would be on everyone’s lips throughout the province. The local officials would also report it to the emperor who would award the person involved with a memorial archway or a horizontal inscribed board. Therefore,

① Ye Tingfang. “The China Fever” in the European Cultural Movement in the 18th Century.

he concluded that Chinese's political organizations were the most complete organizations in the world. He exclaimed, "Human wisdom can never imagine there would be any political organizations better than Chinese" (Voltaire, 1995, p.217). Paul Holbach said, "China could be the world's only proven country that integrates fundamental political law with morality." He believed that "a country must rely on morality to become prosperous." To this end, he believed that to practice "rule by virtue," "European governments must learn from China" (Zhu, 1999, p.278-279). Thanks to the influence of Enlightenment thinking, following the French Revolution, in Article 6 of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1793* he drafted in 1793, Maximilien Robespierre said, "Liberty is the power that belongs to man to do whatever is not injurious to the rights of others; it has nature for its principle, justice for its rule, law for its defense; its moral limit is in this maxim: Do not do to another that which you do not wish should be done to you" (Zhang & Fang, 2004, p. 357). This is evidence of Confucianist cultural influence over France. In Europe, not only Enlightenment thinkers in the 18th century praised China for its culture, but also in the early 20th century the renowned German thinker Georg von der Gabelentz praised Confucius in his *Confucius und seine Lehre*, stating that Confucius "was one of the greatest man of humankind. Over the past more than 2,000 years, one third of humanity has been inspired morally, socially and politically by the spirit of Confucius" (Liu, 2007, p.308). The Europeans were not alone in their praise of Chinese culture. In Asia, fine ancient Chinese culture spread far and wide and exerted extensive influence. The cultures of Japan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and others have their origin in China's Confucian culture, and they are known as the Confucian cultural circle. In his preface to the

Chinese edition of his *Human Rights, States, and Civilizations*, Professor Yasuaki Onuma from Tokyo University, Japan, wrote, "In history China was a country that exerted powerful influence over a long historical period. Its culture spread far and wide and Far Eastern countries took the characters, Confucianism and legal systems as a model. It was through China that these countries embraced Buddhism that was created in India" (Yasuaki Onuma, 2003, p.2). In his *China, Science, and Civilization*, Japanese Professor Kiyosi Yabuuti said, "In the world, regions that established an ancient civilization like China included Egypt, the Middle East, and the Indian River valley. However, these civilizations perished 2,000 years ago. None of them was like China nor could keep its civilization until today. The creation of the Chinese civilization is a miracle in the world" (Hu, 2005).

Thanks to the rapid development of science and technology in the world today, humankind has entered an information and internet era, but people still hope that they get directed by Chinese culture. In 1988, 75 scientists who were Nobel Prize laureates had a gathering in Paris to discuss the future for the world in the new century. They stated, "For humankind to enjoy a peaceful and happy life in the 21st century, we must go back to China's Confucius who lived 2,500 years ago for wisdom" (Yang Yingyu, 2010). This shows that the scientists are convinced that Chinese cultural wisdom will lead humankind to a healthy and happy future. Not only scientists but also politicians think highly of the positive significance Confucian ethics and morality have for modern society. In 1992, former US President George Bush sent a message for the 2,543rd anniversary of Confucius, stating: The moral standard established by Confucius is affirmed and practiced in every corner of the world. When problems arise in our country from the collapse of family and life values, we should practice the teachings of this great philosopher

about individuals' honors and their responsibility for families (Ma, 1998).

