

中国  画报

A Window to the Nation A Welcome to the World

CHINA PICTORIAL

Vol. 894 May 2023

Intangible
Cultural Heritage
in Modern Life

国内零售价: 10元

USA \$5.10 UK £3.20

Australia \$9.10 Europe €5.20

Canada \$7.80 Türkiye TL10.00

ISSN 0009-4420



9 770009 442231

邮发代号2-903 CN11-1429/Z



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May 2023

Administrative Agency: 主管单位：中国外文出版发行事业局
China International Communications Group (中国国际传播集团)

Publisher: China Pictorial Publications 主办、出版单位：人民壹报社

Address: 社址：
33 Chegongzhuang Xilu 北京市海淀区车公庄西路33号
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Telephone of the Distribution Department: 订刊电话：
86-10-68412660 86-10-68412660

Legal Adviser: Yue Cheng 法律顾问：岳成

Printing: Toppan Leefung Changcheng 印刷：北京利丰雅高长城
Printing (Beijing) Co., Ltd. 印刷有限公司

Overseas Distribution:
China International Book Trading Corporation (Guoji Shudian),
35 Chegongzhuang Xilu,
Po. Box 399, Beijing 100044, China
Telephone: 86-10-68413849
Fax: 86-10-68412166
China Book Trading (Canada) Inc.
Telephone: 1-416-497-8096

出版日期 每月1日
国内零售价：10元
国内刊号：CN11-1429/Z
国际刊号：ISSN0009-4420
京海工商广字第0121号

In China, subscriptions are available at any post office.

Subscription and distribution agency in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan:
Hong Kong Peace Book Company, Ltd.
17/F, Paramount Building, 12 Ka Yip Street, Chai Wan, Hong Kong

Visit *China Pictorial* on the Internet:
www.china-pictorial.com.cn

China Pictorial is an official media partner of the Boao Forum
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Express

Linking Past to Present /08



Central

Intangible Cultural Heritage in
Modern Life /12

Intangible Cultural Heritage
Improving Lives /14

China's Intangible Cultural
Heritage Listed by UNESCO /18

Integrating Intangible Heritage
with Tourism: China's Innovative
Approach /26

Intangible Cultural Heritage:
Thriving on Campus and Beyond
/32

Folk Culture Key to Rural
Revitalization /38

New Boom for Old Crafts /44



34

Panorama

From Court to Crowd /60



53



56

Mosaic

Chinese Cloisonné: Capturing the
Country's Landscapes /50

The Story of Time /56

Cover Caption

A Kunqu Opera actress prepares for her stage performance in Suzhou City, eastern China's Jiangsu Province. Originating in Kunshan, a county-level city under the jurisdiction of Suzhou, Kunqu Opera was listed as a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage item in 2008. (Photo by Liu Gang/CFB)

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy has organized a range of Open Day activities across the country to mark its 74th founding anniversary that fell on April 23, 2023.

A total of 62 PLA Navy barracks in 22 cities including Qingdao, Dalian, Shanghai, and Guangzhou have been open to the public since April 21. As part of the celebration, members of the public were invited to visit 28 anchored military vessels. The featured ships include a diverse range of classes including guided-missile destroyers, guided-missile frigates, and hospital ships.

The PLA Navy was founded on April 23, 1949.



Soldiers from the PLA Navy guide visitors on a tour of a military vessel during an Open Day activity at the Qingdao Port, eastern China's Shandong Province, April 22, 2023. (Photo by Duan Wei/China Pictorial)



Colorful kites are displayed at the 40th Weifang International Kite Festival in Weifang, Shandong Province, April 15, 2023. (Photo from IC)

The 40th Weifang International Kite Festival, which kicked off in Weifang, eastern China's Shandong Province, on April 15, 2023, attracted kite enthusiasts from around the world.

As a national-level intangible cultural heritage, the technique to make Weifang kites with bamboo and paper has been inherited from generation to generation for more than 2,000 years. The coruscating festival, featuring an array of kites in various shapes and sizes, has become one of the most iconic international events in China since the country launched its reform and opening up in the late 1970s. According to organizers, more than 600 kite enthusiasts from 59 countries and regions participated in the event.

Alongside kite flying, the festival also included a range of other activities including cultural performances, exhibitions, lantern fairs, concerts, and food stalls serving local delicacies, providing a platform for opening up and exchange, and creating an international gala featuring traditional cultures and Chinese characteristics.



The first flight on a new route from Xi'an, northwestern China's Shaanxi Province, to Astana, capital of Kazakhstan, is ready to depart from the airport, April 21, 2023. (Photo courtesy of Air China)

Air China introduced a direct flight from Xi'an, northwestern China's Shaanxi Province, to Astana, Kazakhstan, on April 21, 2023. It is the first fixed international service to Kazakhstan from Shaanxi by the carrier and would increase the connections between China and Central Asia.

As planned, the flight operates twice a week, flying from Xi'an on Mondays and Fridays, and returning on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

The route was inspired by the increasing demand for personnel exchange between China and Kazakhstan and would strengthen bilateral connections in terms of trade, culture, and travel while boosting the aviation markets of both countries, said Zhang Sheng, a vice general manager of China National Aviation Holding Co., at a press conference in Xi'an.

Air China has launched around 60 routes along the Belt and Road so far, connecting 36 cities in 26 countries and regions since 2013.

A star-studded list of 38 plays from home and abroad will be staged during the 2023 Aranya Theater Festival, which is scheduled to be held from June 15 to 25 in Aranya, a sea resort and cultural community by the Bohai Sea in northern China's Hebei Province.

Themed "Howls & Whispers," the event will focus on exploring and showing "how art can be expressed" and stimulate the potential and emotions of artists with natural scenery of seawater, green spaces, forests, and beaches. Additionally, the festival will also strengthen international exchange to find a more multicultural narrative between globalization and localization.

Celebrities in theatrical art including directors Meng Jinghui and Chen Minghao as well as actress Zhang Ziyi serve as artistic directors for the festival this year. Highlights will include *The Hour We Know Nothing of Each Other* by Robert Schuster as the opening show and *Red* by Chen Minghao. Concerts, dialogues, exhibitions, and theater workshops will also be held.

An outdoor performance during the 2021 Aranya Theater Festival. (Photo courtesy of the Aranya Theater Festival)



Linking Past to Present

Text by Christoph John
Photos courtesy of Christoph John

Our job as designers and artists is to carry Chinese cultural heritage into the new era by linking them with today's technologies and freshening them up with current elements and trends.



Born in Germany, Christoph John graduated from the Domus Academy of Design in Milan, Italy, and now lives in Hangzhou, China, where he co-founded the PINWU Design Studio and the Rong Design Library with his partners. It is a laboratory to experiment with Chinese materials and craftsmanship to be translated into contemporary design.

Traditional Chinese crafts are facilitating opportunities to shuttle between the past and the present. Understanding such crafts involves not only techniques and materials, but absorbing an entire culture.

Zhang Lei, Jovana Zhang, and I developed a passion to search for and discover them. We met and became friends in Milan, Italy, in 2009 and ventured to China in 2010. For Zhang Lei, it was a return and rediscovery of the culture of his own nation. However, for Jovana and me, an adventure into a new world began.

Inspiration From Oil-Paper Umbrella

We started with visiting local

workshops and craftsmen in our neighborhood in Hangzhou, eastern China's Zhejiang Province. A small traditional oil-paper umbrella workshop caught our eyes. It has been making Yuhang oil-paper umbrellas, a provincial-level intangible cultural heritage item in Zhejiang, with ancient techniques and natural materials for decades.

We went to the workshop many times to analyze and learn this traditional Chinese craft. The local craftsmen warmly welcomed us and openly shared their skills. The elderly owner of the workshop was passionate about passing on his lifetime skills to his son Liu Weixue, who harnessed his passion to refurbish the workshop with his own vision

and ideas. We became friends and instead of only researching the techniques, we also helped them update their products and improve the workshop with our own predictions about how this significant craft could evolve in future.

One day, we watched a craftsman doing routine work gluing numerous paper layers onto the prepared bamboo frame, which later served as the main shade of the umbrella. This step caught our attention and inspired us to experiment with it.

We made several samples and tried putting wet paper layers onto each other, adding glue as well. Later, we realized that the combination of this uniquely strong and flexible paper with our newly developed approach resulted in a surprisingly stiff form. The more layers we added, the more durable the shape became.

With this approach, we made a chair named *Piao*. The open and fluffy edge surrounding the whole seat not only makes each piece unique and light in appearance, but also communicates what the work is based on—handmade Yuhang paper. With its unique technique and design, the chair won the "Red Dot: Best of the Best 2022" for Product Design, the highest award for international design in Germany.

Alongside the chair, we designed and crafted a collection of works based on the Yuhang oil-paper umbrella. Together with other artists and designers, we produced lamps, installations, and new umbrellas.



Piao, a paper chair.



Cewo, upcycled ceramic seating.



The silk ware series *Shine*.



Air, a bamboo chair.

Discovery Journey of Traditional Chinese Crafts

By then, we were stunned by the surprising outcomes and even more motivated to discover other secrets and inspirations hidden in rich Chinese culture. That's how our never-ending journey started. We realized that just one local craft that we found in our neighborhood gave us the inspiration to produce such significant works. From that day, we were even more encouraged and enthusiastic about exploring other crafts and techniques, all related to materials all over China.

So far, we have traveled to nearly every province of the country, gathering countless material samples and communicating with many traditional workshops and craftsmen. Based on our initial experience, the process behind each work is often the most exciting and inspiring, so we highlight that in our Rong Design Library, which hosts a wide range of ancient crafts, original techniques, and related materials.

After the success of our work based on the traditional oil-paper umbrella, everything else we did from that point on was inspired by either a traditional Chinese technique or related materials. Rather than reproducing the original craftsmanship, our aim has been to deconstruct it and reshape it into a contemporary work. We are truthful to the natural material qualities and benefit from the fundamentals of the long proven crafts. Our job as designers and artists is to propel such Chinese cultural heritage into



Christoph John (right) with partners Zhang Lei (center) and Jovana Zhang (left) outside the Rong Design Library in Qingshan Village.



Inspired by paper kite, a Chinese intangible cultural heritage item, Christoph and his partners have integrated its unique value into the shop window displays of Hermes and other domestic and international brands.

a new era by linking them with today's technologies and spicing them up with current elements and trends.

