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|---|---|---------------------|
| <p>Yuyan Wang
<i>Lead Author: Graduate Student</i>
<i>Hanyang University, Korea</i></p> <p>Albert Young Choi, Ph.D.
<i>Co-author: Graduate Advisor, Professor</i>
<i>Hanyang University, Korea</i></p> | <p>Research on Visual Symbol Design of Traditional Festivals</p> | <p>2-17</p> |
| <p>Bixi Lin
<i>Lead Author: Graduate Student</i>
<i>Hanyang University, Korea</i></p> <p>Albert Young Choi, Ph.D.
<i>Co-author: Graduate Advisor, Professor</i>
<i>Hanyang University, Korea</i></p> | <p>A Case Study of Ecological Aesthetics and Culture Code Analysis of Chinese Hezhen 'Fish Skin' Paper Cutting</p> | <p>18-35</p> |
| <p>Xin Wang
<i>Lead Author: Graduate Student</i>
<i>Hanyang University, Korea</i></p> <p>Albert Young Choi, Ph.D.
<i>Co-author: Graduate Advisor, Professor</i>
<i>Hanyang University, Korea</i></p> | <p>A Study of Logo Redesign from the Perspective of Brand Ecosystem</p> | <p>36-49</p> |
| <p>Yuhao Zhang
<i>Lead Author: Graduate Student</i>
<i>Hanyang University, Korea</i></p> <p>Albert Young Choi, Ph.D.
<i>Co-author: Graduate Advisor, Professor</i>
<i>Hanyang University, Korea</i></p> | <p>Analysis of Chiang Embroidery Patterns Elements Based on Cultural Semiotics</p> | <p>40-67</p> |
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Research on Visual Symbol Design of traditional Festivals

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ABSTRACT

Presuming that the essence of design is in creating symbols for communication, typography occupies a central position among the variety of design sectors. The root and trunk of typography are no other than language and texts. Texts are composite elements that not only have static characters including linguistic information, but also visual and audio elements as a visual and formative language. Nowadays, when visual and audio functions are far more active with the usage of computers and the advent of New Media, the descriptive realm of typography has been expanded to dynamic spaces such as monitors or screens, from a limited space based on printing mediums: papers. By adding elements of various impacts to the existing, static typography, it was expanded to dynamic typography that simultaneously represents visual, spatial and audio images, becoming a method that can create more significance. Such changes brought forth new tides in the overall design sector, and moving texts are rapidly spreading as if it is a fashionable vogue.

Based on the solid value of the visual symbols of traditional festivals and the limitations of the current research on the visual symbols of traditional festivals, an in-depth study of the visual symbols of traditional festivals is conducted based on the expertise of semiotics, symbols, and visual communication design: the intrinsic value and meaning of traditional festivals are discussed from the leading conventional festivals. This paper summarizes the main problems and causes of current traditional festivals. It proposes the design of visual symbols for traditional festivals as a practical and effective way to integrate traditional festivals into modern society. Through the study of the visual symbolic appeal of traditional festivals, the integration of tradition and modernity is sought

to create visual design works of traditional festival culture that meet the characteristics of the new era. For the “festivals” covered in this paper, 3-5 different Chinese festivals will be selected and analyzed through questionnaires. Such as. Chinese Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, etc.

Based on the expertise of semiotics, symbolic communication, and visual design, this topic studies the visual symbols of traditional festivals. On the theoretical level, on the one hand, from the perspective of literature, the visual symbols of traditional festivals are explored in traditional and modern applications. On the other hand, from the perspective of fine arts, methods of inheritance and innovation are sought. Through the analysis of typical cases and theory combined with practice, this paper studies the inevitability and importance of the value innovation of festival visual symbols explore the value innovation methods of festival visible signs, constructs new festival visual symbols, and promotes the visual design to meet modern aesthetic needs.

KEYWORDS

Traditional Culture, Traditional Festivals, Visual Symbols, Visual Images, Cultural Innovation

INTRODUCTION

5.1 THE REASON FOR CHOOSING THE FESTIVAL

China has a rich history and varied culture. With the evolution of time, many traditional festivals have been produced and continue to now. The paper chooses the festival symbols of the Chinese traditional Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and Mid-Autumn Festival as the primary research object. Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and Mid-Autumn Festival are the traditional festivals that China attaches great importance.

