



## A Survey of the Study of Cultural Confidence in China

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### Abstract

As a newly-coined term emerging in China’s publication, “cultural confidence” has captured Chinese researchers’ great attention. The recent years have witnessed an upsurge of the study of cultural confidence. This paper, based upon the materials available collected through CNKI database, sums up all the relevant researches into cultural confidence in China in the past few years. Additionally, reflections upon the survey of cultural confidence in China have been given for the purpose of providing food for thought.

**Key words:** Cultural confidence; Survey; Reflections

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### INTRODUCTION

The Chinese culture is the only culture in the world which lasts till today ceaselessly (Wang, 2017). During thousands of years of history, China has exhibited its unique cultures characterized by features of different periods. The powerful and radiant Chinese culture has been influencing the development of world civilization profoundly. The vitality of the Chinese civilization lies not only in its overwhelming cultural preponderance, but also in its richness and colorfulness. Moreover, the Chinese culture is able to remain erected for long not only

because of its ability to learn from other civilizations but also because of its potential cultural confidence and the ability of refreshment and improvement in the presence of foreign civilizations exerting their influence.

### 1. LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE STUDY OF CULTURAL CONFIDENCE IN CHINA

In recent years, cultural confidence has emerged as a key ingredient in Chinese socialist cultural construction. Take the data collected by CNKI, China’s biggest and most influential database for example. There are 4080 papers in total available published in 2019 which are centered upon the key word “cultural confidence”. Diversity characters the research into cultural confidence. Currently, the study of cultural confidence covers the area ranging from its definition, connotation, features, significance to its construction approaches. Basically, its study can be categorized into the following three fields.

#### 1.1 The Definition, Connotation and Significance of Cultural Confidence

The concept of cultural confidence was believed to be first advocated by a Chinese scholar Huang Jing in his investigation report “*The Chinese Language is in Dilemma*” and completed in Chinese top leaders’ exposition about cultural confidence afterwards. Zhao Fuke (2016) concludes the formation logic of cultural confidence from the perspective of history, value and practice. Cultural confidence is believed to be a belief in culture from the angle of culturology. For instance, Xiao Lanlan (2013) holds that cultural confidence means a nation or people’s complete confirmation in one’s cultural value, which is a firm confidence in the vitality, creation and cohesion of one’s culture, and embodies cultural pride. Liu Lintao (2016) believes that cultural confidence is a stable psychological feature of one’s own cultural value and cultural vitality through cultural subjects’ cognition, criticism, reflections, comparison and recognition of cultural objects.

Concerning the connotation of cultural confidence, some scholars generalize it from the perspective of cultural philosophy or cultural content. More scholars, however, decode cultural confidence based upon the interior logical relationship between cultural confidence and confidence in the theories, confidence in the system and confidence in the path. Yang Xiwei (2016) analyzes the connotation of cultural confidence through the comprehension of the relationship of six-dimension elements like cultural inclusiveness and cultural soft power. Ni Peimin (2017), a professor from an American university, compares the western culture and the eastern culture aiming to expound the connotation of cultural confidence. Additionally, other scholars focus upon the analysis of the features of cultural confidence from the perspectives of objectivity, directivity, symbolism and inclusivity. With regard to the significance and value of cultural confidence, Liu Lintao (2016) stresses that cultural confidence is expected to enhance soft power, help combat cultural conflict and achieve the aim of national renaissance. Zhang Man (2016) centers upon the reality and history to expound the significance and urgency of the construction of cultural confidence. Generally speaking, most Chinese scholars share the view that cultural confidence stems from the inheritance and promotion of the national excellent traditional culture and one of the most important task to construct cultural confidence is to re-appreciate and recognize the excellent traditional culture.

