

2011-2015: Principles of National Cultural Strategy and Cultural Industries Development in Mainland of China



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Since 1840, the Chinese cultural psyche and self-confidence that had been established during the imperial eras of the Zhou, Qin, Han and Tang dynasties were destroyed by the weakness, civil instability and repeated invasions that characterized the late Qing dynasty. From the beginning of the 20th century, the country's culture has been burdened with an enormous amount of political baggage, saddled as it was with the onerous dual task of salvaging the nation and driving social reform. From the New Culture Movement to the Cultural Revolution, Chinese culture has had to chase ever-shifting attitudes ranging from a lack of self-esteem, to arrogance, to self-awareness. Since the beginning of reform and opening up in 1978, the CPC¹ Central Committee and the State Council have worked to implement the three national strategies of 'economic wealth', 'scientific and technological innovation' and 'culture and creativity'. Both society and the economy have developed rapidly, and China has grown ever stronger as a nation, while the 'China model', the 'Chinese experience' and the 'China highway' have garnered widespread global attention, providing a powerful emphasis for Chinese culture as a culturally autonomous, self-assured and self-aware major Eastern civilization.

Following the elevation of the cultural industries to the level of national strategy after the publication of the 'Cultural Industry Promotion Plan' by the State Council in September 2009, the seventeenth meeting of the Sixth Plenary Session of the CPC, held from 15 – 18 October 2011, provided a comprehensive and systematic map of a model for the road to Chinese cultural reform and development, with the goal of building a 'Socialist culturally strong nation'. This was an historical necessity, a response to the times and part of a global trend.

1. SYSTEMIC CULTURAL REFORM IS AN IMPORTANT FOUNDATION OF NATIONAL CULTURAL STRATEGY

As an important initiative in the implementation of a creative and cultural national strategy, systemic cultural reform has passed through three stages.

The first was 1978-1997, a period of preparation for systemic cultural reform. During this period, flowing with the tide of opening up and reform and the construction of the socialist market economy, the cultural needs of the population grew continuously, as did the prosperity of China's cultural market. This market boom gave rise to the passive, superficial and piecemeal reform of cultural public institutions. The second period was 1998-2002, during which systemic cultural reform was explored more fully. With the establishment of the Cultural Industries Division of the Ministry of Culture in 1998, the idea of using the cultural industries as an important means of promoting the development of socialist culture became part of the government's agenda. During this period, and taking advantage of the opportunities to reform state-owned enterprises and develop the securities market, individual cultural industries underwent a high level of systemic reform, promoting the establishment of publishing groups, radio and TV broadcast groups and media groups, as well as the market listing of a number of radio and TV broadcast companies. The period marked a manifestation of systemic economic reform within the cultural realm, focusing on the cultivation of market entities. In 2002, the 16th National Congress officially divided the construction of a socialist culture into non-profit cultural activities and cultural activities operated as a business, laying down a new concept and a theoretical foundation for the launch of comprehensive systemic cultural reform. The third period from 2003-2011, was a period of propelling comprehensive systemic cultural reform forwards. The first pilot project for systemic cultural reform began in 2003, when 35 pilot units nationwide embarked upon a series of test projects in areas such as field development, market growth and content production. Since 2006, the Central Committee has held annual meetings on the progress of systemic cultural reform in order to compile details of practice from the pilot projects, and 2007 saw the launch of full-scale systemic cultural reform.

Over the past nine years of China's systemic cultural reform, a wealth of experience has been accumulated in terms of institutional development, area development and industry development, with impressive results being achieved in each of these fields, while the basic task of systemic cultural reform has already been completed.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES IS A NECESSARY PATH FOR NATIONAL CULTURAL STRATEGY

The cultural industries moved into the spotlight as an emerging industry in the 1990s. After 1997, the UK, Australia, Singapore, South Korea and Japan all adjusted their own industrial strategies for the next century, pushing the cultural industries to the fore, and leveraging the emerging force of the cultural industries to increase employment and drive rapid economic growth in their respective countries.

In China, creative and cultural strategy as a national strategy began in 1998, the indicator being the establishment in this year of the Cultural Industries Division by the Ministry of Culture, a unit whose specific duty was to take responsibility for cultural industry policy and guidance. Following this, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council both separately underlined the importance of ensuring the firm-footed development of 'cultural industries and related industries' in 2000 in the 'Outline of the '10th Five-Year Plan' for National Economic and Social Development', and during the 16th National Congress Report in 2002, which referred to the 'acceleration of systemic cultural reform and the development of the cultural industries'. These all provided indications that the China of the new century was ushering in a new era – one of cultural consumption born of a knowledge-based economy. In September 2009, in the 'Outline of the '11th Five-Year Plan' for Cultural Development', the State Council underlined the importance of developing the cultural industries as a national strategy. The importance of this development was once again emphasized in November 2007 in the 17th National Congress Report, which stated that the development of the cultural industries was an important means by which to achieve China's goal of being an affluent society in which "political construct, economic construct, social construct and cultural construct" were united as one. The report also proposed "working vigorously to develop the cultural industries, implementing a strategy lead by major cultural industry projects, accelerating the construction of