The Declaration Toward a Global Ethic formulated at the Parliament of the World's Religions, held in Chicago from August 28 to September 4, 1993, made Confucius' statement "What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others" the second article of the 13 "golden rules" for a global ethic, made the rule a vital principle for individual, social and government ethics, and stated that statement of Confucius was an important part of the great religious tradition (Hans Kung & Karl-Josef Kuschel, 1997). Internationally, not only traditional Chinese cultural virtues are affirmed for their positive significance but so are the scientific pursuits embodied in ancient Chinese philosophical classics highly regarded. In the early 1970s Western physicist Fritjof Capra stated in his book *The Tao of Physics* that Tao and qi are similar to the physicist concept of field. He blamed the complete crisis in the world today on the crisis of the mechanized worldview and concluded that the new worldview was identical to the ancient concept of Tao. He said that in his opinion, of the great traditions Taoism offered the most profound and complete ecological wisdom (Ge, 1991). Hideki Yukawa, a renowned Japanese physicist and Nobel Prize winner, stated that regarding the relationship between humankind and nature, he was influenced by the thinking of Laozi when he was in high school. He added that especially due to the development of modern science, he developed a better understanding of the thinking of Laozi. He said, "Over 2,000 years ago, Laozi predicted what human civilization would be like today and even what kind of civilization people would have in the future" (Hideki Yukawa, 2000, p. 46). The contemporary German philosopher Herbert Mainusch viewed Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* as a book of skepticism and believed that he was a founder of skepticism. He believed that skepticism

could help bring about scientific truth. During my trip to the United States and Canada as a member of China's Ministry of Education Delegation for Liberal Education in September 2002, I keenly felt that Western scholars who had meetings with us highly respected Chinese cultural classics. During a meeting at Simon Fraser University in Canada, a Canadian professor said he loved ancient Chinese classic works, stating that Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* was great and he was especially inspired by his great thinking that "The Dao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Dao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name." He added that if there had been a Nobel Prize in the 5th century BC, Laozi should have won that prize because modern German physicist Werner Karl Heisenberg was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for his uncertainty principle, which reflected



Laozi



Laozi's principle of uncertainty. This is a foreign scholar's understanding of the inspiration *Tao Te Ching* had on modern science. Chinese cultural concepts about the harmony between humankind and the nature, the protection of resources and the conservation of resources constitute a typical theoretical form about ecological civilization under the conditions of the ancient Chinese farming civilization. They preserve the thinking about harmony between humankind and nature, a sharp contrast with the antagonism between the concept of setting humankind in opposition to nature which has been developed since the world had modern industrial civilization. If humankind wants to change the tradition it has developed to conquer nature since modern times and re-established the harmonious relationship between humankind and nature, it may go back to ancient Chinese theories of ecological civilization for information. Ilya Prigogine, founder of the dissipative structure theory, and his colleague Isabelle Stengers, said: Chinese civilization has a profound understanding of the relationships between humankind, society and nature. Chinese thinking has always been a source of enlightenment for Western philosophers and scientists who want to increase the scope of significant of science (Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers, 2005, p.1). In short, the glorious traditional culture created by the Chinese nation has a long history, is extensive and profound, and contains timeless and eternal wisdom. Therefore, foreign thinkers, philosophers, and scientists, past and present, have praised Chinese culture for its excellent and brilliant contributions to human culture.

## 2. Adhering to Marxism as a source of effective guidance for confidence in Chinese culture

China's confidence in its culture is not only

underpinned by the solid base of its fine Chinese culture but more importantly is under the effective theoretical guidance of Marxism. Marxism is the best conceived theory today because it is the crystallization of humankind's advanced culture. Marxism didn't come out of thin air; it is a combination the fine cultures of humans have developed based on a review of the experience of the workers movement in the first half of the 19th century and the advances of science and technology to that time. Lenin stated: The reason why Marxism is a well-conceived conclusion is that "it relies on the knowledge humankind has acquired under capitalism as a solid base.... The full understanding of the knowledge derived from the past science is used to prove this conclusion to be true. It is critical of everything created in human society, ignoring nothing. It has critically explored again all human thinking and examined all of it in the workers movement" (Lenin, 1958, p.253). "Marxism, a revolutionary proletarian system of thought has become historically significant the world over.... On the contrary, it has absorbed and transformed everything valuable in the development of human thinking and culture over the past more than 2,000 years" (Lenin, 1986, p.332). It is justifiable to conclude that Marxism is an advanced cultural paragon derived from all human knowledge. It reveals the law governing the development of human society and serves as a well-designed worldview and methodology by which people understand and transform the world and still represents the orientation of the development of advanced human culture. At the turn of this century and millennium, Marx topped a BBC News Online poll to find the greatest thinker of the millennium. This shows that Marxism is truth.

