

# Research on the Development Path of Traditional Festival Folklore and Traditional Chinese Medicine Cultural Resources from the Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication

Mei ZHANG, Jing WANG

*Department of Business English, School of International Studies, Guangdong University of Education, Guangzhou, Guangdong, 510303 Email:meizh@gdei.edu.cn, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4897-4619>*

## Abstract

The breadth and depth of cross-cultural communication in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) depend on the establishment of behavioral systems, the construction of TCM's material image, and the emotional connection with the general public. Disseminating core Chinese philosophical ideas, such as holism and system theory, along with relevant TCM terminology overseas, requires both top-down institutional frameworks and bottom-up strategies that subtly enhance foreign markets' understanding and acceptance of TCM culture through the promotion of folk activities and folklore. This bottom-up approach helps establish a strong consumer foundation for the TCM cultural industry. Both traditional festival folklore and TCM culture are deeply rooted in the fertile soil of traditional Chinese culture and serve as interpretations of life, health, and disease. By leveraging traditional festival folklore to expand and structure the TCM cultural industry chain, exploring TCM's unique resources, developing diverse communication media, and fostering cross-cultural communication and integration, the global dissemination of TCM can achieve greater breadth and depth.

**Keywords** Cross-Cultural Communication; Festival Folklore; TCM Culture; Development Path  
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## 1 The Connotation of Cross-Cultural Communication in Traditional Chinese Medicine

In 2005, the 8th Chinese Medicine Culture Subcommittee of the China Association of Chinese Medicine defined *Chinese medicine culture* as: “*Chinese medicine culture is the sum of the spiritual and material civilizations that reflect the essence and characteristics of Chinese medicine within the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation.*” While comprehensive, this definition remains somewhat vague. Zhang Qicheng (2018) further refined the concept of *Chinese medicine culture*, distinguishing between broad and narrow definitions. The broad definition encompasses the material and spiritual civilizations of Chinese medicine, comprising three levels: *spiritual and psychological culture, behavioral and institutional culture, and material and image culture*. The narrow definition specifically refers to the *spiritual and psychological culture* of Chinese medicine, which forms its core. Zhang Qicheng characterized *Chinese medicine culture* as: “*the sum of the intrinsic values, ways of thinking, external behavioral norms, and material representations of Chinese medicine.*” He vividly categorized *Chinese medicine culture* into three levels: “**heart**,” “**hand**,” and “**face**.” The “**heart**” level represents the core values and ways of thinking in Chinese medicine culture; the “**hand**” level pertains to its systems, behaviors, and management; and the “**face**” level reflects its environmental image and branding.

Li Jie (2023) argued that the knowledge framework of the theoretical system of Chinese medicine involves the interaction between explicit and tacit knowledge. He emphasized that tacit knowledge plays a crucial role in the inheritance and dissemination of Chinese medicine culture. From a knowledge management perspective, Chinese medicine encompasses not only explicit knowledge—which can be articulated and documented—but also a significant amount of tacit knowledge, derived from practical experience and advanced psychological activities such as creativity, inspiration, and intuition, which can only be understood implicitly. Therefore, the inheritance and innovative development of Chinese medicine can, to some extent, be regarded as a matter of knowledge dissemination and innovation, with tacit knowledge playing a pivotal role.

Wang Zhongtuo (2017) emphasized that defining the concept and content of Chinese medicine culture aims to construct and interpret the social phenomena and foundations of Chinese medicine culture, ultimately exploring its core value system. When conducting cross-cultural communication of Chinese medicine, it is essential to clarify the Chinese philosophical ideas embedded within it. Discussing the cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese medicine without considering the cultural and philosophical context would be like a tree without roots or a river without a source. Therefore, deeply exploring the rich connotations and unique values of Chinese medicine culture while promoting China’s excellent traditional culture is both necessary and significant.