The study understands the cultural concept of traditional Chinese festivals through cultural semiotics, explores the relationship between traditional Chinese festivals and traditional festival cultural patterns, understands the meaning and value of the unified festival pattern elements, makes the traditional festival culture symbolized in graphics, summarizes the importance of festival culture, creates a strong reference value for creating more art forms and methods about festival cultural symbols in the future, and creates more possibilities for traditional Chinese. The significance of traditional festival culture is sum-

marized.

5. 2 FESTIVAL BACKGROUND

The Spring Festival, also known as the Chinese New Year, is the most solemn and bustling ancient traditional festival among Chinese people. The Spring Festival has been handed down for thousands of years in Chinese history as the “oldest and most popular festival. (Shang, 1989) Chinese traditional festival culture is gradually formed over the long history. The working people in ancient China adapted to the rhythm of natural cycles. They created a highly developed farming civilization, cultivated in spring, planted in summer, harvested in autumn, and stored in winter (Wu Zhaosheng, 2008). Chinese traditional festivals are linked with agricultural production activities with apparent periodicity, and people’s life naturally forms a cyclical rhythm reflected by many festivals. China has always been based on agriculture since ancient times. People who have been in agricultural society for a long time weave the farming life yearly and the similar but different history year after year through the seasonal network they created. The Spring Festival is because it is in the slack season and the slack season is long, so all kinds of folk entertainment activities, even wedding ceremonies, are also held during the Spring Festival. So, the traditional Spring Festival atmosphere is also energetic and festive.

The Dragon Boat Festival, a traditional festival with a long history in China, is celebrated on the fifth of May in the lunar calendar. The Dragon Boat Festival has been extended for thousands of years. There are many theories about its origin, of which the theory of commemorating Qu Yuan has the most comprehensive, profound, and significant influence. Qu Yuan wrote a patriotic poem about his own life and insisted on his ideal with his death. The traditional custom of Chinese people celebrating the Dragon Boat Festival mainly reflects the thought of patriotism, loyalty, and filial piety advocated in Chinese traditional culture (Kang Shujing, 2015).

The Mid-Autumn Festival is to the ancient Chinese calendar. The 15th day of August in the lunar calendar is in the middle of August in the autumn of a year, called the “Mid-Autumn Festival.” It is said that the origin of the Mid-Autumn Festival has a history of more than 2000 years. Ancient Chinese emperors have the ritual of offering sacrifices to the sun in spring and to the moon in autumn. Every aspect of the Mid-Autumn Festival seems to be related to the moon, from the worship of the moon to the appreciation of the moon, from

the celebration of the autumn harvest to the family reunion, from the festival activities represented by eating moon cakes and appreciating osmanthus to the beautiful legends (Li Fang2015). In China, the moon has always symbolized people's hope. In traditional Chinese festivals, the theme of "reunion" is also reflected in a strong form. The Mid-Autumn Festival is also one of the festivals with the theme of reunion.

6. RESEARCH THE BACKGROUND OF THE FESTIVAL CULTURE CODE

China pays attention to the development of traditional culture, which contains many cultural significance and social functions that can be reflected in conventional festival symbols, how the cultural elements of traditional Chinese festivals and the symbolic of elements meanings continue to be inherited along with the demands of the times is of great significance to the cultural construction of China's collective value system, which is one of the reasons why the paper chooses to study the code of festival culture. The paper is hoped that by sorting out, researching, and analyzing the codes of Chinese festival culture, people can better preserve the traditional culture. The article will demonstrate the potential role of visual cultural codes in cultural transmission and development through two methodological approaches, highlighting the importance of festival symbols for information about traditional cultural festivals.

Summarizing American philosophers Saussure and Peirce's proposal of symbolic duality and triadic relations leads to the conclusion that:

Symbol structure: There is a difference between simple and complex symbol structures. Simple symbols, such as the single concrete form of the Chinese New Year symbol, can express the meaning of celebration and auspiciousness, while many structural symbols in the Chinese New Year visual symbols (lanterns, firecrackers, fortune characters, etc.) can also signify the festive and auspicious meaning of the Chinese New Year. In modern social life, a symbol can be said to be created if someone replaces something complicated and complex with something that also gives meaning. However, after a symbol is created, which does not mean that the symbol has the vitality of life. The life of a symbol also depends on the recognition of the society, that means the society "affirms" the form and content of the symbol (meaning the thoughts and feelings conveyed by the symbol). If a symbol is not socially recognized after the symbol birth, the symbol will "perish"; if the symbol is not socially recognized in circulation,

the symbol will die from aging. Therefore, being recognized by society is very important for symbols.