### 1.2 The Fields of Fulfillment of Cultural Confidence

The data collected from CNKI database indicates that besides the probe into the theoretical research into cultural confidence, Chinese researchers have already integrated cultural confidence into such fields as morality education, language capacity cultivation, and varieties of disciplines, which accounts for the vast majority of the whole of the cultural confidence research. Some academic fruits have been brought forth regarding the fields of fulfilling cultural confidence. For instance, Cheng Zhaowei and Zhou Lihong (2017) conduct a research into Liaoning translation history from the perspective of cultural confidence. In particular, there are rich academic fruits on cultural confidence in the field of education. Zhang Hongchong and Wu Zaisheng (2016) believe that the construction of cultural confidence in vocational colleges is supposed to be based upon the orientation and practical situation of the colleges and cultural resources of the related enterprises so that the culture with typical features in vocational colleges can be developed. Zheng Jihai (2014) notes that it is necessary to bring into full play the function of families and society and hence form the three-dimensional educational system of society, family and school with the purpose of enhancing college students' cultural confidence practically. In the field of comparative education, Xiao Fuyun (2017) puts forward three approaches to manifesting cultural confidence, namely the awakening of self-reflection, the choice and innovation

of multi-cultural methodology and the construction of comparative educational knowledge system. In terms of cultural confidence in ethic and art education, Feng Tieshan (2014) holds that ethical cultural confidence embodies the attitude orientation of cultural recognition, which stands for the recognition of college students' own country and the value of national culture and the recognition of their own cultural identity. From Feng's point of view, ethical cultural confidence manifests the complete affirmation of one's own country and national ethical culture. Guo Hongyan (2014) points out faced with conflicts and collisions of the cultural value and ideology brought by globalization artists should complete their own cultural missions, reflect upon traditional national culture and advance from cultural consciousness to cultural confidence by making a list of varieties of demonstrations of a deficiency of cultural confidence in the field of traditional music. Some Chinese scholars like Long Xinyuan (2019), Tang Hong (2020) and Liu Hongqing and Su Peng (2020) treat translation of classic works, paper-cutting, and grotto art as their academic interest, from which the cultural confidence is separately analyzed. Zhang Kai (2017), Ren Zhenyu (2017) and Zhou Min (2017) respectively probes into the fulfillment of cultural confidence and how the Chinese culture is transmitted to the world from the angle of the Internet plus and big data.

### 1.3 The Approaches to Fulfilling Cultural Confidence

Since culture is a most complicated phenomenon in human society, it is certain to call for a long period of time and a great deal of cultivation and nourishment before the fulfillment of cultural confidence. Based upon the researches available, three approaches to the fulfillment of cultural confidence have been probed into. The first approach is based upon the cultural subjects. Jian Zhenrui and Xu Shen (2016), for instance, believe that cultural confidence springs from people's inheritance and creation of the outstanding traditional culture. Cultural confidence depends upon people's acceptance and combination of the world's outstanding traditional cultures and is determined by people's choice and recognition of the advanced cultures. Shao Longbao (2018) makes an analysis of the cultivation and inheritance of cultural confidence from the angle of different cultural subjects. Lang Huihui (2017) insists that it is better to awake fully Chinese people's subject consciousness and stick to the core value system of socialism so as to fulfill the big task of cultural confidence. The second approach is based upon cultural content such as the attitude towards traditional national culture, modern culture and alien cultures. Xu Fengzhen (2017), for instance, puts forward a series of basic approaches to strengthening cultural confidence. On the other hand, Wang Yongqiang (2018) and Ma Baojuan (2018) suggest that to cultivate well-rounded person the content about traditional culture and content aiming at strengthening cultural confidence should be

introduced into education. The third dimension is cultural communication and innovation. Kui Jincheng and Fang Guangshun (2016) hold that cultural confidence can be inspired and promoted through cultural system reform, inheritance innovation and mutual learning. In this way, the convergence and surging of different cultures are expected to trigger cultural momentums and accordingly improve cultural confidence. Zhang Man (2016) argues that cultural confidence is based upon the active mutual learning of the positive elements of alien cultures and it is through cultural innovation that cultural confidence can be consistent. Li Lang (2019) suggests that in the context of all-media cultural confidence should be shaped internally from an individual perspective and thus an external push should be formed from a national perspective. Hu Chun and his co-authors (2020) argue that the excellent Chinese traditional culture, revolutionary culture, and the advanced socialist culture are three important weapons to contain and fight against the invasion of western culture and bulwarks to strengthen cultural confidence. Shen Zhuanghai's work *On Cultural Confidence* is one of the few book-length works that centered upon cultural confidence. Besides the analysis about some basic concepts about cultural confidence, the author (2019) discusses the ways to boost cultural confidence and the construction of Chinese academic discourse system such as building a strong cultural nation, injecting vitality of new era into cultural confidence, and consolidating the base of cultural confidence.