The experience of living and working in the countryside even inspired the three of us to move our design studio and Rong Design Library from downtown Hangzhou to a nearby village named Qingshan in Yuhang District. There, we found an abandoned and half-collapsed old city hall. With the help of the local government, it just took more than a year to reconstruct the building while retaining the original structure and layout. Now, it's the home of our Rong Design Library and all our gathered materials and techniques. And we even settled down in the village with our families to enjoy the natural environment surrounding us. 



Before and after the reconstruction of the Rong Design Library.

Protecting National Treasures



The Palace Museum in Taipei boasts a collection of over 690,000 precious cultural relics, serving as concrete evidence of the inheritance of Chinese culture. The museum's exhibitions of blue-and-white porcelain, Asian tea culture, and Islamic jade artifacts highlight the significant role Chinese civilization has played in Asian culture. Alongside inheriting treasures from the imperial palace of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the museum constantly acquires new artifacts through purchases and donations. Among them are the chime-bell set of Zi-fan from the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.), gold and bronze Buddhist statues from dynasties following the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534), and the calligraphy work *Cold Food Observance*.

Chinese Heritage
April 2023

A Different Childhood



Playing is considered by many to be a child's primary occupation. Whether engaging with toys or games, it plays a crucial role in a child's development. It helps children develop cognitive, emotional, motor, social, psychological, and language skills. However, children born after 2010 have grown up in a world where electronic screens dominate their daily lives. Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, noisy short videos and repetitive games replaced books, puzzles, and traditional toys like building bricks, pulling children away from these valuable experiences. This raises the question of what different effects these current games have on children's lives.

Sanlian Life Week
April 17, 2023

Going to China



Recently, Tesla announced construction of a mega factory in Shanghai to produce the company's energy storage product Megapack, the first outside the United States. Foreign investments are swarming into China, reflecting investors' confidence in the country's future development. According to recent data from China's Ministry of Commerce, foreign direct investment into China, in terms of actual use, reached 408.45 billion yuan (around US\$58 billion) during the first quarter of this year, with a year-on-year increase of 4.9 percent. Among these investments, the number of newly established foreign-funded enterprises exceeded 10,000. "Going to China" has become a hot topic across the world.

China Newsweek
April 24, 2023

Food Factories in China



For thousands of years, Chinese people had yearned for no more than a full stomach. Nowadays, with over 1.4 billion people bidding farewell to the struggle for basic necessities, the pursuit of high-quality and safe food has become one of China's top priorities. From small workshops to large factories, modern food processing industrial parks have sprouted up across the country. The modernization of China's food industry not only instills confidence in the people to eat enough and well but also serves as a remarkable embodiment of China's modernization with its vast population.

National Humanity History
March 15, 2023

Intangible Cultural Heritage in Modern Life

Concept by China Pictorial

A fashion show at the 6th Miao Costumes and Ornaments Festival in Fenghuang, Hunan Province. Thousands of young Miao people from Yunnan, Guangxi, Sichuan, and other regions dressed in festive attire to showcase the vibrant and diverse culture of Miao clothing at the event. (Photo by Zhang Yujie/Xinhua)

The seeds of China's intangible cultural heritage, imbued with Chinese wisdom, are now flourishing with new vitality in the new era.

During a long climb from primitive culture to agricultural civilization and then technological civilization, the wisdom imbued in China's intangible cultural heritage has maintained a strong vitality. As of March this year, China had recognized 1,557 national intangible cultural heritage items and 3,057 state-level inheritors in five waves. A vast number of intangible cultural heritage projects support the continuous

inheritance of China's profound culture embedded in them.

Intangible cultural heritage represents not only cultural legacies of the past, but also stories of individuals, family destinies, and the evolution of the Chinese nation. Rooted in the daily lives of the people, these cultural treasures embody the essence of the past and continue to shine brightly in the new era. Through transformation and innovation in recent years, intangible cultural heritage has been integrated into modern life and has been of great value in promoting economic and social development and meeting the people's ever-growing needs for a better life.

Intangible Cultural Heritage Improving Lives

Text by Shen Ce

Intangible cultural heritage is now considered an integral part of daily life as a link between traditional culture and modern life.

The many exhibitions and promotional events featuring time-honored food brands, handicrafts, and folk customs held during traditional festivals each year have been testifying to the increasing popularity of intangible cultural heritage in modern society. A carrier of Chinese nostalgia for

traditional culture, intangible cultural heritage manifests Chinese lifestyles and concepts. Contrasting official history recorded in books, history recorded through intangible cultural heritage is simpler but more amicable and diverse—closer to the lives of everyday people. Unlike tangible cultural relics and ancient buildings, intangible cultural heritage requires human carriers to survive, making it a more poetic cultural treasure.

China joined the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (hereinafter referred to as the Convention) in 2004. Since then, the spirit and purposes of the Convention have fueled great progress in intangible cultural heritage protection in China. Over the past two decades, China has explored a unique path to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage which has drawn high attention from the international community.

Because so many intangible cultural heritage items face the dilemma of an inability to adapt to modern life, the Chinese government introduced a series of approaches for intangible cultural heritage conservation with Chinese characteristics such as “productive protection,” “restorative protection,” and “comprehensive protection.”

The “comprehensive protection” approach conforms with the concept of “participation of communities” specified by the Convention: Both stress the necessity of allowing intangible

cultural heritage items to survive and flourish in their original environments and advocate integrated protection of both intangible cultural heritage and their environment.

China’s only item listed on the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, the “strategy for training incoming generations of Fujian puppetry practitioners,” is a pristine example of fertilizing the soil for the survival of intangible cultural heritage through wide participation from both practitioners and local communities. Few young people choose to learn puppetry anymore due to socioeconomic changes transforming lifestyles and the long period of training required to master the sophisticated performing techniques, which has been a global challenge. In recent years, Fujian’s Quanzhou String Puppetry Troupe, Zhangzhou Glove Puppetry Troupe, and Jinjiang Hand Puppetry Troupe adopted the “comprehensive protection” approach. They successfully ignited youth passion for traditional puppetry by performing in schools and communities and organizing international puppetry festivals. Moreover, they integrate puppetry into local folk customs and festive events, effectively improving the living environment of the traditional art and strengthening its conservation and inheritance.

In recent years, many activities aiming to integrate



A young performer from the Zhangzhou Puppetry Troupe operates palm-sized puppets in a performance, November 15, 2021. Puppetry, a national-level intangible cultural heritage in China, has been practiced for more than 1,000 years, with palm-sized puppetry as one of the many genres. During performances, the performer places puppets on their fingers and manipulates them to mimic a range of delicate and lifelike movements. (Photo by Wang Dongming/CNS/VCG)



The Maolong Festival of the Gelao people, a national-level intangible cultural heritage in China, is celebrated in Shiqian County, Guizhou Province. The Gelao Maolong Festival is a traditional folk activity that has been passed down across generations in the Gelao ethnic group in Shiqian. During the Spring Festival, people carry a Maolong, a dragon made of fur, and run around with it. It is an activity to pray for harvest and prosperity in the new year. (Photo by Long Jun)



Elementary school students in Changsha City, Hunan Province experience movable-type printing, an intangible cultural heritage, September 21, 2022. (Photo by Yang Huafeng/CNS/VCG)

intangible cultural heritage into modern life have been promoted around China to actualize the concept of “comprehensive protection.” Attempts to connect intangible cultural heritage to creative industries, education, youth, tourism, and poverty alleviation have all played a crucial role in empowering rural revitalization, improving people’s livelihoods, enriching cultural lives, increasing the available educational resources, inspiring cultural creativity, and encouraging young people to embrace positive cultures

and values. All of these efforts have further enhanced the country’s systematic protection of intangible cultural heritage and promoted the innovative transformation and development of fine traditional Chinese culture.

It should also be noted that many intangible cultural heritage items have achieved trans-sectoral, trans-regional, and cross-cultural dissemination and exchange via now-ubiquitous online short videos and livestreaming platforms, inspiring more people to participate in intangible cultural heritage protection. With this innovative approach, intangible cultural heritage has been popularized among the general public instead of a niche audience. Effectively, fine traditional Chinese culture represented by intangible cultural heritage is becoming modernized. For instance, many folk craftsmen have been dedicated to creating cultural and creative products with Chinese flavor and modern design works such as handmade bags targeting young customers. They even filmed the making process to produce teaching videos to introduce intangible cultural heritage to students. Some artists of traditional opera forms such as Peking Opera, Henan Opera, and Huangmei Opera have won massive fan bases through livestreaming their performances to influence modern Chinese lifestyles.

And the focus of intangible cultural heritage protection has shifted from cultural legacies to folk customs that have survived

and even developed into unique lifestyles through continuously reforming to adapt to modern society. Such reformative trans-generational inheritance serves as a reminder that understanding the practices of intangible cultural heritage protection from a dynamic perspective rather than a static one ensures it maintains

eternal vitality to adapt to social changes. 

The author is an associate researcher at the Chinese National Academy of Arts and a specialist at the International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under UNESCO.



Yang Changqin (right), the inheritor of the Guizhou provincial intangible cultural heritage “Chishui Bamboo Weaving,” weaves bamboo alongside local villagers. Bamboo weaving boasts rich ethnic and folk cultural characteristics and involves a complex process. In 2008, it was listed as a national-level intangible cultural heritage. (Photo by Xu Xun/China Pictorial)

China's Intangible Cultural Heritage Listed by UNESCO

Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (43)



A performance combining Kunqu Opera with modern elements such as electronic music and rock in Beijing. (Photo by Dong Fang/China Pictorial)

Kunqu Opera

Inscribed in 2008

Originating in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Kunqu Opera is one of the oldest forms of Chinese operas still performed today. It has exerted a massive influence on various other kinds of Chinese operas in modern times.

Uygur Muqam of Xinjiang

Inscribed in 2008

Uygur Muqam of Xinjiang includes songs, dances, and folk and classical music. It is a general term for various Muqam traditions spread among the Uygur communities in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. It is known as the encyclopedia of Uygur ethnic history and life.



(Photo from CFB)



(Photo from CFB)

Guqin and Its Music

Inscribed in 2008

The Chinese zither, called the *guqin*, has existed for over 3,000 years and is China's most symbolic solo musical instrument. It topped the "four arts" (alongside calligraphy, painting and an ancient form of chess) required to attain proficiency as a Chinese scholar in ancient times.