Symbol chain (symbol string): The symbols in a symbol system are a set, and the set of symbols is usually composed in a certain order. Such an ordered set is called a “symbol string”, also called a “symbol chain”. A simple sum of several symbols is not the meaning of a symbol string. A single symbol shape and a series of actions form an ordered set of symbols, which is a symbol string.

7. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

By applying the principles of semiotics, the paper summarizes and sorts out the graphic patterns of traditional Chinese festivals, the characteristics of festivals, and potential social impacts. From the perspective of semiotics, the representative symbols in traditional Chinese festivals are analyzed, summarized, and sorted out.

The analysis of traditional festivals from the perspective of semiotics can stimulate the vitality of traditional Chinese festivals and traditional culture, help traditional Chinese festivals maintain good national characteristics in the context of globalization, and improve the communication ability of traditional culture. The semiotic analysis also helps to understand the profound cultural connotation of traditional festivals. Sorting out traditional festival symbols with Chinese characteristics can meet more business needs, explore a new way to apply conventional symbols, and improve the market competitiveness of traditional festival symbols.

Choi Albert Young’s (2018) CCBD book describes cultural codes as follows: “As the symbol of the smallest unit to promote and define culture, cultural codes help to understand the elements of culture. Moreover, due to special rules, various cultural codes are connected, establish relationships, and define culture. (Choi, A.Y.: *Cultural Code Brand Design Methodology*. 1st ed. Book Lab Press, Seoul, South Korea 44 (2018)).

Using semiotics to analyze Chinese traditional festival symbols, the object or theme of semiotics research is symbols and the role of symbols or semiotics. (Choi, A.Y.: *Cultural Code Brand Design Methodology*. 1st ed. Book Lab Press, Seoul, South Korea 44 (2018)). Use the concept of semiotics to analyze the symbols and the meanings contained in traditional Chinese festivals such as Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and Mid-Autumn Festival.

Ethnic culture is a concrete entity measured by social values and has been

regarded as a ‘cultural code’ in different contexts (Tambovtsev, 2015). For example, traditional Chinese festivals such as the Spring, Mid-Autumn, and Dragon Boat Festival have a solid ethnic and cultural dimension. The Chinese people living on Chinese soil attach particular importance to the transmission and development of traditional festivals, so the ethnic culture in Chinese society also has a cultural code unique to the festivals.

8. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY


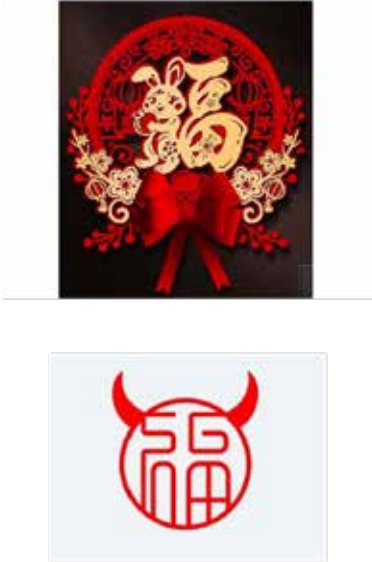
8.1 THE USE OF CULTURAL CODE BRAND DESIGN (CCBD) METHODOLOGY

Through the analysis of Choi Albert Young’s (2018) CCBD, the book proposes that “visual cultural code” (VCc) is a visual element to convey cultural code. Visual culture codes can be divided into “general visual culture code,” “suggested visual culture code,” “active visual culture code,” and “inactive visual culture code.” All visual cultural codes are closely related to cultural codes. For example, summarize the cultural code of Chinese traditional festival symbols. Therefore, “Visual Code” (Vc) is a visual element, the fundamental element for creating design results that can be communicated. (Choi, A.Y.: Cultural Code Brand Design Methodology. 1st ed. Book Lab Press, Seoul, South Korea 46-47 (2018)).

General Visual Culture code (GVCC) is a visual culture code that is understood and trusted by specific social groups but can be easily changed. The cultural code related to the universal visual cultural code is the ubiquitous cultural code (GCc). Active Visual Culture code (AVCc) is a visual culture code that is easy to identify the culture of a social group and is not easy to change. The cultural code associated with the visual cultural code of the event is the active cultural code (ACc).