cultural industry bases and regional cultural industry clusters, cultivating key cultural industry enterprises and strategic investors, enriching the cultural market and enhancing international competitiveness". It also put forward the important idea of increasing the soft power of Chinese culture. In September 2009, the State Council promulgated the 'Cultural Industry Promotion Plan', while in 2010 President Hu Jintao gave a speech on cultural construction during the 22nd collective learning event organized by the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, and the nine ministries published the Guidance relating to financial support for promoting the prosperous development of the cultural industries. In March 2011, both the CPC Central Committee and the State Council proposed that the promotion of the construction of the cultural industries should become one of the main pillars of the Chinese national economy. This series of national initiatives demonstrates the official nature of China's cultural and creative national strategy.

The cultural industries are viewed differently all over the world: for example, in the UK they are called the creative industries, in Japan and South Korea they are called the content industries, in Taiwan and Hong Kong they are known as the cultural and creative industries, just as they are in Beijing, while they are known simply as the creative industries in Shanghai and Yanhai. All central-level documents, such as those of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, specify the use of the term cultural industries. Of course, by extension these concepts are different, but against the background of the cultural industries, which was believed that these all essentially express a single entity, characterized by the following points: firstly, it is based on individual creativity in the creative sphere, a kind of intelligence, knowledge, copyright and aesthetic-based industry, which features the artistic innovation of a particular place's traditional culture; secondly, it is based on modern technology and new media, a type of agglomerative media and content industry capable of large-scale reproduction and mass production; thirdly, it is modern and international market oriented, catering for the formation of a large-scale cultural market and cultural consumption, and; fourthly, it is a combination of product management and business operation and of industrial management and capital management, with the long-term overall value of business operations increased by profits from short-term fragmented projects.

Today, the cultural industries have become one of the major talking points of China's social and economic development, and cultural consumption has started to become a feature that permeates all of our lives on a daily basis. During 2012, the increase in value of the cultural industries in Guangdong, Shandong, Jiangsu and Beijing reached as much as CNY 100 billion, becoming a major support for economic and industrial restructuring in these regions, as well as a major component of economic development. The cultural industries have been the driving force behind the way in which China is breaking free from its predicament of the middle income countries while the nation stagnates, as well as a primary factor in the development and transformation of the Chinese economy from one driven by investment, government, cost and price to a much higher value model for economic growth, driven by the market, product quality and innovation. The mantra is no longer 'Made in China', but 'Created in China'.

3. CULTURAL INNOVATION IS A FUNDAMENTAL CHOICE FOR NATIONAL CULTURAL STRATEGY

From the point of view of global economic development and the classical economic theory of 'elements', in much the same way as agricultural economies which were dependent upon land became industrial economies dependent on technology and investment, economic scarcity has now transferred from information and knowledge to creativity, especially in the last 20 years. Accordingly, both economic and industrial models have shifted and developed from being information and knowledge-based to being creativity-based. This is as much a global trend as it is a pattern for national and regional socio-economic development. The world today is in the process of transition from an era characterized by the importance of minerals, technology and management, to a new era driven by creativity. Creativity, or cultural innovation, is a combination of the three principles of the scientific quest for truth, the human quest for well-being and the artistic quest for beauty. It is the introduction of products and services with profound cultural connotations through the marriage of art and science.

The aim of a 'cultural nation' strategy is to ensure the enduring existence of a nation through merit, culture and effort, to become the very tallest tree in the global forest of nations. Cultural national strategy is a logical choice for any developed nation after a period of rapid economic development. Japan's national strategy since the dawn of the modern era has been divided into three stages: a military national strategy (from the Meiji Restoration to WWII), an economic national strategy (from the end of WWII to the 1980s) and a cultural national strategy (since the 1990s). In 1995, Japan established a strategy for the 'cultural nation' of the 21st Century – 'The 21st Century Cultural Nation Program' – that actively promoted the international dissemination of Japanese culture and the expansion of Japan's cultural industries. From the cherry blossom trees on the lawn of the White House in Washington to the animation series and music that have flooded the globe, the cultural image that Japan has shaped successfully since the end of their economic boom has won praise all over the world. In 1998, South Korea clearly delineated its 'cultural nation principles' and the 'South Korea Content Vision 21', with the aim of building South Korea into a major cultural and informatics nation of the 21st Century, by providing a powerful boost to the quality of South Korean cultural products across the board, including through governmental and institutional adjustment, national and social awareness, the development of the creativity of content and the cultivation of specialist personnel. As a result, South Korean music, cinema, TV content and online games have swept the world's markets. China must capitalize on the characteristics of this era of development and make creativity and innovation the foundation of the nation, and thereby implement a cultural national strategy.