Cross-cultural communication refers to the interaction and exchange between different cultures and among members of society from diverse cultural backgrounds. It involves the dissemination of information and interpersonal interactions within a multicultural society, as well as the flow, sharing, integration, and migration of various cultural elements on a global scale. Ef-

fective cross-cultural communication requires an understanding of the target culture—including its values, beliefs, traditions, customs, and behaviors—to formulate appropriate communication strategies. It also necessitates the use of precise language, ensuring that information is accurate, appropriate, and clearly understood within the target culture. Additionally, it involves avoiding cultural barriers by recognizing and addressing potential sources of conflict and misunderstanding. Furthermore, cross-cultural communication relies on diverse media to enhance accessibility and effectiveness. Selecting appropriate formats—such as text, images, audio, video, and games—tailored to different cultural backgrounds and demographic groups ensures accurate and impactful information transmission.

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One of the challenges in the *cross-cultural communication* of *Chinese medicine* is the *difficulty of translating its theories and concepts* into foreign languages. For instance, the terms *Yin* and *Yang* carry profound meanings, yet they lack direct English equivalents and are, therefore, commonly transliterated as *Yin* and *Yang*. However, transliterating every term—such as *Qi*, *Xu Huo* (deficient fire), and *Feng Xie* (wind pathogen)—is impractical. To address this issue, practitioners promoting *Chinese medicine culture* must utilize resources such as the **WHO International Standard Terminologies on Traditional Medicine**, the **Terminology of Traditional Chinese Medicine Clinical Diagnosis and Treatment**, and the **International Standard for Basic Terms of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Chinese-English)** to ensure *accurate and appropriate translation* that enhances effective communication.

On the other hand, the breadth and depth of cross-cultural communication in Chinese medicine depend on the establishment of behavioral systems, the construction of its material image, and the emotional connection with the general public. Disseminating Chinese philosophical ideas, such as holism and system theory, along with TCM terminology overseas, requires subtly enhancing foreign markets' understanding and acceptance of Chinese medicine culture through the promotion of folk activities and folklore.

A well-known theory in cross-cultural communication is the “Iceberg Effect.” In the context of Chinese medicine, what is visible above the waterline is its ability to prevent and treat diseases,

while hidden beneath are its unique values and philosophical foundations. Chinese medicine is based on the Yin-Yang theory and the Five Elements theory, viewing the human body as a unified entity of Qi, form, and spirit. Through inspection, listening and smelling, inquiry, and palpation, it explores the causes, nature, and location of diseases, analyzes the pathogenesis and changes in internal organs, meridians, and joints, as well as the flow of Qi, blood, and body fluids. It then determines disease names, summarizes syndromes, and formulates treatment principles. Following the principle of syndrome differentiation and treatment, it employs various therapeutic methods, including sweating, vomiting, purging, harmonizing, warming, clearing, tonifying, and reducing, as well as therapies such as Chinese herbal medicine, acupuncture, injury treatment, massage, cupping, Qigong, and dietary therapy, to restore the balance of Yin and Yang in the body.

Traditional Chinese festivals and folklore contain numerous elements of Chinese medicine. Utilizing traditional festival folklore to develop Chinese medicine cultural resources has significant practical value. It contributes to the growth of the Chinese medicine cultural industry, highlights the unique features and advantages of Chinese medicine culture, and helps preserve valuable Chinese medicine resources.

