

On the International Dissemination of Jingchu TCM Culture: Under the 'Belt and Road' Initiative *

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Abstract: TCM culture is an essential part and typical representative of traditional Chinese culture. Jingchu TCM culture, as a splendid bracelet, boasts a long history and plays a significant role in the TCM culture as a whole. Under the "Belt and Road" Initiative, based on the solid foundation it has laid, Jingchu TCM culture should make great efforts in pushing forward the following concerns, strengthening the top-level design of the dissemination of Jingchu TCM culture, building up an internationally famous cultural brand--Li Shizhen, promoting the construction of the overseas organizations in transmitting TCM culture etc.. All these measures will prove to have far-reaching importance in the future in international exchange and overseas dissemination of Jingchu TCM culture.

Introduction

TCM culture is conceived in the womb of traditional Chinese culture and sustains the essence of traditional Chinese culture. As President Xi often stresses, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is the gem of ancient Chinese science and a key to opening the treasure-house of Chinese civilization. As China's former Vice-premier Liu Yandong once stated, TCM has become a unique health resource, an economic resource with huge potential, a scientific and technological resource with its original advantage, and an important ecological resource of our country. There is no doubt that TCM and TCM culture are becoming increasingly important for us.

According to the White Paper 'Traditional Chinese Medicine in China', TCM has been spread to 183 countries and regions around the world. According to the World Health Organization(WHO), 103 member states have given approval to the practice of acupuncture and moxibustion, 29 have enacted special statutes on traditional medicine, and 18 have taken into account acupuncture and moxibustion treatment in their medical insurance provisions. TCM medicines have gradually entered the international system of medicines, and some of them have been registered in Russia, Cuba, Vietnam, Singapore, United Arab Emirates etc. Some 30 countries and regions have opened a couple of hundred TCM schools to train the native TCM workers. So far, the Chinese government has signed 86 TCM-related cooperation agreements with other countries and international organizations, and has supported the building of 10 TCM centers overseas.[1]

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The ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative is a grand initiative for China in the new era with new national power and international influence, which creates a well-cherished opportunity for the international exchange and overseas communication of China’s TCM culture, including the regional TCM culture originated from Jingchu, now mainly Hubei province.[2] Right after the proposal of the initiative, TCM community and Hubei Provincial Government have been seriously thinking about how to better disseminate Jingchu TCM culture in the whole world.

An Historical Overview of Jingchu TCM Culture in its International Dissemination

Jingchu is the birthplace of Emperor Shennong and the medical saint Li Shenzheng. From the birth of TCM culture to today, TCM culture has been playing an extremely important role in saving people’s lives and sustaining traditional Chinese culture here. In history, the greatest medical scientists like Zhang Zhongjign, Wang Shuhe, Gehong, Sun Simiao had been living and working here for some time, and the greatest medical scientists like Pang Anshi, Wan Mizhai, Li Shizhen, Yang Jitai were born and had been practicing and inheriting TCM science here.[3] Jingchu TCM culture has already become the part and parcel of China’s TCM culture as a whole.

In history, the Silk Road has been playing an extremely important role in inheriting and disseminating traditional Chinese culture. During the long two-way cross cultural communication directed by the Silk Road, exchange of medical culture isn’t an unnoticeable dot that can be neglected. The historical literature shows that after the opening of the Silk Road, TCM cultural exchange activities had been carried out more frequently than before. According to the recording of Records of the Historian, right after Zhang Qian was dispatched on a diplomatic mission to the Western Regions, traditional Chinese herbal medicines like Cortex cinnamomi, Chinese rhubarb had been exported to China’s neighbouring regions then, while other medicines like Cornu rhinocerotis and Carapax eretmochelyos had been introduced to China and gradually become an indispensable part of TCM. [4] Such medical cultural exchange has hit a new high in the Tang Dynasty. Several centuries later, Li Shizhen and his epochal masterpiece *Compendium of Materia Medica* opens up a brandnew era for the international exchange of TCM culture.