Art of Chinese Seal Engraving

Inscribed in 2009

Chinese seal carving is a traditional art with stone as the primary material, carving knives as the tool, and Chinese characters as the subject matter. It originated from the ancient craft of seal making and has a rich history spanning over 3,000 years.



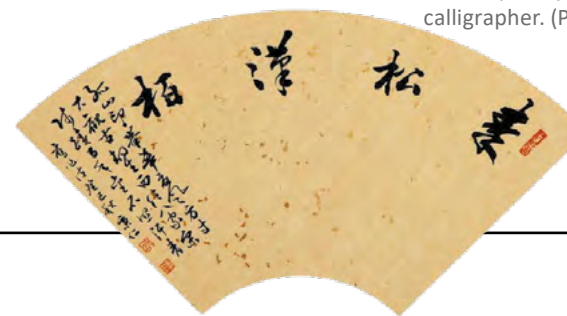
(Photo from CFB)

Chinese Calligraphy

Inscribed in 2009

Chinese calligraphy has developed alongside the creation and evolution of Chinese characters over more than 3,000 years and has become a symbol of Chinese culture.

A calligraphic work by Shao Bingren, a famous contemporary Chinese calligrapher. (Photo from CFB)



(Photo from CFB)

Urtiin Duu, Traditional Folk Long Song

Inscribed in 2008

The Urtiin Duu is a type of traditional music that nomadic communities from the grasslands in northern China perform while grazing in the wild or during traditional festivals. The melodies are long and soothing, and convey broad artistic connotations. This form of songs is highly respected in Mongolian society.



(Photo from CFB)

China Engraved Block Printing Technique

Inscribed in 2009

The art of woodblock printing is an exceptional craft using knives to carve characters or designs onto wooden blocks. Once the blocks are carved, ink is applied and pressed onto various materials such as paper or silk, resulting in printed pages that can then be bound into books. This technique boasts a history of over 1,300 years.

Chinese Paper-cut

Inscribed in 2009

Chinese paper-cut is an art involving cutting or carving designs on paper using scissors or knives. The art is used to embellish daily life or complement various folk activities, and it is loved by all walks of life.



(Photo from CFB)



(Photo from CFB)



(Photo from CFB)

Chinese Traditional Architectural Craftsmanship for Timber-Framed Structures

Inscribed in 2009

This skill has been passed down from generation to generation through a system of apprenticeship. For over 7,000 years, it has spread throughout various regions of China as well as to other East Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea. It serves as a representative of ancient Eastern building technology.

Craftsmanship of Nanjing Yunjin Brocade

Inscribed in 2009

This craft is a continuation of China's royal weaving tradition and represents the highest level of Chinese brocade weaving. Using materials such as silk, gold threads, and peacock feather threads, craftsmen weave luxurious fabrics on large, complex looms.

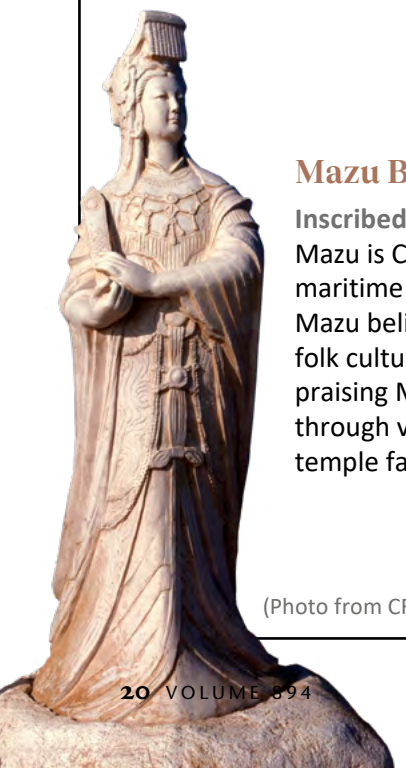


A dragon boat race. (Photo from CFB)

Dragon Boat Festival

Inscribed in 2009

The Dragon Boat Festival is a traditional Chinese holiday that falls on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar each year and has a history of more than 2,500 years. After originating from customs meant to drive away evil and pests, it has since fostered various folk activities such as dragon boat racing.



Mazu Belief and Customs

Inscribed in 2009

Mazu is China's most influential maritime guardian deity. The Mazu belief and customs are a folk culture that revolves around praising Mazu's great love through various activities and temple fairs.

(Photo from CFB)



(Photo from CFB)

Farmers' Dance of China's Korean Ethnic Group

Inscribed in 2009

The farmers' dance of China's Korean ethnic group is a reflection of traditional folk performing arts that integrate instruments, singing, and dancing to showcase folk activities related to agricultural production, such as god worshipping, blessing, praying, and celebrations of bountiful harvests.

Mongolian Art of Singing, Khoomei

Inscribed in 2009

Khoomei is a mesmerizing singing art invented by the Mongolian people in China. The style involves a singer creating two different vocal parts simultaneously with their own vocal organs.



(Photo from CFB)

Sericulture and Silk Craftsmanship of China

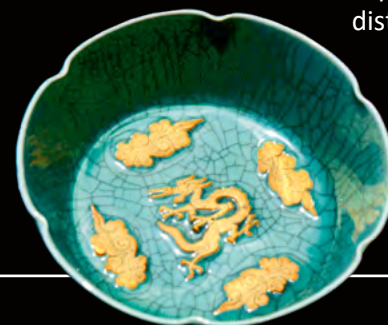
Inscribed in 2009

This craft encompasses the entire process of cultivating mulberry trees, raising silkworms, reeling silk, dyeing, weaving, and related folk activities that have emerged from it.

Traditional Firing Technology of Longquan Celadon

Inscribed in 2009

The traditional firing technology of Longquan celadon represents a form of handicraft that features intricate production techniques and highly artistic aesthetics. With a history spanning over 1,700 years, this craft not only fulfills needs in daily life, but its products also exhibit distinct aesthetic value.



A celadon basin with a dragon pattern made by the Ge Kiln in the Song Dynasty (960-1279).
(Photo from CFB)



(Photo from CFB)

Nanyin

Inscribed in 2009

Nanyin (literally the "sound of the south") is considered one of the oldest genres of music in China. Sung in the Quanzhou dialect, it is typically accompanied by traditional Chinese musical instruments such as a bamboo flute called the *dongxiao* and a crooked-neck lute called the *pipa*. Currently, there are over 3,000 pieces of ancient musical scores in existence.

Regong Arts

Inscribed in 2009

Regong arts, which originated in the 13th century, primarily involve various forms of Buddhist art including thangka, murals, embroidery, and sculpture. It is a significant artistic school within Tibetan Buddhism.



(Photo from CFB)

Traditional Handicrafts of Making Xuan Paper

Inscribed in 2009

Papermaking is known as one of the four great inventions of ancient China. Xuan paper, in particular, is distinguished by its supple and durable texture as well as its resistance to insects and decay. Since its invention in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), it has endured as the preeminent medium for calligraphy, painting, and printing of classic works.



(Photo from CFB)



(Photo from CFB)

Xi'an Wind and Percussion Ensemble

Inscribed in 2009

Xi'an wind and percussion ensemble is a popular genre of folk music in Xi'an City and its surrounding regions. The music boasts a grand structure and elegant style, and to this day is transcribed using the same score-keeping method from over a millennium ago.



(Photo from CFB)

Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group

Inscribed in 2009

The Grand Song of the Dong ethnic group includes multi-part folk songs performed without instrumental accompaniment or a conductor. They narrate crucial cultural information such as the Dong people's lifestyle, social structure, ethics, etiquette, customs, and wisdom.

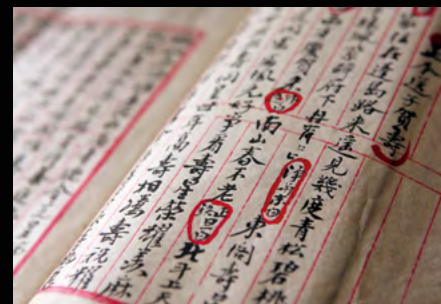


(Photo by Ma Yue/China Pictorial)

Yueju Opera

Inscribed in 2009

With over 300 years of history, Yueju Opera is performed in Cantonese. It integrates a variety of musical and dramatic elements, expanding the expression of traditional Chinese operas in innovative ways.



A Yueju Opera score. (Photo from CFB)

Tibetan Opera

Inscribed in 2009

Tibetan Opera is a drama in which stories are told by players singing and dancing with masks. It took shape in the 14th century and has been passed down on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The content is mostly myths and legends in Buddhist scriptures that encourage good and punish evil.

Hua'er

Inscribed in 2009

The folk song known as "Hua'er" (literally "flowers") originated around 1368 in the early Ming Dynasty, and was created and shared by various ethnic groups including the Han, Hui, and Tibetan in northwestern China. It derives its name from its lyrics, which compare women to flowers.

Manas

Inscribed in 2009

Manas is a large-scale heroic epic of the Kyrgyz people in Xinjiang, which has been circulating since the 16th century. It depicts the heroic deeds of Manas and his seven generations of descendants, who led the Kyrgyz people in the battle against foreign invaders.

Gesar Epic Tradition

Inscribed in 2009

Originating in the 3rd to 4th century B.C., the Gesar epic is a grand story about the sacred achievements of the ancient Tibetan hero King Gesar. It comprehensively showcases the experience and knowledge of nature acquired by the Tibetan people and other related ethnic groups.



(Photo from CFB)

Traditional Design and Practices for Building Chinese Wooden Arch Bridges

Inscribed in 2009

Craftsmen use raw wood as the material and adopt traditional tools and manual techniques to build wooden architecture, and employ tenon-and-mortise joints to construct extraordinarily stable arch bridges.

Acupuncture and Moxibustion of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Inscribed in 2010

Acupuncture and moxibustion are unique medical treatment methods created by ancient Chinese people. They involve burning mugwort or inserting needles at certain parts of the body to treat diseases, based on unique theories which hold that the human body acts as a small universe connected by channels and that by physically stimulating these channels, the practitioner can promote the human body's self-regulating functions and bring health to the patient.



(Photo by Wang Lei/China Pictorial)

Qiang New Year Festival

Inscribed in 2009

This is a traditional festival of the Qiang ethnic group in southwestern China's Sichuan Province. The festival is celebrated on the first day of the 10th lunar month every year. During the festival, the Qiang people worship gods for prosperity.