Marxism is not only the crystallization of advanced human culture but is also critical, open-ended and developing. It remains double-edged: For



the world and for itself. It doesn't admit anything will remain changeless and treats things from a developmental, critical and reformative perspective, works for changes, and promotes reformative transformation in order to create a bright future. At the same time it takes a critical and reformative approach to its system, never regarding it as a finished system of truth but taking it as a creative science that keeps developing. Mao Zedong (1991) stated, "Marxism-Leninism has in no way exhausted truth but ceaselessly opens roads to the knowledge of truth in the course of practice" (p.296). Marxism works forever to keep pace with the times and reflects, in its unique way, the spirit of the times. With a strong sense of history and responsibility, it creatively enriches and develops its theory based strictly on social development and scientific progress, and promptly corrects individual concepts and conclusions that have been proved obsolete in practice to preserve and develop the effectiveness and truth of its system and stay full of vitality. From the creation of Marxism to the present, there has emerged Marxism for present-day China—Mao Zedong Thought and the system of theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics, indicating Marxism is a process of constant development.

### **2.1 Marxism reveals the nature of development and the principles governing its development.**

What is culture? What is its nature? These are philosophical questions for which there are many discussions and solutions. Based on the basic theory that material production determines all social phenomena, Marxism reveals how culture comes into being and develops to correctly explain its nature, characteristics, structure, functions and the law governing its development. According to Marxism, culture is inseparable from people's material production, is manifested in human activities designed to transform the

objective world, and the people themselves, through material production, embodies social development and people's nature, strength, measurement and achievements, and is the artificial world and a form of humanization created by humankind. Culture is created by people and is unique to people; all culture belongs to people. Natural things do not fall into the category of culture. A stone is not culture; but it is culture after it is deliberately processed by people. Things naturally produced from soil are not culture; things that are produced by sowing seeds are culture, so culture is different from nature and is a form of humanization of nature or humanized nature. Culture not only contains material natural things but also includes people's activities as well as the intelligence, ability, aesthetic appreciation, and value orientations that are formed during social and historical development and give things the special form of humanization. Culture is embodied both in the way people carry out activities and what they achieve and in people's intellectual production, forms of thinking, and ways of thinking, is found in all aspects of human social activity and develops as human society makes progress. In turn, accumulated as "a social genetic code," human culture affects society and shapes humankind.

As a form of humanization, culture is bound to be social and ethnic. Humanized products are not necessarily all culture; they aren't culturally relevant until they are of value for their creators and all those within the broadest possible scope. In addition, culture exists and develops amidst the interactions between people, between people and nature, and between people and society, and relies on the conditions created in human society in the past for its development. Marx said, "People make their own history, but not at will under the conditions of their own choice, but under the established conditions that they encounter and inherited from the past" (Marx & Engels, 2009, p.470). Every generation

“encounter large quantities of productivity, capital and environment left behind by their predecessors. On the one hand, the productivity, capital and environment may be changed by the new generation, but on the other hand, they determine the living conditions for the new generation in advance so that these people can have a certain level of development and special nature” (Marx & Engels, 1995, p.92). This determines that people’s cultural creation is social, historical and inherits the past. In addition, as those who create culture live in different regions, observe different ways of production and living, languages, social psychologies, and customs, these will inevitably be reflected in the culture in a form of humanization. This gives rise to the ethnic nature of culture so that it is a record of the history and uniqueness of ethnic groups. Different cultures are related to the social practice of humankind. They come into being in practice and develop from a lower to a higher level, from being simple to being complicated, and from being one-sided to being well-rounded. Therefore, culture must have the features of the times.

Culture is created by people and serves their purposes. People create culture ultimately for educating people and humanizing things. This involves the functions of culture. Culture’s functions refer to the role culture plays in the survival and development of society and humankind. Culture is found in every aspect of life in society and has a variety of functions such as solidifying, expressing, storing, transmitting and processing social information; educating, training and cultivating people; promoting social development, and enhancing and expanding understanding. As far as people are concerned, education without culture is civilization without people; people can only become civil through cultivation by culture. As far as the development process of society is concerned, culture is important for promoting social