Since the hard-finished compilation, Li Shizhen’s *Compendium of Materia Medica* had been spread more and more widely along the Belt and Road, making TCM culture more broadly known and recognized in the world. In 1606, *Compendium of Materia Medica* was for the first time transmitted to Japan and then reprinted and annotated by the local scholars in Japan. It’s generally held that Li’s great medical thoughts has exerted profound impact on Japanese medical science, especially Japanese Kampo Medicine as well as Japanese pharmacology and botany. It’s roughly estimated that *Compendium of Materia Medica* has been translated in languages of Japanese, Korean, French, English, Russian, Italian, Latin etc. one after another in different countries, which is obviously a sweet pastry for scholars from the the western. No wonder Joseph Needham, the world renowned historian and sinologist known for his scientific research and writing on the history of Chinese science and technology commented that the greatest scientific achievement made in the Ming Dynasty is undoubtedly *Compendium of Materia Medica* compiled by Li Shizhen.[5]

Countermeasures for International Dissemination of Jingchu TCM Culture Under the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative

On March 28, 2015, *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road* was issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China, with State Council authorization. The Vision and Actions charts the panoramic view for different great missions under the Belt and Road’ Initiative in the future. According to road map, the designed cooperation priorities include Policy Coordination, Facilities Connectivity, Unimpeded Trade, Financial Integration, People-to-people Bond.

On People-to-people Bond, it says “We should strengthen cooperation with neighboring countries on epidemic information sharing, the exchange of prevention and treatment technologies and the

training of medical professionals, and improve our capability to jointly address public health emergencies. We will provide medical assistance and emergency medical aid to relevant countries, and carry out practical cooperation in maternal and child health, disability rehabilitation, and major infectious diseases including AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. We will also expand cooperation on traditional medicine.”[6] The Vision and Actions has set a bright guide for the international exchange and overseas communication of Jingchu TCM culture under the new historical conditions.

Then how-to is a frequently asked question.

1. Strengthening the Top-level Design

As Cai Wu, the former head of Ministry of Culture once said, the construction of the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative requires that the top priority be given to cross cultural communication among the countries along the route, that the public opinion and social foundations be deepened and in the final analysis, the top-level design be strengthened. [7]So far, to better promote TCM culture, quite a few diplomatic veterans have been employed in the field of international communication of TCM culture, such as Li Zhaoxing, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chen Mingming, the former ambassador to other countries, etc. For sure, they are telling TCM-related stories in a more powerful way. For Jingchu TCM culture, we need to seek by efforts officials or scholars like them to make it more widely known and recognized in the world.

2. Constructing Popular Brands in the International Dissemination of Jingchu TCM Culture

As is mentioned above, Li Shizhen and his *Compendium of Materia Medica* have been world-famous. But compared with Zhang Zhongjing and Henan Province, Ge Hong and Guangdong Province, Huang Fumi and Gansu Province, Sun Simiao and Shaanxi Province, Li Shizhen and the regional TCM culture he once spared no efforts to inherit and spread have been caught up with and even surpassed by others. One of the most important reasons is, we haven’t so far constructed a world popular brand in terms of TCM culture. However, Guangdong Province has built Luo Fushan Mountain into a Five-A tourist destination, and tourists travelling here can experience the unique TCM culture mainly left behind by Gehong, a world-famous TCM scholar in the Jin Dynasty who had lived and worked here. For another example, under the efforts of Gansu Provincial Government and TCM Community, quite a few overseas TCM centers and clinics has been established in the countries along the route. Such popular brands both at home and abroad will definitely push forward the development of going global of the regional TCM cultures. Hubei is in an urgent need to set up such brands in modern styles and with modern languages.

Conclusion

Jingchu enjoys a brilliant history in the inheritance and development of TCM culture for its rich resources in TCM, like the numerous famous TCM scientist and diversified medicinal materials growing and discovered here. Li Shizhen and his *Compendium of Materia Medica* opens up a new era in disseminating TCM culture internationally. The ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative surely will bring new opportunities for the international exchange and transmission of TCM culture, which may pose threats too if the top-level design is not formulated on a sound basis and if popular brands cannot be established in the field of global dissemination of Jingchu TCM culture in the future. There is still a long way to go for our great cause to progress.

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