(Photo from CFB)

Traditional Li Textile Techniques: Spinning, Dyeing, Weaving and Embroidering

Inscribed in 2009

This is a textile craft created by women from the Li ethnic group in Hainan Province that integrates spinning, dyeing, weaving, and embroidery. They use materials such as cotton, hemp, and other fibers to make clothes and other daily necessities.



(Photo from CFB)

Meshrep

Inscribed in 2010

Meshrep is a vital carrier of Uyghur cultural traditions encompassing a wide range of customs and performing arts such as music, dance, drama, folk arts, and acrobatics.

Peking Opera

Inscribed in 2010

Peking Opera incorporates singing, recitation, acting, and martial arts. It is regarded as the epitome of the ideal aesthetics of traditional Chinese operas.



(Photo from CFB)

Watertight-Bulkhead Technology of Chinese Junks

Inscribed in 2010

This technique originated in Fujian Province in southeastern China. The usage of watertight bulkheads increases the strength of the ship's hull. With the help of this technique, if one cabin was accidentally damaged in the course of navigation, seawater would not flood other cabins. The safety of navigation is thus ensured.

Hezhen Yimakan Storytelling

Inscribed in 2011

Narrated in the Hezhen language, Yimakan storytelling is an oral literary tradition of the Hezhen ethnic group. Yimakan includes stories of Hezhen heroes triumphing over demons and invaders, presented in both poetry and prose. It is a significant part of the Hezhen people's worldviews and memories of their history.



(Photo from CFB)

Chinese Shadow Puppetry

Inscribed in 2011

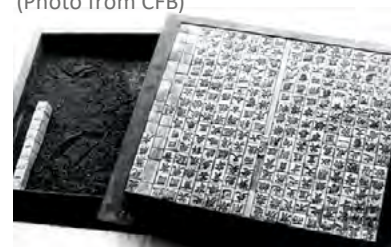
Chinese shadow puppetry is a form of theater performed with colorful silhouette figures made of leather or paper and accompanied by music and singing. It passes on elements such as culture, history, social beliefs, oral traditions, and local customs.

Chinese Zhusuan, Knowledge and Practices of Mathematical Calculation through the Abacus

Inscribed in 2013

The Chinese Zhusuan is a method of performing mathematical calculations with an abacus. It has strong scientific and practical value and holds an important place in the history of science and technology.

(Photo from CFB)



Wooden Movable-Type Printing of China

Inscribed in 2010

Wooden movable-type printing of China is one of the world's oldest printing techniques. It was invented by Bi Sheng (970-1051) during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). Today, the technique is only preserved in Rui'an, eastern China's Zhejiang Province.



Glove puppetry originating in Zhangzhou City, Fujian Province. (Photo from CFB)

Strategy for Training Coming Generations of Fujian Puppetry Practitioners

Inscribed in 2012

Fujian puppetry performance is a distinguished example of Chinese puppetry arts. It has been widely popularized in Quanzhou City, Zhangzhou City, and the surrounding regions since the 10th century. Performances are characterized by exquisite techniques and a diverse range of traditional plays.

The Twenty-Four Solar Terms, Knowledge in China of Time and Practices Developed through Observation of the Sun's Annual Motion

Inscribed in 2016

The Twenty-Four Solar Terms constitute a knowledge system and social practice developed by ancient Chinese people through observing the annual movement of the sun. This system helped them understand changes in seasons, climate, and phenology and was used to guide traditional agricultural production and daily life.

Lum Medicinal Bathing of Sowa Rigpa, Knowledge and Practices Concerning Life, Health, and Illness Prevention and Treatment among the Tibetan People in China

Inscribed in 2018

The Tibetan people developed traditional knowledge and practices of using natural hot springs and medicinal water or steam to balance their physical and mental health. This practice is used to achieve a healthy life and prevent and treat diseases.

Ong Chun/Wangchuan/Wangkang Ceremony, Rituals and Related Practices for Maintaining the Sustainable Connection between Man and the Ocean

Inscribed in 2020

The Ong Chun Ceremony is widely practiced in the coastal regions of China's Fujian Province as well as in the Chinese communities in Melaka of Malaysia to pray for safety and peace. It reflects the sustainable connection between people and the ocean and is considered a shared cultural heritage by communities in both China and Malaysia.

Taijiquan

Inscribed in 2020

Taijiquan is a physical practice based on traditional Chinese philosophical thought and concepts of health preservation. Characterized by relaxed, circular movements, it is still used by contemporary people to promote physical and mental health and maintain inner peace.



(Photo from VCG)

Traditional Tea Processing Techniques and Associated Social Practices in China

Inscribed in 2022

Traditional tea processing techniques and associated social practices in China encompass management of tea gardens, picking of tea leaves, handcrafting of tea, and knowledge, skills, and practices associated with tea drinking and sharing. These traditions embody the Chinese values of humility, harmony, propriety, and respect. 47

(Photo courtesy of China National Tea Museum)



Integrating Intangible Heritage With Tourism: China's Innovative Approach

Text by Zhou Chenliang

Integration of intangible cultural heritage with scenic spots not only enhances the charm of these destinations, but also expands the reach of intangible cultural heritage to a broader audience.

A lion dance team enters a movable-type printing experiencing hall for a performance at Yongqingfang, a historical and cultural neighborhood in Guangzhou City, southern China's Guangdong Province. Guangdong lion dance is a subgenre of lion dance art in China. As a national-level intangible cultural heritage, it is an icon of folk culture of the Han ethnic group that integrates martial arts, dance, music, and other elements. (Photo from VCG)

China is currently integrating intangible cultural heritage projects into neighborhoods, scenic spots, and other areas to create new interactive cultural scenes for tourism. The latest innovative

approach incorporates live performances and immersive experiences, providing a refreshing enjoyment that attracts more young people. It has successfully broken traditional boundaries and brought intangible cultural heritage to a wider audience.

Yongqingfang Community: Regaining Vitality

Yongqingfang community is located on Enning Road in Liwan District, Guangzhou City. Since the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), it has been one of the most prosperous commercial areas in southern China, and it has the longest and best-preserved arcade street in Guangzhou. In recent years, Yongqingfang has undergone small-scale renovations to revitalize its old buildings, adhering to the concept of “repairing the old as the old, and integrating old and new.” The characteristics of ancient buildings such as gray brick houses and black tile roofs have been preserved. Standing the test of time, the old community has renewed its appearance and regained vitality.

In August 2020, the first neighborhood known for intangible cultural heritage in Guangzhou was completed in Yongqingfang. Over 10 master studios for intangible cultural heritage such as Cantonese Opera, Cantonese Embroidery, and Lion Dance have settled successively. Now, visitors can experience a wide range of intangible cultural heritage programs within a single block. “Many art students come to learn Cantonese Embroidery, and then they apply the techniques in their own works,” said Li Min, a municipal-level inheritor of Cantonese Embroidery. “Children also visit to experience traditional culture.”

The head of the Guangzhou

Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center explained that every intangible cultural heritage studio there functions as a “miniature museum,” combining production, exhibition, sales, experience, exchange, and research under one roof. Visitors can see exhibits, participate in hands-on classes and educational tours, and engage with the inheritors directly.

The Cantonese Opera Museum, founded in 2016, serves as a crucial venue for exhibiting and promoting its namesake intangible cultural heritage. By 2022, the museum attracted approximately 2.4 million visitors. In recent years, it has prioritized the establishment of a digital museum by developing a digital resource library and a “virtual tour” platform. Alongside these efforts, the museum has also introduced novel forms of exhibition and performance such as hosting events like the “Cantonese Opera Carnival” and “Virtual Museum Tour” live shows. It has also fostered engagement with the public through online conversations. In March 2017, the institution created a Cantonese Opera education base to provide children regular training on the traditional art. Currently, over 500 individuals are participating in these courses, and many have emerged victorious in various national competitions such as the China’s Little Plum Blossom Opera Competition for children.

“Previously, most visitors were middle-aged or elderly, but now



The launch ceremony of a dragon boat race is held in Liwan District, Guangzhou City, May 19, 2021. The ceremony is an important part of the Dragon Boat Festival. (Photo courtesy of the Publicity Department of the CPC Liwan District Committee)

it seems that more young people are interested in our museum,” said Ma Nan, director of the Cantonese Opera Museum. “As a world-renowned intangible cultural heritage item, it’s

crucial that Cantonese Opera is protected and passed down across generations. We’re thrilled to see a growing number of young people eager to learn about and appreciate Cantonese Opera.”



During the Lantern Festival, visitors go to the market, enjoy the lantern show and guess lantern riddles in the Yongqingfang Community of Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province. (Photo courtesy of the Publicity Department of the CPC Liwan District Committee)



A flower market in Yongqingfang during the 2023 Spring Festival. (Photo courtesy of the Publicity Department of the CPC Liwan District Committee)



The 37th Qinhuai Lantern Festival is held along the beautiful Qinhuai River and near the Confucius Temple in Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu Province. (Photo by Fang Fei)

Qinhuai Lanterns: Igniting Modern Life

The Qinhuai Lantern Festival boasts a rich history that can be traced back to the Three Kingdoms period (220-280).

Its heyday was during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), and it remains one of the most representative folk arts in Nanjing. A traditional handicraft, the Qinhuai lanterns draw

inspiration from a variety of classical Chinese arts including painting, calligraphy, paper-cutting, shadow puppetry, embroidery, and sculpture. Its production incorporates a range of crafts such as woodworking, lacquer work, colored drawing, carving, clay sculpture, and knotting, creating a distinctive artistic style.

The Qinhuai Lantern Festival serves as a microcosm of the history and culture within the Qinhuai River Basin. Originally created for lighting, local lanterns gradually evolved into an art with various shapes and designs. They have always been symbolic of wishes and aspirations for a better life. “We shouldn’t stop at inheriting craftsmanship alone,” said Chen Bohua, a representative inheritor of the Qinhuai lantern-making skills who has researched the traditional craft for 45 years. During his overseas exchanges, he found that second and third generations of overseas Chinese have very limited knowledge of traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, greater attention should be paid to preserving common cultural memory and reviving the vitality of intangible cultural heritage. Chen insisted that this entails not only passing on lantern-making skills, but also exchange and continuation of traditional culture across time and space.