development. Without culture, human society cannot make progress from their natural and ignorant state, and humankind cannot move from a lower to a higher level. However, culture is often inherited and the culture of a certain society often contains its past cultural achievements, so not all the roles culture plays are positive. For example, traditional Chinese culture plays a dual role in modern society. On the one hand, the quintessence of culture is a record of China’s history of civilization of several thousand years and educates, trains and cultivates the Chinese people so that they will be industrious, brave, hardworking, simple, pragmatic, ready to make progress, be persistent, protect the principle at their own expense, oppose violence, and love peace. Chinese culture has been combined to become a national spirit with patriotism as the core. Today, in light of the revolutionary culture and the new socialist culture the Party and people have cultivated through revolutionary struggle, Chinese culture has now been combined and is at the core socialist values, namely prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony, freedom, equality, justice, the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendship. Chinese culture has become today the intellectual power and moral nourishment for pooling the spirit and strength of the nation and contributing to Chinese spirit, Chinese values, and Chinese strength in order to serve as an inexhaustible source of power for building socialism with Chinese characteristics. On the other hand, our traditional culture has not been challenged for a long time and has failed to make breakthroughs, and doesn’t reflect much of the world since modern times. As a result of being dominated by political ethics, a style of study that follows the beaten track, and a lack of scientific and logical spirit, traditional Chinese culture is laden with dross and bad habits which have a negative impact on national spirit. For example, conventionality, feudal superstitious, patriarchy,

hierarchy, and paying too much attention to one's personal careers and making a fortune are all feudal dross affecting traditional Chinese culture. As culture's functions are double-edged, only fine traditional culture is what we should study and carry forward. In addition, we should innovate it to reflect the realities in modern society in order to create a new culture that is in line with the features of the times and meets the needs of social development.

Marxism not only reveals the nature, features and functions of culture but also sheds light to the law governing cultural development. According to Marxism, there exists a relationship between the source and the course of the cultural development of humankind. By the source of cultural development I mean that cultural development is activated by human production and social change (I will expand on this in the next section). By the course of cultural development I mean that the existing culture is criticized, carried on, studied, learned from, and innovated in an all-around way. The source and course work together to produce the law governing cultural development. During cultural development, all cultures are ethnic, historical, contemporary, and specific. However, as a form of humanization, all cultures consist of human feelings and human nature as well as the principles for survival and development. These are the common grounds shared by all cultures. Commonality lurks in individuality. Therefore, the cultures of all nations can interact, learn from, assimilate, and supplement each other to develop together. The history of human cultural development shows that based on the achievements of its national culture, a country always produces a new culture. This is the law governing cultural development. In accordance with this law, the CPC has established the basic principle of following the guidance of Marxism, critically carrying forward fine traditional culture, learning from advanced foreign cultures, making comprehensive innovations,

and building a new culture. At this new historical starting point, Xi Jinping adheres to this principle and has established the new policy of "staying true to our fine culture, absorbing advanced foreign culture, and remaining future-oriented." This means that we should be rooted in our fine traditional culture, the revolutionary culture the Party and people have developed in the revolutionary struggle, and the advanced socialist culture, absorb all the progressive cultures in the world, review the new experiences gained in modern social changes and scientific and technological developments, and build a new culture geared to the world, modernization and focused on the future.

## **2.2 Marxism is an effective methodology for analyzing, understanding and developing culture**

Marxism is both a worldview and a methodology. Engels stated, "Marx's worldview as a whole is not a dogma, but a method. It is not a ready-made dogma but a starting point for further analysis and a method for this analysis" (Marx & Engels, 1974, p.406). Lenin thought highly of Marxism as a methodology, and cited on several occasions Engels' statement, "Our system is not a dogma, but a guide to action," believing that this was the living soul of Marxism and that ignoring it "would mean castrating the living soul of Marxism, disrupt its fundamental theoretical basis—dialectics," and deviate from truth (Lenin, 1959, p.22). Mao Zedong also stressed that to study Marxism, it was necessary to study its standpoint, viewpoint, and method. When it came to the theory of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, he said, "We should regard it not as a dogma, but as a guide to action. Studying it is not merely a matter of learning terms and phrases but of learning Marxism-Leninism as the science of revolution. Only this guide to action and only this viewpoint and method are revolutionary science" (Shi & Liu, 1992, p. 66). When it came to understanding culture and promoting cultural development, Mao Zedong