The 'Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development', agreed at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies for Development in Stockholm in 1998 clearly stated that 'development can ultimately define the concept of culture, and cultural prosperity is the highest goal of development'. It was the contemporary German philosophical anthropologist Michael Landmann who said, "Culture is like a circulatory system, the blood of which is comprised of subjectivity". China becoming a cultural power should not be the wishful thinking of an elite few, but the common pursuit of all citizens. And just like a circulatory system, cultural national strategy should circulate culture to permeate every part of society, from a national level down to a regional, business and individual level. It should not just be implemented by the central government ministries and local government units commissioned to do so, but rather the implementation of national cultural strategy should be the responsibility of each and every citizen.

4. 2011-2015: AN HISTORICAL OPPORTUNITY FOR NATIONAL CULTURAL STRATEGY

The decade from 2010 to 2020 will be an important period for China in achieving its goal of becoming an affluent society, as well as forming the golden years for the development of China's cultural industries. The period of the '12th Five-Year Plan' (2011-2015) is the best opportunity history has ever granted China for the development of its cultural industries. It must consolidate past achievements made in the construction of cultural public institutions and the development of operating cultural industries, while avoiding the problems that have emerged in the past decade of rapid cultural industrial growth, and take a firm grasp of the development trends inherent in global cultural industry development to promote the growth of cultural industries in China.

During the past decade of development of the cultural industries in China, especially in the last three years, particularly prominent issues have arisen in the following areas:

- 1) Cultural industry growth method. Currently, the growth of China's cultural industries is focused not on creating content but on manufacturing, mainly relying on immovable material cultural resources to achieve major breakthroughs in cultural tourism. This type of cultural industry development is, therefore, essentially an extension of something else and it borders on being insulting to the development of local natural scenery, history and celebrities, primarily seeking

profit through real estate development following ticket sales and the increase in value of the surrounding area.

- 2) Actual cultural connotations of the cultural industries. Over the past decade, China has produced many low-quality cultural products simply to satisfy the vulgar tastes of the consumer public, and the resulting negative effects on modern urban cultural consumption are a violation of the valuable content and humanistic character of China's cultural industries, thereby reducing the value of pursuing cultural products and blindly increasing the interaction with, trendiness of, participation in and experiences with these so-called 'cultural products' simply for base physical satisfaction.
- 3) Realizing the benefits of the cultural industries. Currently, the benefits of the cultural industries are mainly reliant upon those derived from the economies of scale of the industrialized model of mass production used by cultural industry parks and bases, with very little increase in value brought about purely through symbolic value (i.e. a combination of the functional and symbolic value of a cultural product). Moreover, most cultural industry parks have very few downstream industrial associations built upon intellectual property rights, and it is rare to see benefits derived from cultural products being exported abroad and building an international brand.
- 4) Administration and supervision of the cultural industries. Currently, the role played by the Chinese government in promoting the development of the cultural industries is as yet unclear, often intertwining as it does the responsibilities of public cultural service and the development of the cultural industries, with 'concerted efforts' meaning that enterprises and employees in the cultural industries cannot avoid scrutiny by the public sector, a situation which can even result in power struggles and disputes of interest. At the same time, standards remain vague for the review of cultural product content by government administrations, characterized by high levels of subjectivity and low objective operability. There is no distinction between governmental content review and classification of industry standards, which harms the interests of the public in terms of cultural consumption, and is not conducive to the increase in value of cultural products.

Therefore, to tackle the issues mentioned above, the '12th Five-Year Plan' should touch upon all of these problems to varying extents in order to provide critical preparation for the realization of China's aim to become an international cultural power. Overall, the '12th Five-Year Plan' should focus on the following basic principles and key areas for development:

- 1) The '12th Five-Year Plan' should be implemented on the basis of an objective and fair assessment of the past decade, a detailed summary should be compiled of the historical experience gained in this area and international experience should be learned from in order to better define the main practices and methods that will embody the rules of the '12th Five-Year Plan' during the period of its execution. Over the past decade, the central government has published a range of documents, including the '12th Five-Year Plan Outline for the Development of the Cultural Industries', the 'Cultural Industries Development Plan for the Period of the '12th Five-Year Plan'', the CPC's '17th National Congress Report', the State Council's 'Cultural Industries Promotion Plan' and the Ministry of Culture's 'Advice Regarding the Acceleration of the Development of the Cultural Industries' which, along with successful experiences in Beijing, Shanghai, Yunnan, Hunan and other places, represent the accumulation of wisdom and the execution of experience. It is now necessary to fully assess the effects of their implementation and their continuation, in order to enable the '12th Five-Year Plan' to truly complement, deepen and extend these policies, as well as to build upon, promote and popularize this experience.
- 2) The '12th Five-Year Plan' should focus on development over the next 10 years, gain a firm grasp of the aspects that characterize China's political, economic, cultural and social development during this decade, in order to implement a rational breakdown of the tasks and lay the foundations for the '12th Five-Year Plan' during the period of its execution.