“To introduce traditional craftsmanship and techniques into modern life, it is essential for the inheritors to embrace modernity first,” he said. Over


the years, Chen has developed the Qinhuai lantern-making techniques by integrating traditional craftsmanship and his own ideas to meet the needs of modern life. He founded a center for researching Qinhuai lanterns, where he improved traditional lantern-making methods by focusing on the materials and techniques. Today, his works blend the features of northern and southern lanterns, boasting innovative designs and meticulous workmanship, while incorporating modern technology to create high-quality lantern products.

Dedicated craftsmen like Chen Bohua are ceaselessly pursuing innovation in realms like traditional Chinese lantern



Tourists pack the 37th Qinhuai Lantern Festival this year. (Photo by Fang Fei)

making. Through successful integration of time-honored craftsmanship and cutting-edge

technology, Chen has injected age-old Qinhuai lanterns with fresh vitality in the modern era. 



The Qinhuai Lantern Festival is popular in Nanjing City, Jiangsu Province. It is the only comprehensive lantern festival in China to integrate lantern exhibitions, fairs, and markets. It is also one of the largest lantern festivals with the longest history and most participants in the country. (Photo by Fang Fei)

Intangible Cultural Heritage: Thriving on Campus and Beyond

Text by Mo Qian

The on-campus vibe of intangible cultural heritage is sowing the seeds of cultural inheritance to empower people to pass on fine traditional culture from generation to generation.

Teachers and students play the *lusheng*, a reed-pipe wind instrument, in a theme class introducing *lusheng* culture in Liuzhou City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, December 14, 2021. (Photo from VCG)

has gained ground on China's campuses while cultivating numerous students to master relevant skills.

Students in primary and secondary schools are often introduced to the charm of intangible cultural heritage after

participating in theme activities. Vocational schools cultivate skilled personnel to inherit intangible cultural heritage while innovating ethnic culture as part of national demonstration practices. University students can now earn undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees related to intangible cultural heritage, which is lifting talent cultivation to a new historic stage of high-level specialization.

Schools present fertile ground for inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. In recent years, intangible cultural heritage

The on-campus vibe of intangible cultural heritage is sowing the seeds of cultural inheritance to empower people to pass on fine traditional culture from generation to generation.

Touching Enlightenment

Every morning, students at the No. 1 and No. 4 primary schools in Qiaotou Township, Dongguan City, Guangdong Province, engage in traditional boxing exercises attentively, with a series of actions from squaring away steadily to moving forward, turning sideways, stamping feet, and shouting loudly, under the instruction of PE teachers. At the No. 2 Primary School in Xingqing District, Yinchuan City, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, students sew palm-sized fish toys with tie-dyed cloth at an on-campus workshop. The workshop's walls and booths

are decorated with students' tie-dye and batik works as well as displays of fans, pillows, and hats they sewed.

In recent years, primary and secondary schools nationwide have been actively introducing intangible cultural heritage into campuses under the guidance of China's Ministry of Education. Many inheritors of intangible cultural heritage have delivered lectures and demonstrated their skills on campus. Special primary and secondary schools have been established successively to cultivate "student envoys" of intangible cultural heritage such as Chinese opera, calligraphy, seal cutting, and ethnic and folk fine arts.

Concurrently, implementation of the "double reduction" policy has helped many schools incorporate items of intangible

cultural heritage into after-school services to enrich children's learning.

Learning Techniques

Named after an ancient guild of craftsmen whose works decorated the Potala Palace and other temples and palaces in southwestern China's Tibet Autonomous Region, the Xueduibai School for Traditional Arts and Crafts is located in the northern suburb of Lhasa. The endless clanging from the small courtyard of the school indicates that students are learning metalworking techniques. Students can also learn how to draw thangka (a richly colored

Primary school students perform martial arts on a playground in Rongcheng City, Shandong Province, March 25, 2019. (Photo from CNS)



A student (left) from the intermediate thangka class at the Xueduibai School for Traditional Arts and Crafts shares the progress of his graduation work with his teacher, 2016. (Photo by Yeshe Tenzin)

form of classical Tibetan painting), sew Tibetan costumes, and apply Tibetan block printing skills.

Song Ming, founder and principal of the school, is a native of Xuzhou City, Jiangsu Province, and a graduate of the Department of Oil Painting at the Nanjing University of the Arts. In the 1990s, Song joined the second batch of assistance personnel from Jiangsu to work in Tibet. While working as an art teacher in Lhasa, Song spent much of his time on field trips to compile the book *Collection of Tibetan Handicrafts*. He



Metalworking students at the Xueduibai School for Traditional Arts and Crafts focus on their school work, 2017. (Photo by Norbu Dondrup)

discovered that many local intangible cultural heritage items had either failed to be handed down or were teetering on the verge of extinction. He decided to promote inheritance of Tibetan intangible cultural heritage via education while combining his academic background and advanced concepts learned in Jiangsu Province.

“I founded the school in 2010 with savings I had earned from a culture-oriented company and the teaching network I established to mainly serve students from Tibet’s farming and pastoral areas for free,” Song talked of the origin of the school, emphasizing

that the institution has been sponsoring teaching, research and development, incubation projects and docking with the market since its founding. The school provides courses including thangka painting, ceramic production, cloth weaving, and more. Its teaching staff include teachers from local universities, intangible cultural heritage inheritors, and folk artists. The curricula involve cultural theories, handicraft skills and compulsory vocational courses stipulated by the state. “The curricula empower students to both master the crafts and develop understanding of

traditional ethnic culture behind them,” Song explained.

Since its establishment, some 500 students majoring in intangible cultural heritage have graduated from the Xueduibai School for Traditional Arts and Crafts. “Many continue to engage in handicraft work after graduation,” Song said. “Some have set up their own studios with the help of the incubation projects launched by the school.”

“Some early graduates have already climbed to the top of their respective industries and made important contributions to the inheritance and development of Tibetan

handicrafts,” he added.

The school plans to offer the stone carving course in the future. “After that, the school’s curricula will basically cover every existing Tibetan intangible cultural heritage item,” Song noted. He hopes to build it into Tibet’s first private art college or university, a goal for which all the faculty has been striving.

Cultivating Talent

Chen Yang is a postgraduate student majoring in ceramic decoration and painting at Jingdezhen Ceramic University. He is versed in a long list of processes including casting, hand-painting, glazing, and firing to transform clay into blue-and-white porcelain with different features.

So far, more than 70,000 students have graduated from Jingdezhen Ceramic University. Among them, many are now masters of ceramics and other crafts. Also, graduates of the multi-disciplinary institution, the only one named after ceramics in China, have contributed 80 percent of the country’s architectural ceramics and daily-use ceramics brands. The university is thus acclaimed as the “Cradle of China’s Ceramics Industry.”

Its curricula are divided into two categories: inheritance and innovation, with focus on the research of cutting-edge ceramic technologies such as heat-resistant ceramics. The university provides great support



Associate Professor Yuan Lehui demonstrates casting skills for students of the 2010 pottery class at Jingdezhen Ceramic University, April 2012. (Photo courtesy of Jingdezhen Ceramic University)

for upgrading China’s ceramic industry through scientific and technological progress. Its complete higher education system ranging from undergraduate to master’s and doctoral programs has cultivated students both theoretically and practically. The students get many chances to discuss ceramic crafts with like-minded teachers and friends on campus and go on field trips to ceramics bases, ceramics enterprises, and kiln factories while wandering around Jingdezhen, a living ceramics museum.

And cultural exchange also happens there.

“Archaeologists from all over the world yearn for the opportunity to learn about the porcelain-making history in Jingdezhen, the capital of Chinese porcelain,” smiled

Mahdi Ahmad, an overseas student from Egypt.

After graduating from the Faculty of Archaeology of Fayuom University in 2020, Ahmad arrived at Jingdezhen Ceramic University to study the inscriptions on ancient Chinese porcelain wares. He hopes to review the millennia-old Silk Road bond between China and Arabic countries by researching Arabic characters on ancient porcelain. During his studies in China, Ahmad visited many archaeological sites, museums, and ancient buildings to explore the past.

In total, the university has attracted more than 3,000 international students from over 60 countries and regions worldwide and empowered them to deploy a poetic science with a “great perhaps.” CP



Students show the porcelain wares they painted with blue-and-white patterns in a ceramics training course targeting South African students at Jingdezhen Ceramic University, September 2017. (Photo courtesy of Jingdezhen Ceramic University)

Folk Culture Key to Rural Revitalization

Text by Zhang Jianjun

The “intangible cultural heritage plus rural revitalization” development mode is keeping pace with the times in dynamic China.

Born in the ancient villages, China’s intangible cultural heritage continues shining like a bright pearl in the crown of the country’s traditional culture. It contains rich livelihood resources and represents ecological wisdom, folk culture, and moral norms maintained by local communities. It is a window to China’s past rural life. It advances the sustainable development of contemporary villages and drives the modernization of agriculture and rural areas.

Ethnic Festivals Reinvigorating Villages

Ethnic festivals, a vivid testament to uninterrupted Chinese civilization over 5,000 years, persist as a gem of China’s traditional culture and intangible cultural heritage.

Leishan County in southwestern China’s Guizhou Province is known as the Miao people’s cultural exhibition hub and a good example of integrating ethnic festivals with rural cultural tourism. The celebration of the Miao New Year in

Children dressed in traditional costumes celebrate the Miao New Year in Leishan County, southwestern China’s Guizhou Province. The Miao New Year Festival was added to China’s representative list of state-level intangible cultural heritage in 2008. (Photo by Shu Wenjun)



the county has attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors since 2000. Countless tourists swarm into Leishan to experience local distinctive ethnic culture and enjoy Miao singing and dancing, creating jobs for locals and raising

their incomes.

Many intangible cultural heritage items are created, maintained, and shared by different ethnic groups, reflecting interaction, exchange, and deep integration throughout history.

In the Zhuang community, younger relatives of seniors often offer them grain on the Chongyang Festival or milestone birthdays to wish them health and longevity. The practice acknowledges that when a senior

People enjoy the Water-Splashing Festival at a square in Jinghong City, southwestern China's Yunnan Province. The Water-Splashing Festival of the Dai ethnic group was included in China's representative list of state-level intangible cultural heritage in 2006. (Photo from VCG)



People burn a barge to dispel bad luck during the Wangchuan Ceremony held in Xiamen City, southeastern China's Fujian Province. The ceremony developed in Fujian and Taiwan was included in China's representative list of state-level intangible cultural heritage in 2011. (Photo from VCG)

reaches a certain age, their “grain” or lifetime will run out. So, it is very important for their offspring to “replenish the grain” for them. Similar folk customs have also been long practiced by Han, Yao, Dong, and Maonan people living nearby, who work together to preserve the tradition.