(1993) stated that the Marxist fundamental method was an overall historical method (p.400). This general method is generally for an analytical and generalization purposes. Analysis means to separate a whole into different parts, aspects, and factors so as to study them one by one. Generalization means, on the basis of analysis, to integrate in one's thinking, all the natures of the targets into a unified whole by their internal linkage. Analysis and generalization are the basic Marxist methods for acquiring an understanding of things. Engels believed that analyzing and generalizing unknown targets was a basic method. Lenin also appreciated this method. His comments on Hegel's statement that "in every one of its movements, the philosophical method is both analytical and generalizing" and are: "Fantastic. Wonderful" (Lenin, 1986, p.257). This shows that analysis and generalization are very important in the dialectical method.

Mao Zedong integrated Marxism with China's realities and comprehensively enriched and developed the Marxist methodology. Regarding analysis and generalization, he integrated this method with the method for analyzing contradictions. He said that analysis and generalization were a unity of opposites and that this was called methodology and dialectics as well (Shi & Liu, 1992, p.73). He held that to acquire a complete understanding of the nature of things, it was imperative to use the method of analysis and generalization. He said, "We should use the method of analysis and generalization to analyze aspects of the whole thing before generalizing them" (Shi & Liu, 1992, p.73). Analysis and generalization are closely interconnected, and analysis involves generalization to some extent. He took his understanding of Yan'an for example. He used the analytical method to make an orderly, careful research and analysis of every part of Yan'an before using the method of generalization to generalize the analysis of the parts to acquire an

understanding of Yan'an as a whole. "At this time he has a different understanding of Yan'an from the time when he just arrived.... He now has a proper and specific understanding of Yan'an" (Shi & Liu, 1992, p.73). Mao Zedong said, "Marx wrote his *Capital* in this way. He first analyzed every part of capitalist society before generalizing them to work out the law governing the movement of capitalism" (Shi & Liu, 1992, p.74).

Mao Zedong called the Marxist overall historical method the ancient, present, Chinese and foreign method. The idea "is to ascertain that the problem under study occurred in a certain time and a certain space and study it as a historical process under certain historical conditions. By 'ancient and present' I mean historical development, and by 'Chinese and foreign' I mean ourselves and others" (Mao, 1993, p.400). When it came to culture, by using the ancient, present, Chinese and foreign method, he proposed critically carrying forward traditional culture, studying and drawing on advanced foreign cultures to meet the needs of the Chinese people, generalizing all elements and innovating and developing our culture. When it came to "ancient and present," he stated, "A splendid old culture was created during the long period of Chinese feudal society. To study the development of this old culture, to reject its feudal dross and assimilate its democratic essence is a necessary condition for developing our new national culture and increasing our national self-confidence, but we should never swallow anything and everything uncritically. It's imperative to separate the fine old culture of the people, which had a more or less democratic and revolutionary character, from all the decadence of the old feudal ruling class.... therefore, we must respect our own history and must not lop it off. However, respect for history means giving it its proper place as a science, respecting its dialectical development, and not eulogizing the past

at the expense of the present or praising every drop of feudal poison” (Mao, 1993, p.707). Therefore, it is necessary to criticize both national nihilism and cultural conservatism. When it came to “Chinese and foreign,” Mao Zedong said, “To nourish her own culture China needs to assimilate a good deal of foreign progressive culture” (Mao, 1993, p.706), and, “We should as far as possible draw on what is progressive in it for use in the development of China’s new culture” (Mao, 1991, p.1083). He also stressed opposition to the wrong tendencies to shut out and blindly copy foreign culture and said, “We should draw on foreign culture critically to meet the actual needs of the Chinese people” (Mao, 1991, p.1083). He vividly compared drawing on foreign culture to people digesting food so as to reject the dross and absorb the ideal to develop our own culture. Regarding both “ancient and present” and “Chinese and foreign,” he stressed the need for us to independently choose and create. In his interview with the British journalist Guenther Stein, he stated, “Carrying on China’s past thinking and embracing alien thinking does not necessarily mean copying them unconditionally. Rather they should be used in light of China’s specific conditions and adapted to China’s realities... We the Chinese people must think independently and decide what is suitable for our soil” (Mao, 1996, p.192). This serves as the fundamental guiding thought for developing Chinese culture. Following the founding of the People’s Republic of China, Mao Zedong generalized our experience of cultural development as the cultural policies of “making the past serve the present, making foreign things serve China, critically carrying on, generalizing and innovating” “letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred school of thought contend.” Problems arose in the past when these policies were implemented, but these policies reflect themselves in the law governing cultural development.