- 3) Chinese cultural development must take into account the dual issues of social equality and market efficiency and balance the relationship between culture and the economy. Within this framework, cultural institutions mainly focus on the principle of equality in the cultural rights and interests of the people, while the cultural industries mainly focus on the principle of cultural market efficiency. Making the most of cultural industry efficiency relies mainly upon the full implementation of market mechanisms, and the '12th Five-Year Plan' should, therefore, be conducive to the full participation of cultural market entities ('enterprised' state-owned companies, private enterprises, foreign-funded enterprises and individuals) and the prosperity of cultural consumption.
- 4) The advantages of an industrial policy-led national cultural industry development model should be actively elaborated and a 'Cultural Industry Development Promotion Act' drawn up to legally resolve the issue of the multi-entity management, administration and supervision of the cultural industries. Concepts, connotations and denotations should be drawn up for the cultural industries to be uniformly adopted at all levels of government, a unified statistical indicator system and a national cultural industry statistical standards authority established, a national 'Annual Chinese Cultural Industry Development Report' should be periodically and uniformly published, and a standard basis for international cultural industry dialogue and exchange should also be established. Furthermore, at the regional level, the rational regional distribution of the cultural industries, as well as relative regional development and balanced growth must all be taken into account.
- 5) The role played by the government in the management and promotion of the development of the cultural industries must be fully elaborated upon, the administrative efficiency of the government's management of public culture increased and the regulatory experiences of regional cultural administrative bodies summed up in order to establish the solid foundations for, or even complete, the '12th Five-Year Plan' for the central ministries.
- 6) The construction and development of regional cultural industry parks and bases should be strictly regulated, a unified national evaluation index system established and completed, and an annual inspection system for the national cultural industry bases and parks implemented.
- 7) The drawing up, implementation and management of classification and grading standards for cultural product content should be promoted, governmental content review and industry content classification should be distinguished at the conceptual level, the Chinese cultural connotations of Chinese cultural products fundamentally improved, the protection, use and development of creative content strengthened, cultural content distribution channels established and a 'China Content Strategy' and 'Chinese National Creative Material Development Plan' implemented at the national level.
- 8) The promotion of the development of emerging online cultural industries should be focused on, research performed into the trends and characteristics of the cultural industries over the next decade, focusing on the triple-network and three-screens-in-one industries of digital content and new media, and a market-leading position in the global cultural landscape should be established. The cultural productivity of the cultural industries and the crossover and integration with traditional industries (agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, and manufacturing) and third sector industries should be strengthened, and the cultural added value of the traditional industries increased, even extending to enable traditional industries to create a level of cultural competitiveness in the international marketplace.
- 9) An international cultural industry development strategy should be actively drawn up, the international cultural market should be borne in mind in all domestic cultural industry developments, cultural industry participation in international cultural trade should be promoted, and targets for China to enter the 'Top 5 International Cultural Market Powers' should be set, full

use should be made of Chinese cultural centres and Confucius Academies established abroad, Chinese cultural industry development institutes should be established in Tokyo, London, Paris and New York and an international development strategy for the key cultural industries, enterprises and regions for film, publishing, the performing arts and fine art should be drawn up.

- 10) A series of content standards and value assessments should be developed for cultural industries personnel, a system of accreditation for various cultural industries professional qualifications and abilities should be formulated, a national recognition system should be implemented and overseas personnel who contribute to the international promotion of Chinese culture should be encouraged and rewarded.

The question of the 'cultural nation' is not a theoretical one, but a practical one. Culture is the way of life of a nation and its people, a lifestyle which can make them noble, decent and dignified as well as winning the respect, envy and approval of the people of other nations. German-born American philosopher and social theorist Herbert Marcuse believed that people living in contemporary industrial societies could be classed as 'One Dimensional Men', but we now need to become 'Multi-Dimensional Men'. The 'cultural nation' is an important national commitment and strategy for achieving this ultimate goal. We must build a platform for the development of the cultural industries on the established foundations of comprehensive laws and regulations. We must also enable government to provide multi-faceted financial support while adhering to the diversification of cultural production entities. Moreover, we must fully implement market operations and operate the cultural industry in accordance with market laws, and we must pay close attention to the protection and development of cultural heritage and promote the modern communication of traditional Chinese culture. Finally, we must strengthen the international exchange of art and culture in order to establish both universal and international recognition of its value.