## **2 Cultural Interpretation of Traditional Festival Folklore and Traditional Chinese Medicine Elements**

Among all traditional Chinese festivals, the customs of the Dragon Boat Festival are most closely related to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), earning it the title “Festival of Hygiene and Epidemic Prevention.” The Dragon Boat Festival occurs in early summer, a season when mosquitoes breed, and infectious diseases are more prevalent. To ward off evil spirits, prevent diseases, and promote well-being, many TCM elements have been integrated into the festival. One of the hallmark customs of the Dragon Boat Festival is the hanging of mugwort on doorways, as mugwort is a commonly used herb in TCM. The earliest recorded medical text in China, *The Prescriptions for Fifty-Two Diseases* from the Warring States period, noted the disease-preventing, anti-inflammatory, and therapeutic effects of mugwort leaves. Hanging mugwort on doors is believed to ward off evil and ensure good health. Additionally, in some areas, it remains a custom to eat eggs boiled with mugwort on the morning of the Dragon Boat Festival. People wash mugwort leaves, boil them with eggs, and consume them for health benefits. In Guangdong, there is a tradition of bathing in herbal water during the festival, while in Hakka regions, people hang kudzu vines, which are believed to ward off evil and symbolize peace. In the Chaoshan area, many towns follow the custom of drying “hundred-day ginger.” Fresh ginger is washed, tied with string, and left on rooftops to be exposed to the elements for one hundred days, from the Dragon Boat Festival to the Mid-Autumn Festival. This dried ginger is later used to make tea, which is believed to dispel cold and wind.

The Mid-Autumn Festival, which falls on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month, is celebrated by eating mooncakes and admiring the moon. The traditional fillings of mooncakes, such as red

bean paste, sesame, jujube paste, walnuts, peanuts, and almonds, often serve a dual purpose as both food and medicine. They are not only delicious but also nutritious. Moon-gazing during the Mid-Autumn Festival embodies unique health wisdom. Ancient people believed that admiring the moon helped accumulate energy, balance the body's Yin and Yang, and regulate the biological clock, thereby promoting relaxation and harmony of body and mind. The eighth lunar month, also known as the "Osmanthus Month," is the best time to enjoy osmanthus flowers. Drinking osmanthus wine while admiring the moon is both a seasonal health practice and a poetic tradition. Osmanthus wine is particularly effective in relieving stomach cold. It is warm but not overly dry, nourishes the spleen and stomach, and helps counteract the dryness of autumn.

The ninth day of the ninth lunar month is the traditional Double Ninth Festival. On this day, ancient people followed the custom of placing dogwood leaves on their heads and hiking to high altitudes, believing that these practices could ward off misfortune and bring peace and happiness. This tradition has been preserved and passed down to the present day. Dogwood is a member of the fennel family and can grow over three meters tall. It blooms with greenish-white flowers in spring and bears purple-black fruits in autumn. Dogwood can be used medicinally or for brewing wine, both of which have therapeutic effects. In TCM, dogwood is commonly used to treat various pain-related conditions, including Jueyin headaches and abdominal pain caused by cold. Additionally, dogwood's strong fragrance repels mosquitoes and other insects, making it effective in preventing bites. From a TCM perspective, hiking during the Double Ninth Festival is also highly beneficial. With clear autumn skies and fresh air, hiking not only strengthens the body but also enhances lung capacity, improves blood circulation, and helps regulate blood sugar levels, making it an excellent health practice.

The *I Ching (Book of Changes)* includes the phrase "Winter Solstice gives birth to Yang," which signifies the moment when extreme Yin transforms into Yang energy. This marks the optimal time for nourishment, as the spleen and stomach function more actively, enabling better absorption and storage of nutrients, thereby strengthening the immune system. Traditional Winter Solstice customs include consuming ginseng chicken soup, dumplings in the north, and glutinous rice balls in the south.

### **3 Pathways for Developing TCM Cultural Resources Through Traditional Festival Folklore**

Traditional festivals often align with seasonal transitions. During these celebrations, people integrate their understanding of health and disease, reflecting a deep respect for nature and life. The development of TCM cultural resources through traditional festival folklore can be achieved via multiple pathways, including the expansion and construction of the TCM cultural industry chain, the exploration of TCM's unique cultural characteristics, and the utilization of diverse communication media.

### **3.1 Extending and Developing the TCM Cultural Industry Chain Through Traditional Festival Folklore**

The development of TCM cultural resources is inherently linked to the TCM cultural industry. The overseas dissemination of TCM culture can leverage the promotion of traditional festival folklore as a strategic entry point. For example, Guangdong has effectively integrated its TCM health resources with local folklore to develop a diverse range of services, including tourism, vacationing, leisure, health care, fitness, dietary therapy, scientific research, public health education, and cultural entertainment.