Following the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh CPC Central Committee in 1978, Deng Xiaoping categorically stated on the basis of a review of the experience and lessons in socialist cultural development, to develop our culture, “We must always uphold the policies of letting a hundred flowers bloom, weeding through the old to bring forth the new and making the past serve the present and foreign things serve China” (Deng, 1994, p.210). He stressed the need to “draw on and learn from all that is progressive and advanced in science, technology, literature, and art of old China, and of other countries as well” (Deng, 1994, p.210) to develop our new socialist culture. Thanks to reform and opening-up, there was a large influx of Western culture into China. The Chinese people found it refreshing and absorbed it. This greatly promoted the development of the new socialist culture, but at the same time there emerged a phenomenon in which Western culture was indiscriminately copied. To address this problem, Deng Xiaoping said that foreign culture must be absorbed selectively and must not cost us our national confidence and price. He stated, “If we want to learn from developed capitalist countries and take advantage of such advances in science, technology, management and other areas as may be useful to us, it would be foolish to keep our doors closed and persist in the same old ways. But in learning things in the cultural realm, we must adopt Marxist approach, analyzing them, distinguishing the good from the bad and making a critical judgment about their ideological content and artistic form” (Deng, 1993, p.44). He added, “When we study the technology and management experience of capitalist society, we must never allow ourselves to worship capitalist countries, to succumb to corrosive capitalist influences or to lose the national pride and self-confidence of socialist China” (Deng, 1993, p.262). In accordance with the law governing cultural development and Deng Xiaoping’s thought, it



was stated at the 15th National Party Congress, “Our country cannot develop its culture in isolation from the common achievements of human civilizations. Adhering to the principle of having our own culture as our base but utilizing foreign achievements, we need to launch various forms of cultural exchange, drawing on their strengths while introducing our own achievements to the world. We must resolutely resist the corrosive influence of decadent ideas and cultures” (Jiang, 2006, p.35). All this requires us to selectively absorb the ideal parts of foreign cultures and dismiss their dross. When we digest and absorb advanced foreign culture, we should take Chinese culture into account and create a new Chinese culture. Mechanically copying foreign culture will never work. The correct way of doing this is as follows: “Chinese and foreign things should be integrated. We should not merely copy foreign things. We should learn the way hats are produce in foreign countries, so to speak, and use that way to produce Chinese hats. We should draw on all useful things from foreign countries and use them to improve and promote Chinese things and create new unique things of China” (Mao, 1999, p.82).

### 3. The people's creativity: A source of strength for China's confidence in Chinese culture

Critically carrying on fine traditional culture and drawing on progressive foreign culture is a prerequisite for developing a socialist culture. However, this is only the course of cultural development, not the source of cultural development. Marxism believes that culture is rooted in humankind's practice of production. The people are the creators of culture and culture comes into being

and develops in the people's practice and creation. Therefore, only the people's practice and creation are the source of cultural development and a source of strength in cultural confidence.