Folklore Traditions Unleashing Potential

Chinese anthropologist and sociologist Fei Xiaotong summarized the cultural foundation of Chinese society in his book *From the Soil*. In the older days, Chinese people lived

together and dwelled in the same place for generations, which built strong bonds of mutual help and moral support. The intimacy of insular villages empowered them to form relatively stable and distinctive customs.

The “soil of China” has been influenced by the wave of modernization since the turn of the 20th century. Major changes have taken place in the labor situation, production technologies, and lifestyles. However, regardless of how a society evolves, the people's aspirations for a better life with ample food and clothing and further progress in ecology, social harmony, and civility have



The folk performance *Taige*, literally meaning “Lifted Stage,” featuring the legend of “Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea,” attracts many spectators in Pujiang County, eastern China’s Zhejiang Province. The performance was included in China’s representative list of state-level intangible cultural heritage in 2008. (Photo by Hu Lilei)

have added cultural vigor and injected momentum into rural revitalization.

Many folk customs are based on traditions handed down across generations in certain communities, and reflect wishes to maintain a sustainable connection with nature. The Wangchuan Ceremony originated from a traditional ritual performed by fishermen for centuries and is still celebrated as a marine culture carnival in southeastern China and Southeast Asia. The ceremony and its related practices preserve fishermen’s knowledge of meteorology, tides, ocean currents, and navigation, evoke historical memories of ancestral seafaring, and honor harmony between man and ocean.

never changed. In the process of advancing rural revitalization, traditional folk customs have emerged as a precious legacy with huge potential. They are crucial cultural resources necessary for building a beautiful countryside that is desirable to live and work in.

Festivities like dragon dancing, lion dancing, land boat dancing, and lantern shows are still organized in villages and towns in China’s northwestern regions such as Gansu, Xinjiang and Shaanxi. These traditions are passed down across generations and radiate the people’s wishes for a peaceful, happy, and healthy life. Such festival customs




A rider performs at the opening ceremony of the Dangjiren horse racing festival in Damxung County, southwestern China’s Tibet Autonomous Region. Dangjiren was included in China’s representative list of state-level intangible cultural heritage in 2008. (Photo by Xu Xun/China Pictorial)

Folk Heritage Empowering Rural Revitalization

Folk handicrafts are still practiced in many villages as a way to earn a living. Today, many folk arts and crafts have been listed as national intangible cultural heritage items because of their unique cultural elements, complete technical systems, and distinctive aesthetic and practical value.

Shejiantai Village in Mianzhu City, southwestern China’s Sichuan Province, is a stronghold for protecting Mianzhu New Year painting, a national intangible cultural heritage item. Over the years, Shejiantai has explored a unique

path to prosperity, involving training a professional painting team, leveraging the cultural potential of the folk art, and integrating local New Year painting industries. By the end of 2022, the number of practitioners of Mianzhu New Year painting in the village had soared from 300 to more than 2,000, and the annual output value had grown tenfold to 20 million yuan (US\$2.91 million). By combining cultural tourism and painting production in one characteristic village, Shejiantai has become a shining example in the Chinese countryside in protecting and developing traditional folk arts.

Since 2021, China’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism has been collaborating with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and the National Rural Revitalization Administration to support rural revitalization by developing intangible cultural heritage. More than 2,500 intangible cultural heritage workshops had been built across the country as of the end of 2022, of which over 1,400 were located in areas emerging from poverty. These workshops empower local residents to find jobs near their homes and increase their incomes, solidifying the important role of folk handicrafts in rural revitalization. 

A folk artist performs shadow puppetry at a temple fair in Pingliang City, northwestern China’s Gansu Province. Shadow puppetry is a form of theater featuring colorful silhouette figures made from leather or paper. (Photo from VCG)



New Boom for Old Crafts

Text by Tian Xiao

When old techniques embedded deep in Chinese people's blood and the core of Chinese civilization emerge in contemporary expression, they radiate new charm and offer new value in the new era.

After developing for thousands of years, China's intangible cultural heritage represents not only old folk customs and skills, but also artistic treasures and culture. It is valuable life wisdom and precious cultural wealth handed from generation to generation, and represents a living civilization created by the people and for the people.

The intangible cultural heritage items we know today were mostly leading trends or fashions in their times. They have survived across time and preserved the genetic code of national spirit and culture.

In this fast changing era, people are pursuing a richer spiritual world. By exploring the relationship between intangible cultural heritage and its current and future contexts, contemporary inheritors dive

into the realm of intangible cultural heritage through expressions of contemporary art, which not only expands understanding of the diverse forms of intangible cultural heritage in our society, but also minimizes the gap between intangible cultural heritage and modern life.

Intangible cultural heritage is fertile soil and a huge trove of contemporary art and design. The increasing number of crossover achievements of intangible cultural heritage with contemporary art, fashion, and design testify to its inherent power and sustainable value.

When old skills preserved deep in Chinese blood and the core of Chinese civilization are embedded in contemporary expressions, they will radiate new charm and offer new value for the times.



Book from the Sky, a large-scale installation by contemporary artist Xu Bing. After starting in 1987, it took him more than four years to complete. The work features some 4,000 pseudo-Chinese characters invented by the artist, printed with the Song-style script of the Ming Dynasty by hand-engraved blocks in movable type. (Photo by Chi Miao/China Pictorial)

Movable-type Printing

Movable-type printing, an ancient printing technique, embodies the wisdom and essence of traditional Chinese culture. Before printing, blocks were produced with raised Chinese characters in reverse. Craftsmen selected character blocks and arranged them in a type plate according to manuscript, inked, and printed with them. After printing, the type blocks were removed and saved for the next typesetting.

In this way, Chinese culture has been passed on from generation to generation. From the simple and square typeface of the Song Dynasty (960-1279) to Western Xia (1038-1227) script with complicated strokes, when fragrant ink met handmade paper, a profound Eastern culture with unique charm could be felt immediately.

Art is a link between the past and the future. Contemporary art pursues enrichment of concepts and expansion of thoughts. Linking ancient art and contemporary art, characters transcended their role as a communication tool and became an independent and dignified artwork.

Nine Heavens, a large-scale hand-carved cowhide work by contemporary artist Wu Jian'an and Wang Tianwen, a representative inheritor of the national intangible cultural heritage technique of shadow puppetry in Huazhou District, Weinan City, northwestern China's Shaanxi Province. (Photo from VCG)



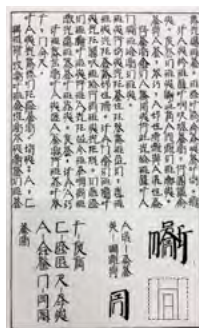
Shadow Puppetry

"Stories told for thousands of years can be shared by the players, and millions of soldiers can be commanded with their hands" is a vivid description of Chinese shadow puppetry. Shadow puppetry play is a traditional drama form in which colorful puppets made of leather or paper are performed with music and singing.

Storytellers control puppet figures with wooden sticks behind a translucent scrim and create dynamic images when the light passes through the scrim. Integration with contemporary art is inevitable for the survival of traditional art. When shadow puppetry stopped performing and became a display art, it is resurrected to tell new stories.



The Orchid Pavilion Preface, written by ancient Chinese calligrapher Wang Xizhi (303-361), has long been revered as an unsurpassed model of cursive writing. Repeatedly writing over his free-hand interpretation of the original, artist Qiu Zhijie turns the paper into a saturated black field and asserts that the ultimate goal of calligraphic practice is a form of "written meditation." (Photo courtesy of Qiu Zhijie)



A hand-printed wood-block calligraphic work by contemporary artist Xu Bing. (Photo by Chi Miao/China Pictorial)

Calligraphy

Chinese calligraphy developed with the emergence and evolution of Chinese characters. After more than 3,000 years of development, the ancient writing art of Chinese characters has become a representative symbol of Chinese culture. The unique style and rhythm of brush and ink reflect people's thinking of nature, society, and life.

Just as the ink gradually blackened the pool of renowned Chinese calligrapher Wang Xizhi, the influence of calligraphy also spread widely in the fields of Chinese art and decoration. Many artists have sought to reinterpret the tradition of Chinese calligraphy and ink painting in unique new ways. Their efforts and skills are clear in every stroke of writing as well as in the space between black and white.

A calligraphy work titled *To the People, Food Is the First Necessity* by contemporary artist Qiu Zhijie is exhibited at Sanyuanli food market in Beijing, 2021. The artist created nearly 100 calligraphy pieces related to food, signboards, and recipes, integrating Chinese calligraphy into everyday life in an intimate way. (Photo courtesy of Qiu Zhijie)



Returning with a Reward along the Silk Road by Yao Jianping, a representative inheritor of Su embroidery, a national intangible cultural heritage item in China. The embroidery work is collected at the National Art Museum of China. (Photo courtesy of Yao Jianping)

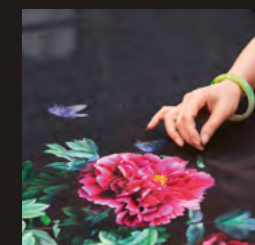


A Yue embroidery work themed on the Chinese zodiac from the Republic of China period (1912-1949). (Photo by Chen Chuhong/CNS)

Embroidery

Records of embroidery as decoration of clothes can be traced back to *The Book of Documents*, one of the Five Classics of ancient Chinese literature. Across various dynasties, hand-made embroidery technique achieved great progress, developing into four famous styles: Su embroidery, Yue embroidery, Xiang embroidery, and Shu embroidery. There are also a wide variety of unique local embroideries. Embroidery contains rich cultural connotations and artistic value.

Today, this exquisite Chinese craft has made its way abroad and become a beautiful beacon on the world stage. When it merges with fashion and clothing, its charm becomes even more irresistible.



Yao Jianping displays Su embroidery techniques. (Photo by Wang Lei/China Pictorial)



Three Cats, a traditional Su embroidery work by Yao Jianping. (Photo courtesy of Yao Jianping)

Cloisonné

The art of enamel originated in the West and spread to China along the Silk Road. It evolved into “cloisonné” in the royal courts of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties and has been presented to the world as state gifts in the new era. Cloisonné state gifts are important witnesses of Chinese civilization and many have also become diplomatic envoys to spread Chinese culture such as *The Plate of Peace*, the first state gift of the People’s Republic of China, *The Four-side Square Zun*, a gift from the Chinese government to the World Economic Forum, *Peace in the World*, a cloisonné vase given to an APEC meeting, and *The Zun of Peace*, a cloisonné vessel given to the United Nations in 2015.