Three types of demonstration bases have been established: TCM Ecological Tourism Bases, TCM Cultural Tourism Bases, and TCM Comprehensive Health Service Bases. TCM Ecological Tourism Bases emphasize the appreciation of natural landscapes and cultural relics associated with TCM; TCM Cultural Tourism Bases highlight TCM cultural landmarks and museums; and TCM Comprehensive Health Service Bases primarily offer TCM wellness services.

By leveraging traditional festival folklore to collect, organize, and disseminate knowledge about TCM culture—along with health and disease prevention practices embedded in festival customs—people can engage in these experiences through tourism. This approach not only enhances the cultural appeal of TCM but also facilitates its global dissemination, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of its principles.

### **3.2 Exploring the Unique Features and Advantages of TCM Culture to Foster Cross-Cultural Communication and Integration**

To promote China's rich traditional culture and advance the global dissemination of TCM, practitioners must explore the cultural essence of TCM embedded in traditional festivals. Particular emphasis should be placed on concepts, methods, and practices that contribute to modern health, enabling foreign audiences—especially younger generations—to better understand and embrace these principles.

The core strengths of TCM culture—its simplicity, accessibility, affordability, and efficacy—allow people to easily access both physical and mental health services. For example, the successful dissemination of TCM culture in Africa is supported by the region's abundant natural medicinal plant resources, serving as a material foundation, and reinforced by the emotional bonds fostered through the remarkable medical contributions of Chinese medical aid teams. Moreover, local cultural awareness of disease prevention and health maintenance aligns closely with TCM principles.

Integrating Chinese traditional festival folklore with local customs fosters cross-cultural communication by incorporating TCM practices such as acupuncture, massage, and wellness programs. This approach not only provides comprehensive health services to local communities but also continuously enhances the global influence of TCM culture. With the growing demand for TCM treatments in Africa, local communities are increasingly appreciating TCM culture's core strengths—its simplicity, accessibility, affordability, and efficacy.



### 3.3 Utilizing Folklore to Develop Diverse Cross-Cultural Communication Media

Effective cross-cultural communication of TCM necessitates an understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds and target audiences. This requires familiarity with their values, beliefs, traditions, customs, and behaviors to overcome cultural barriers and ensure accurate and impactful information dissemination.

On August 20, 2024, *Black Myth: Wukong*, the first domestically developed AAA video game, was officially released. The transliteration of terms such as *Wukong* and *Jin Gubang*, coupled with authentic English voice acting, enhanced player engagement and contributed to the global recognition of Chinese culture.

Similarly, leveraging various media formats—such as text, images, audio, video, and games—to promote traditional festival folklore can further explore and develop the unique resources of TCM culture. Presenting these resources in engaging and accessible formats strengthens the audience's emotional connection and cultural resonance.

Additionally, integrating Chinese traditional festival folklore with local customs enables people to experience key TCM health concepts, such as “food and medicine from the same source,” seasonal health practices, and the holistic unity of body and mind. This not only enriches the cultural significance of traditional festivals but also establishes a solid material, emotional, and cognitive foundation for the cross-cultural dissemination of TCM.

## 4 Conclusion

Traditional festival folklore constitutes an integral part of Chinese culture. Both traditional festival folklore and TCM culture are deeply rooted in the rich heritage of Chinese traditional culture, offering profound interpretations of life, health, and disease. Chinese traditional festival folklore encapsulates life practices passed down through generations and maintains a close connection with TCM principles. As people partake in the cultural festivities of traditional festivals, they simultaneously embrace the health concepts embedded within them.

Harnessing traditional festival folklore not only facilitates the inheritance and promotion of TCM culture but also contributes to the effective development of TCM cultural resources. By establishing pathways for TCM cultural industry development, exploring the distinctive attributes of TCM culture, utilizing diverse communication media, and fostering cross-cultural communication and integration, the global dissemination of TCM can be expanded in both breadth and depth.

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