#### 3.1 The Chinese nation is highly culturally creative.

The Chinese nation lives in a vast territory with complicated terrains and a volatile climate. To survive and develop, it has to be constantly engaged in a struggle with nature. Over time the Chinese nation has developed a national spirit characterized by industriousness, courage, vigor, promise, self-improvement, and innovativeness. Confucian culture stated based on a review of this spirit, “The movement of Heaven is full of power; thus people of virtue constantly strengthen themselves.”<sup>①</sup> It went on to give this explanation, “The greatest virtue between the Heaven and Earth is to cherish life.”<sup>②</sup> The Heaven and earth move vigorously on and on. People keep to the principles of the Heaven in their activities, so they should stay full of vitality and constantly strengthen themselves (Qu, 2015). This shows that to follow the principles of the nature, people should give full play to their subjective initiative and work hard for their ideals. Therefore, a prominent manifestation of vigor, promise, and self-improvement is to stress innovation. In “Great Learning” of *The Book of Rites*, it is stressed to keep innovation alive. This represents a spirit of making endless innovations, a nature of the Chinese nation. Therefore, the Chinese nation is most innovative, and “in development history of the Chinese nation, there have been advanced agriculture and industry, many greater thinkers, scientists, inventors, politicians, strategists, writers and artists, and a variety of cultural classics” (Mao, 1991, p.622). A long time ago China invented the compass,

① *The Book of Changes. Thirteen Classics with Annotations and Commentaries*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1980.

② *The Book of Changes. Thirteen Classics with Annotations and Commentaries*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1980.

gunpowder, papermaking, and printing long before other countries. Therefore, “China is one of the first countries to have an advanced civilization (Mao, 1991, p.622). It is these great four inventions that promoted the development of the world’s civilization. Marx thought highly of this and believed that these inventions became the means to achieve a scientific renaissance, stating, “They became the strongest leverage for the necessary prerequisite for intellectual development and creation” (Marx & Engels, 1979, p.427). Therefore, the Chinese nation is the greatest and most innovative nation and was the first to make the greatest contributions to humankind. Xi Jinping also stated, “Both history and reality have proven that the Chinese nation is highly culturally innovative. At every major historical juncture, Chinese culture had a sense of the changes in the country, stayed at the forefront of the times, let out the voices of the times, and cheered for our people and for our great motherland. Chinese culture both sticks to its fundamentals and keeps pace with the times, ensures that the Chinese nation firmly stays self-confident and is highly capable of correcting itself, and has brought about common feelings and values as well as common ideals and spirits” (Xi, 2015). The people are the creators of history and material and intellectual wealth in society. In the final analysis, in the process of the development of civilization, all cultural products were created by the people. Be they scientific knowledge such as astronomy, geography, and mathematics or artistic forms such as literature, art, painting, music, dance, and sculpture are the crystallization of the wisdom and creativity of the people in terms of their objective origins or primary forms. The people’s cultural creation is manifested by both directly creating many cultural products and providing rich raw materials for the creation of many outstanding cultural products. Ancient Chinese classical novels such as *Romance of the Three*

*Kingdoms*, *Water Margin*, and *Journey to the West* were all created by writers based on oral folk literature. History fully proves the people’s creativity is the most solid source of cultural development. It is the Chinese nation’s creativity that has made it possible for the nation to keep developing and create the extensive and profound Chinese culture. Cultural development promotes the improvement in the nation’s innovation. Especially since the Chinese revolution overthrew the rule of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism and established socialism in China, the suppressed creativity of the people has been released on an unprecedented scale and their creativity has risen higher than ever before. Mao Zedong said, “Socialism has not only liberated the working people and freed the means of production from the shackles of the old society but has also released the boundless resources of nature which the old society could not exploit. The masses have unlimited creative power. They can organize themselves to take on all spheres and branches of work where they can give full play to their energy, tackle production more intensively and extensively and initiate more and more undertakings for their own well-being” (Mao, 1999, p.457). Deng Xiaoping also stated, “The Chinese are very intelligent. Chinese scientists have scored great achievements despite poor research conditions and poor living conditions. When the Chinese people are disunited, they are weak, but when they join together, they have enormous strength” (Deng, 1993, p.358). We enjoy the benefit of the strong socialist system, the leadership of the Communist Party, and the unity and hard work of the people, so we can create almost all miracles in the world. Following the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, China was poor and blank. Relying on themselves, Chinese scientists have made tremendous achievements such as the atomic bomb, the hydrogen bomb, and the man-made satellite, the functional theories of several