For example, the Chinese word “Fu,” which means happiness, is the criterion of ancient Chinese people’s concept of happiness (ancient arts, 2019). Therefore, the word “Fu” is equivalent to the general visual cultural code of the traditional Spring Festival understood and trusted by the Chinese people, which is the Ancient Chinese “Fu” pattern (Table 1). Moreover, in the process of continuous development and evolution of history, the word “Fu” has formed the cultural code of modern Chinese Spring Festival activities, which is the Chinese modern “Fu” pattern (Table.1).

Table.1 “Fu” pattern

Ancient Chinese "Fu" pattern	Chinese modern "Fu" pattern
	

The formula of the Visual Culture code development process in Choi Albert Young's (2018) CCBD is as follows. $PVCc + GVCc = IVCc \rightarrow GVCc > GCc > AVCc$ uses cultural code to summarize and analyze.

8.2 THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SEMIOTIC METHODOLOGY

The object or subject of semiotic research is not just the symbols but the role of symbols or semiotics (Deely, 2005). The symbols of traditional festivals are not only the festival symbols themselves but also gradually become the symbols of the festival, the impressions of the festival, and the formation of laws. Modern society is more conducive to spreading and preserving traditional culture. Semiotics include human and non-human interactions based on the exchange of technology in the social, material, and the personal world (Author links open overlay panel John Mingers et al., 2017). Analysis semiotics observes behind or under the dominant appearance of cultural artifacts to reveal the potential social and cultural structures that produce them (Author links open overlay panel John Mingers et al., 2017). From a social point of view, China has given various

wishes to festivals since ancient times. The Spring Festival is a celebration of the hard work of the year and the arrival of the new year. The Mid-Autumn Festival is expected for a family reunion, and the Dragon Boat Festival is a tribute and memorial ceremony for patriotic figures in the hearts of ancient Chinese. Under the background of China's incredible culture and era, one traditional festival after another has been handed down to this day. Myths have ideological functions - they make particular world views (for example, objectivism, masculinity, freedom, individualism) seem natural and therefore unchangeable (Barthes, 1972, p. 8) (Author links open overlay panel John Mingers et al., 2017). For example, the myth of Chang'e's running to the moon on the Mid-Autumn Festival lays the background for the festival. It is precise because of the elements in the myth that create the cultural symbols related to the Mid-Autumn Festival.

For example, the Chinese New Year firecrackers, the Dragon Boat race, and the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival are all traditional Chinese myths and legends. According to legend, in ancient times, a monster called "Nian" was fierce. "The beast lived deep under the sea and in the forests, and only on New Year's Eve would Nian come up from the sea and come out of the woods to eat livestock and harm people. Therefore, on New Year's Eve (when the old and the new Change), people would flee and hide in caves and other places to avoid being hurt by the beast. An old man later used the sound of firecrackers and red paper to chase away the beast, scaring the beast away and giving rise to the custom of setting off firecrackers at the Chinese New Year (Xiang Lian, 2022).













In modern China, the Dragon Boat Festival is generally intended to commemorate and pay tribute to Qu Yuan; on the Dragon Boat Festival dragon boat racing from Qu Yuan's load, first appeared in the southern Liang dynasty Zongshou's "Jingchu years and times": the fifth of May Qu Yuan holds a stone to throw into the river, Chu people cannot let the death of loyal subjects, too many people rowed to rescue, but after no trace of Qu Yuan. Every year afterward, dragon boats were paddled on the fifth of May to commemorate Qu Yuan and to protect his remains by driving away the fish in the river. In 1984, dragon boat racing became an official national sporting event. Dragon boat racing is not only a cultural activity but also a sporting activity, a cultural activity with a national character (Kang Shujing, 2015).