A candlestick in a turtle and crane design from Emperor Qianlong’s reign in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). (Photo from VCG)

The Zun of Peace, a cloisonné masterpiece completed in 2009 by Qian Meihua, a master of Chinese arts and crafts and the first chief craftsman at Beijing Enamel Factory. (Photo by Dong Fang/China Pictorial)



Design, filigree, and applying the enamel in the cloisonné making process. (Photo by Dong Fang/China Pictorial)



The Bamboo and Rattan Pavilion, a permanent venue of the 10th China Flower Expo. The major feature of the pavilion is its likeness to its namesake materials. (Photo from VCG)

Bamboo Weaving

Bamboo weaving techniques are relatively simple yet highlight harmony between man and nature, a concept central to traditional Chinese craftsmanship. Bamboo weaving has high value in practicality, artistry, and culture. From daily necessities to handicrafts and collectibles, bamboo weaving can come in wide-ranging shapes and styles, with decorative features rich in form and rhythm, bringing a unique aesthetic experience to contemporary life.

A work by Qian Lihuai, a contemporary artist who is a representative inheritor of bamboo weaving, an intangible cultural heritage item in China, inspired by snakes, Taihu stones, and diamonds. (Photo from VCG)

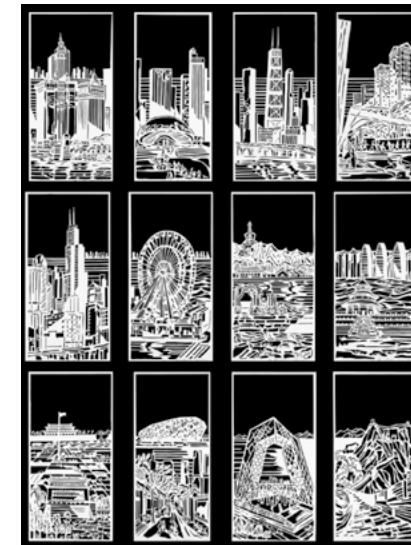


A piece of Dongyang bamboo weaving, a traditional handicraft from eastern China’s Zhejiang Province. (Photo from VCG)

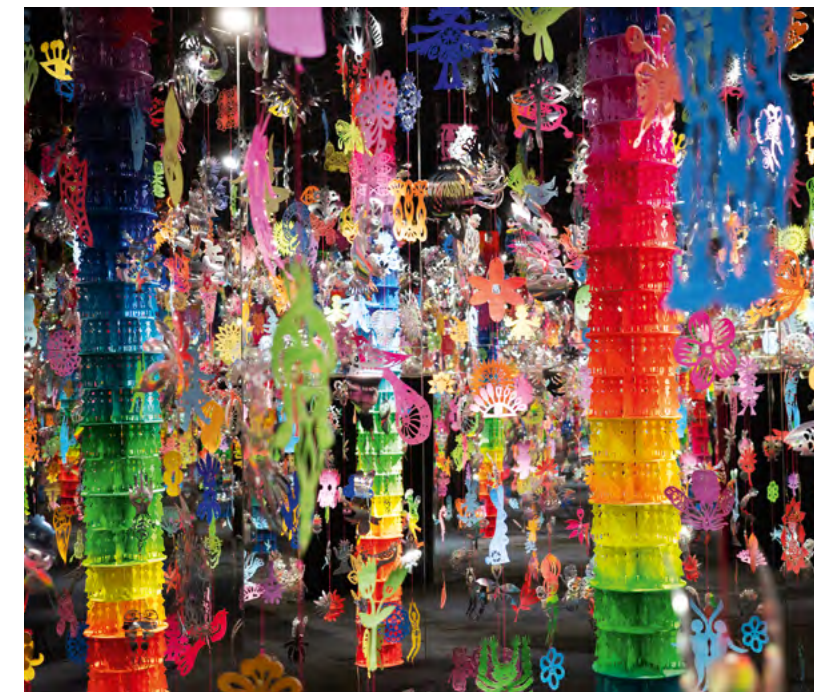


Paper-cut

Chinese paper-cut was added to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2009. Currently, Chinese paper-cut has been enjoying a diversified development trend. Paper-cut is no longer used just for customs and rituals. Thanks in large part to intangible cultural heritage protection efforts, paper-cut has been integrated in urban life to become part of the visual culture of mainstream society. The creations have been welcomed by artists and the general public alike. Paper-cut has also ventured abroad, attracting interest and attention in many countries and regions.



A paper-cut series called *Cityscapes* by Qiao Xiaoguang commissioned by Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport in 2014. (Photo courtesy of Qiao Xiaoguang Studio)



Contemporary artist Chen Fenwan’s work *Paper-cut Universe* exhibited at Beijing Times Art Museum. (Photo from VCG)

Chinese Cloisonné: Capturing the Country's Landscapes

Text by Cao Mengyue
Photos by Guo Shasha

The cloisonné, once popular in royal palaces, is enjoying a renaissance of sorts.

A filigree enamel painting themed on the central axis of Beijing by Guo Wei and his team.

Firstly, golden copper wires are threaded as the outlines and contours of a painting. They serve as the “backbone” and “veins” of the painting. Then, vivid colors come to life through different shades of enamel applied through a blending process called *dianlan* (dipping ground mineral enamel into spaces between threads), resulting in a unique and vivid texture. Finally, a

magnificent filigree enamel painting is finished after setting and drying. “The intensity of different lines and colors is well-suited, and the thin wires are like spring rain nurturing everything.” This ancient Chinese poem demonstrates how deeply people love the exquisite art form.

Filigree enamel painting originated from cloisonné enamel vessels, which were first introduced to China during

the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). Cloisonné also became known as “Jingtai Blue” as it matured in China during the Jingtai reign in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The technique climaxed during the reign of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Due to its exquisite and intricate craftsmanship, brilliant and vivid colors, and elegant and noble temperament, cloisonné enamelware was

used exclusively by the royal family throughout its heydays. In Beijing, imperial workshops and manufacturing bureaus established factories to produce cloisonné wares for the royal family during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Historical records indicate that only Emperor Qianlong's tableware was made of cloisonné enamel during the royal banquet on the eve of the Spring Festival of 1780, testifying to its noble status. For ordinary people in the past, the name "Jingtai Blue" represented an extremely mysterious art from the Forbidden City at the center

of Beijing's central axis, which they only heard but never saw in person. Not until the end of the Qing Dynasty was "Jingtai Blue" finally unveiled to the general public. In 2006, the State Council of China listed the technique to produce cloisonné enamelwork among the first batch of China's national intangible cultural heritage.

The process of producing cloisonné enamel vessels is very intricate and requires highly skilled practitioners capable of navigating nearly a hundred procedures such as design, mold-making, firing, wire

inlaying, enameling, polishing, and gilding. The process is extremely complicated. Filigree enamel paintings refer to cloisonné paintings that apply wire inlaying and enameling techniques to a flat surface. This art saves the craftsman from some procedures of traditional cloisonné production such as firing and polishing. This is also why the art preserves the sandy texture of enamel. And after blending and coloring, the colors presented are ever-changing, making filigree enamel paintings charming in a unique way.

Born in 1982, Guo Wei is

Guo Wei introduces art on a wall in "Original Creation," the cloisonné education center he founded with his friends. Guo has long endeavored to use the technique of cloisonné enamel to depict diverse styles of painting including oil painting, cartoons, and illustrations, with an aim to appeal to modern aesthetic sensibilities.



Filigree enamel paintings preserve the sandy texture of enamel. And after blending and coloring, the colors presented are ever-changing, making filigree enamel paintings charming in a unique way.

an inheritor of the intangible cultural heritage of filigree enamel painting. When he was at middle school, Guo read an article about cloisonné in a textbook, which introduced him to the charm of this art and its rich historical and cultural background. At an art exhibition, he was awestruck by a figure painting made with the filigree enamel craft, which ignited his passion for the art. He began searching for related information and learned from cloisonné craftsmen. Having studied art since childhood and with years of painting experience, Guo combined traditional techniques with modern art, and kept experimenting and innovating.

According to Guo, research

Craftworks with the themes of the Forbidden City and the National Aquatics Center of China (popularly called the "Water Cube") on display in the "Original Creation" cloisonné education center.





The techniques of enameling and wire inlaying and the enamels and tools needed to create filigree enamel paintings. Filigree enamel paintings refer to cloisonné paintings that apply wire inlaying and enameling techniques to a flat surface.

on cloisonné used to focus primarily on the shape of objects, which are decorated by traditional auspicious patterns. Although the filigree enamel painting adopted the wire-inlaying technique used for cloisonné vessels, it focuses more on depiction and can be used with different painting styles such as oil painting and watercolor. The color system is now more modern. Guo Wei used the cloisonné technique to recreate the famous ancient Chinese painting *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*. “This recreated version also used the ink painting style,” said Guo. “The mountains in the distance are textured, so they require applying of inlaid wires. When blending colors, variation in the depth of colors must be considered as a whole to present the visual effect of various layers

of mountains naturally.”

Guo feels strongly that the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage today cannot be confined to the traditional approach under which masters taught apprentices. Instead, he seeks to integrate it into the daily lives of ordinary people. He wants people to experience the art and create themselves, which can help bridge the gap between intangible cultural heritage and the public. With this idea in mind, he co-founded a cloisonné education center named “Original Creation” with like-minded friends in 2013. There, students can learn the traditional procedures of making cloisonné enamel vessels such as wire inlaying and enameling and experience intangible cultural heritage in practice.

Whenever new students arrive, Guo explains the

traditional techniques for making cloisonné as well as historical and cultural connotations behind. Soon after its establishment, the center had attracted many students interested in traditional culture from every age group, ranging from elementary school students to the elderly. Some have kept learning it for nearly 10 years.

“At first, we focused mainly on traditional Chinese realistic painting and traditional patterns,” Guo recalled. “As students became more familiar with this craft, they began to generate their own unique ideas. Some created their favorite cartoons or anime characters, which requires us to keep trying and exploring with them.” In Guo’s opinion, the process also injects new vitality into this intangible cultural heritage in the new era. AP



Guo Wei and a colleague show a filigree enamel painting of a sundial themed on Beijing’s central axis to a student.