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## 2. REFLECTIONS UPON THE STUDY OF CULTURAL CONFIDENCE IN CHINA

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Since cultural confidence became a hot expression frequently referred to in Chinese public media and then labeled as a key pillar in Chinese ideological system, the relevant study has become prevailing in Chinese academia. Reflecting upon its study from the perspective of history, reality and literature review is sure to facilitate the study of what is happening in China and give readers more food for thought.

### 2.1 Cultural Confidence as an Ideological Pillar

Currently, to entrench the Chinese traditional culture and fasten its position as a most significant ideological pillar, culture confidence has been established as one of "Four Confidences" of the Chinese Communist Party. Being a stable psychological feature, cultural confidence is people's firm recognition of their national culture and the most important safeguard of a nation's stability and harmonious development. Now it has been hailed as a most powerful mental support of China's social construction and development.

In the era of globalization, take foreign language teaching as an example. Foreign language teaching, which is at the frontier of cultural communication, shoulders the responsibility of receiving the updated ideologies

from abroad and transmitting Chinese culture. On the other hand, the popularity of the Internet exposes the contemporary Chinese people especially young people to the western culture, which is likely to transform their ideology gradually. On the other hand, while the Belt and Road Initiative Strategy is being carried out, China is playing an increasingly important role at the stage of global cultural communication. Under this circumstance, cultural confidence is sure to function as an ideological pillar and exert profound influence on cross-cultural communication.

### 2.2 Possible Vacancies of the Study of Cultural Confidence in China

In terms of the relevant study of cultural confidence in China, a survey of the study of cultural confidence in China has enabled researchers to believe that fruitful achievements have been made in this field. However, there is still a lot of work to be done. First of all, most of the relevant studies concentrate upon the macro scope rather than from a micro scope and fewer empirical researches have been done. For another, most relevant researches are not problem-oriented, and do not react to some practical questions or issues. In addition, in terms of approaches to the cultivation of cultural confidence, there are more unpractical and abstract suggestions instead of some concrete and specific proposals. The above research vacancies leave enough room for researchers' future study.

### 2.3 Cultural Confidence as a Historical Phenomenon

In China's thousands of years of history, the Chinese people are always taking clear-cut attitude towards their own traditional culture and the alien cultures. Regarding Chinese people's attitude towards their own culture and alien cultures, Feng Youlan, one of the most well-known Chinese philosophers, points out, "Their (Chinese people's) sense of nationalism has been more developed in regard to culture than to politics. Being the inheritors of an ancient civilization, and one geographically far removed from any other of comparable importance, it has been difficult for them to conceive how any other people could be cultured and yet live in a manner different from themselves. Hence whenever they have come into contact with an alien culture they have been inclined to despise and resist it—not so much as something alien, but simply because they have thought it to be inferior or wrong." (Feng, 2015, pp.590-591.) Additionally, he exemplifies Chinese people's reaction to alien culture in history, "The introduction of Buddhism stimulated the foundation of religious Taoism, which came as a sort of nationalistic reaction to the alien faith. In the same way, the introduction of Western culture, in which Christian missionaries played a leading part, created a very similar reaction." (Feng, 2015, pp.590-591.) Historically, the Chinese people's attitudes towards foreign cultures could be labeled as cultural confidence and their reactions manifest completely their wisdom and talents.

## CONCLUSION

As one of the oldest civilizations, the Chinese culture did impact the world culture profoundly. However, any culture in the world must learn how to meet with challenges and learn to perfect itself if it wants to remain animated. The upsurge of the research into cultural confidence, for one thing, proves that it is a necessary and positive reaction when Chinese culture are confronted with the challenges from other alien cultures especially the western culture. For another, the Chinese culture is a rich mineral in which a lot of cultural valuables can be gleaned and recollected for today's use and future profit. Every culture has its every reason to survive and even prosper in the world. For a culture with vitality, however, it needs constant self-improvement and learning from other civilizations. Ji Xianlin, one of the most preeminent Chinese scholars in China suggests that the eastern culture and western culture should complement each other for the shared development in diversity. Professor Wang Yuechuan (2017) from Beijing University holds that western academia in the new century shifts their focus on east, which will add a new thinking to the thinking pattern of western centralism and realizing model of social science and bring courage to east academia marginalized by western centralism to reassess all value and cultural opportunity to search new cultural value of mankind in the future.

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