complex variables, the land facies oil-forming theory and artificially synthesized bovine insulin. Following the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh CPC Central Committee, China started its reform and opening-up and emancipated the mind, and as a result there was an unprecedented upsurge in the people's creativity. Deng Xiaoping strongly believed in and supported the people's creativity. Before reform was carried out in all rural areas, some farmers in Sichuan and Anhui spontaneously implemented the household responsibility system with remuneration linked to output with good results. Deng Xiaoping fully affirmed and supported this, and took this opportunity to promote economic reforms in rural areas. He said, "By so doing we immediately brought their initiative into play, and great changes took place" (Deng, 1993, p.238). "The rural reform our greatest success—and it is one we had by no means anticipated—has been the emergence of many enterprises run by villages and townships. They were like a new force that just came into being spontaneously. These small enterprises engage in the most diverse endeavors, including both manufacturing and trade. The Central Committee takes no credit for this" (Deng, 1993, p.238). "The idea of starting such industries was not put forward by the leaders of this country but by the villages and townships and the farmers themselves" (Deng, 1993, p.252). "The reform and the open policy have been successful not because we relied on books, but because we relied on practice and sought truth from facts. It was the farmers who invented the household contract responsibility system with remuneration linked to output. Many of the good ideas in rural reform came from people at the grass roots. We processed them and raised them to the level of guidelines for the whole country" (Deng, 1993, p.382). China has made even more innovative achievements in science and technology. Chinese scientists "have made breakthroughs in basic

sciences such as high-temperature superconductivity, neutrino physics, nanotechnology, stem cell research, and human genome sequencing, and they have made achievements in engineering technologies such as hybrid rice, laser phototypesetting of Chinese characters, high-performance computing, the Three-Gorges project, manned spaceflight, the lunar exploration project, mobile communications, quantum communications, the Beidou navigation system, manned deep submersible, high-speed railways and aircraft carriers. All these have underpinned China's economic and social development, made a historic contribution to national security, and laid an important foundation for China to function as a major country that is internationally influential" (Xi, 2014, p.5). China has now become the second-largest economy in the world. As progress is made in implementing the Four-Pronged Comprehensive Strategy and in promoting balanced economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological progress and "as an upsurge emerges in economic development, an upsurge will be inevitable in cultural development. The time when the Chinese were considered uncivilized has past, and we will emerge in the world as a nation with a high level of culture" (Mao, 1996, p.345). As the people's material life improves and their understanding of science and culture considerably rises, their intellectual needs will increase and they will become more culturally creative. All this will strongly propel culture forward and sustain our confidence in Chinese culture.

### **3.2 The great practice of building socialism with Chinese characteristics is an inexhaustible source of the people's cultural creativity.**

Marxism believes people's correct thinking finds its source only in practice, and no matter whether it is thinking and theory or science and technology, they all find their vitality and creativity in practice. Mao Zedong said, "In the last analysis, what is the



*Three-Gorges project*

source of all literature and art? Works of literature and art, as ideological forms, are products of the reflection in the human brain of the life of a given society. The life of the people is always a mine of the raw materials for literature and art, materials in their natural form, materials that are crude, but most vital, rich and fundamental...; they provide literature and art from an inexhaustible source” (Mao, 1991, p.860). These are not only the sources for literary and artistic works but are also the sources of culture in the forms of concepts such as thought and theory. Just as Deng Xiaoping stated, “Any new scientific theory is a summation of practical experience. How can a new theory be evolved if it is not based on a summation of the practical experience of both past and present generations of scientists, both Chinese

and foreign?” (Deng, 1994, p.57) The people’s practice serves as a subject matter for cultural works, provides them with rich, vivid and fresh materials, and lays a solid foundation for our cultural creation. We are now in an era of reform and innovation, and socialism with Chinese characteristics is flourishing. Reform and opening-up, socialist modernization, and especially the policy of promoting economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological progress established at the new historical starting point at the 18th National Party Congress, are all great practices carried out under the new historical conditions to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and then moving on to build a socialist modern country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious.



All this and the people's rich and colorful productive activities provide rich content, materials and subject matters for our new cultural works. Cultural workers should consciously work for the sacred mission of the times, get involved in the great practice of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, get in touch with the production and lives of the people, take the great practice of building socialism

with Chinese characteristics as a school and a class, benefit from the magnificent real life of the people, create cultural works based on the great creations of the people, produce new cultural and artistic works, and formulate new theories to develop and enrich a new socialist culture.

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