A teacher from the “Original Creation” cloisonné education center instructs a student on using the techniques to create filigree enamel paintings.



The Grain Rain, the last solar term in spring, fell on April 20 in 2023. The Grain Rain originated from the old saying, "Rain brings up the growth of hundreds of grains," which shows that rainfall during this period is extremely important for the growth of crops. The Grain Rain signals the end of cold weather and a rapid rise in temperature.

The Story of Time

Edited by Wang Shuya
Photos courtesy of Xiron Group

The 24 solar terms connect humans with heaven and earth, reflecting Chinese philosophy on harmony between man and nature.

The opening ceremony of the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games kicked off with a 24-second countdown video of the 24 solar terms. The commencement coincided with *Lichun*, or the Beginning of Spring, which is the first of the 24 solar terms of the year.

Audiences around the world were able to admire on the screen the changes in natural rhythm at different solar terms, which reflects the Chinese understanding of time and life.

The concept of the 24 solar terms is unique to the Chinese calendar. The key role of the solar terms in facilitating Chinese production and life has continued for more than two millennia to this day. UNESCO inscribed China's "24 solar terms" onto the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on November 30, 2016. Contrasting most other Chinese intangible cultural heritage items such as Kunqu Opera, Peking Opera, Xuan paper, the abacus, and paper-cut, the 24 solar terms represent a cultural system to manage time.

Book of Time explained how the solar terms impacted individuals and society by guiding agricultural production and shaping the thinking, customs, and regimen. According to the author Yu Shicun, the 24 solar terms connect humans with heaven and earth, reflecting the

Chinese philosophy on harmony between man and nature.

The ancient Chinese gradually began to understand the importance of time in developing agriculture. They arranged farming activities including plowing and sowing, fertilization, irrigation, and harvesting based on the 24 solar terms every year. As Yu said in the book, "farmers in China and other East Asian countries lifted the profession to its pinnacle. According to a survey by a British agronomist in the early 19th century, farmers in the East utilized the land to an artistic level of sophistication. Each acre of land could support six times more people than a similar plot in Britain at the time. Cultivation activities such as intercropping, field burning, food utilization, fertilization, and soil protection all demonstrated farmers' deep understanding of time."

The solar terms not only affect agriculture but also shape Chinese regimen. They impact people's feelings and cognition of life, nature, and the universe. Under the 24 solar terms system, weather phenomena like wind, rain, sun, thunder, lightning, frost, and snow control the changes of time. Trees, flowers, vegetables, insects, fish, birds, beasts, mountains, and rivers are all integral players in time. The solar terms guide people to live according to the laws of nature and to seek harmony with it. Lots of traditions and customs regarding the



Book of Time
by Yu Shicun,
presented by
Xiron Group in
December 2022.



The Awakening of Insects signals a rise in temperature and increased rainfall. As the third solar term of the year, its name alludes to the fact that animals in hibernation are awakened by spring thunder and that the earth begins to come back to life.



The Beginning of Summer signals the transition from spring to summer. On this day, the sun's rays reach an angle of 45 degrees to the earth. The temperature will rise quickly during this period.



The White Dew indicates the beginning of cool autumn. The temperature declines gradually and vapors in the air often condense into white dew on the grass and trees at night.



The Minor Snow refers to the time when it starts to snow, mostly in China's northern areas, and the temperature drops further.



On the Winter Solstice, the Northern Hemisphere experiences the shortest day and the longest night in the year, as the sun shines directly at the Tropic of Capricorn. The Winter Solstice also marks the arrival of the coldest season of the year.

24 solar terms are still popular in the country, such as offering sacrifices to ancestors on *Qingming* (Pure Brightness), drinking tea on *Guyu* (Grain Rain), weighing oneself on *Lixia* (Beginning of Summer), eating newly harvested wheat on *Xiaoman* (Grain Buds), seeking to gain weight on

Liqiu (Beginning of Autumn), and eating persimmons on *Shuangjiang* (Frost's Descent).

Production and life follow the rhythm of time, as do individuals and society. The 24 solar terms not only mark changes of time. They are also cultural symbols reminding people to act and maintain


certain principles throughout life. It is safe to say that the long-standing national character of China originated from the solar terms.

As the solar term *Lichun* arrives, thunder awakens all living species from hibernation and brings them back to life. It is the time for thriving activities

of flora and fauna. Humans should develop self-constraint and avoid pursuing their own interests at the expense of other lives on the planet. The second solar term, *Yushui* (Rain Water), heralds rising temperatures and frequent precipitation, which reminds people to follow the flow of

nature and make preparations if the rainfall is insufficient for crops. On *Qingming*, or the Tomb-Sweeping Day, people practice a solemn ceremony involving cleaning the tombs and making offerings to the dead to show respect and gratitude to their ancestors. As the name of the solar term

Pure Brightness suggests, people should keep cultivating themselves and lead a life of integrity and uprightness.

The author calls on readers to "return to time itself." Only by respecting nature and recognizing that human beings are part of nature can we live harmoniously with nature. 

From Court to Crowd

Text by Yi Mei
Photos by Qin Bin

Intangible cultural heritage shapes Chinese lifestyles, behavior patterns, and philosophies.

“We are seeing intangible cultural heritage penetrate Chinese people’s lives and shape their lifestyles, behavior patterns, and philosophies,” said co-curator Yang Xuechen when she was touring around the exhibition hall. The exhibition “Beijing Charm, Jinhua Style—Intangible Cultural Heritages of Northern and Southern China” at the National Center for the Performing Arts (NCPA) displayed over 220 pieces (sets) of handicrafts in 30 categories from the cities of Beijing and Jinhua, both boasting rich cultural heritage.

The exhibition was divided into three parts: Royal Classics in Beijing, Song Dynasty Legacies in Jinhua, and Blending

Southern and Northern Styles.

Royal Classics

After serving as the capital city of five dynasties lasting over 1,000 years, Beijing boasts abundant royal cultural heritage featuring supreme craftsmanship and precious materials. Among them, the “eight most famous representatives” are cloisonné, jade carving, ivory carving, lacquer carving, lacquerware inlaid with silver, gold and jewelry, filigree jewelry, royal carpet, and Beijing embroidery.

“These items used to be reserved for royal families,” said Yang, who is also deputy director of the Arts Museum Department of NCPA. “But now the public can also enjoy these exquisite craftworks.”



A Beijing embroidery work, themed on the series of “Twelve Chapters of Heaven and Earth.”



Longevity (left), a Beijing cloisonné work, and a brooch made with the same technique.



In Bloom, a filigree inlay work.



Plum Vase, a carved lacquerwork.

Back in the old times, no fresh fruits or vegetables were available in winter even for emperors living in the Forbidden City, now known as the Palace Museum. So, eye-relishing ornaments in shapes of vegetables and fruits became popular among the rich and powerful. This was how the Chang family became famous. In the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the Chang family began to make decorative glass products. A bunch of frosted glass grapes the family made were so lifelike that many visitors believed they were real. The traditional technique used to make glass ornaments has been passed down across seven generations in the family. “We have been constantly brainstorming ways to make new breakthroughs on the skills since the

times have changed,” said Chang Hong, a current inheritor of the technique. “This exhibition is a good chance for us to show our skills and pool more ideas about innovation from the public.”

Song Legacies

Due to its proximity to Lin’an (now Hangzhou in eastern China’s Zhejiang Province), the capital city of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), Jinhua was heavily influenced by the Song culture, which is characterized by inclusiveness, literati customs, and diverse schools of thought.

“Contrasting Beijing’s cultural heritage, Jinhua’s output focused more on daily use, was enjoyed by the public, and leveraged indigenous materials,” noted

Yang. For instance, the costumes of Peking Opera performed in the imperial palace were usually decorated with luxury trimmings like gold or silver threads, while Wu (ancient name of Jinhua) Opera's costumes were made of silk, a specialty fabric in southern China. "Wu Opera's costumes were brighter and more colorful because the stages were often far from the audience," Yang continued. "The audience in the imperial palace could get close to the stage, so Peking Opera's costumes were magnificent but with more modest colors."

A "calling card" of Jinhua, Dongyang wood carving was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage item in 2006. The traditional craft tends to keep the original textures of the wood and boasts multi-layer patterns which are concise but not simple, and grand but not extravagant. Wheat-straw clipart and paper cutting in Pujiang District of Jinhua both developed from local

folk arts. Locals used to make wheat-straw hats and fans and gradually began to design screens and other ornaments. Pujiang paper cutting also evolved from a tradition to an art form. "When I got married, I had to put paper-cutting works on everything in my dowry to show villagers how skilled I was," said Zhu Ruifang, an inheritor of Pujiang paper cutting. "Now, the custom is not so popular, but paper cutting is preserved as a handicraft passed down from generation to generation." According to Zhu, Pujiang paper cutting mostly features figures from local operas. "The distinctive characteristic of our paper cutting is that we don't cut out the facial features of the figures, but you can still sense their facial expression," she said. "In recent years, more and more young people have joined us. They open studios and often have new ideas which have injected new vigor into this old craft."

Boneless lanterns made by acupuncture tools, a representative intangible cultural heritage in Dongyang City, Zhejiang Province.

A paper-cutting work displayed at the exhibition.

An ivory carving work.



An inheritor of paper-cutting techniques displays a work themed on the Hangzhou Asian Games.



Co-curator Yang Xuechen (middle) introduces some highlights of the exhibition.



Blending Styles

The Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, the longest of its kind in the world, was first constructed in the late Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.) and successively expanded during the Sui (581-618) and Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties.

The canal starts in Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province, in the south and reaches Beijing in the north, spanning over 1,797 kilometers. Throughout its history of more than 2,500 years, the canal has played a key role in cultural and economic communication and exchange between China's north and south. Thanks to the canal, Jinhua and Beijing had more opportunities to borrow from each other. Many artworks

and craftworks from Jinhua were sent to Beijing as tributes, such as Dongyang wood carving and Wu porcelain. Gradually, Beijing's craftsmen merged those skills, patterns, and ingredients into their own cultural products, creating a combined style with traits of both sides.

Traditional tea processing techniques and associated social practices in China were inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2022. Beijing's flower tea and Jinhua's green tea were included. "The two places are famous for different categories of tea and tea-making skills," said Yang. "Through tea ceremonies, they share common social etiquette, respect for nature, and love for life." EP

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