For the Mid-Autumn Festival, legend has it that Chang'e was the wife of a hero named Hou Yi in ancient times. At that time, there were ten suns in the sky, and the suns were very hot, bringing great terror and disaster to China. Hou Yi shot down nine suns and left one behind so that people could finally

live normally, and all the people of the world admired Hou Yi. Hou Yi heard that the Queen of the West had a “pill of immortality,” so Hou Yi went to get it. Not wanting to become immortal alone, Hou Yi took the medicine home and gave the medicine to Chang’e for safekeeping. However, on the 15th day of the 8th month, Hou Yi’s disciple forced Chang’e to hand over the medicine. Chang’e swallowed the medicine in one gulp so it would not fall into the wrong hands. Chang’e then flew up to the Moon Palace. Hou Yi then set up an offering in the courtyard, set out fruits and vegetables, and pondered Chang’e to the moon. People followed suit, and the festival of the 15th day of the eighth month was formed (Shang, 1989). The myths have provided the background for the festival, and the elements of the myth are through the culture that many of the cultural symbols of traditional Chinese culture have been created.

8.3 THE PAPER DISCUSSES THE CONCEPT OF SYMBOLIZATION IN TRADITIONAL CHINESE FESTIVALS

Table.2 Chinese traditional festival representative colors and pictures

Festival	Spring Festival	Dragon Boat Festival	Mid-Autumn Festival
Form			
Color (PMS)	 711C  803C  SM3-1 664	 2427C  2199C	 151C  9001  2028C  2018C

As shown in Table 2, the Spring Festival chooses the color with red as the primary color and yellow as the auxiliary color, and the traditional Chinese lanterns, firecrackers, and Chinese characters as the primary representative patterns, which are the most popular in China during the Spring Festival and the most popular during the festival. The Dragon Boat Festival is mainly green and

blue, supplemented by orange, and is represented by the traditional images of dumplings, dragon boats, and sachets. Finally, the colors of the Mid-Autumn Festival are moon white, red, and orange, with the most representative moon cakes, moon, and rabbit as the main images. There are particular meanings and legends behind the specific patterns and colors of these festivals in China, which also embody the traditional festival culture code (GVCC).

People's emotion transmission and faith expression are done through the symbols and rituals etc. in the festival, thus forming a visual symbol, which in turn become a string of symbols that together unify in the system of traditional Chinese festivals, according to time, space, static and dynamic forms, each of these symbols or symbol systems have independent forms and meanings, and they together show the Chinese. These symbols or symbol systems each have independent forms and meanings, and together they show the different ways of celebrating traditional Chinese festivals and the state of festivity. The symbols of traditional festivals conform to the following characteristics: longevity, stability, symbolism, difference, and derivativeness (Charles Sanders Peirce, 1867).

Longevity: No symbol is a symbol from the beginning, which is only recognized as a specific symbol when people think the symbol can express certain characteristics after a long period of practice. The formation of the visual symbol system of Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival was formed gradually only after the accumulation of a long river of time and the elimination and screening of symbols.

- **Stability:** When symbols are once formed, symbols are recorded and passed down in a relatively fixed form. Through these relatively stable symbols, people can achieve benign interaction and communication and collaboration. Therefore, the visual symbol system of Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival is stable once formed, and the symbols in the composition will not change easily.
- **Allegorical:** The visual symbol system of traditional festivals should have a certain indication of allegorical meaning, i.e. the meaning of "energy" in semiotics. Only through the inner meaning can the visual symbols establish a connection with something external, and the connection can be understood by the public.
- **Differences:** The symbol systems of Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival have the function of expressing the corresponding concepts, i.e., the semiotic meaning of "referential". The visual symbols of traditional festivals also have different differentiated

characteristics from other traditional visual symbols, expressing different intrinsic concepts.

- Derivativeness: While maintaining the original good visual symbols, the visual symbols of traditional festivals have been combined with the culture of each era over the centuries, and new connotations have been derived on the basis of inheritance.

8.3.1 PATTERN

Patterns generally refer to patterns on the surface of decorative buildings, sculptures, handicrafts, designs, etc. Ancient people imitated all phenomena and shapes in nature and depicted them as pictures to express a specific meaning or through a particular prayer. In China, symbols and characters with good wishes and expectations for things eventually become one of the origins of patterns. In addition, with time, expression skills or practical uses have changed, and the shape of the pattern has been deformed or simplified, which is widely used in life. Chinese traditional festival patterns are not only visual decoration and beauty but also have many meanings behind each pattern, such as the “blessing” of the Spring Festival, firecrackers, zongzi and dragon boat of the Dragon Boat Festival, moon, and rabbit of the Mid-Autumn Festival, etc., which are the cultural codes of traditional Chinese festivals (GVCC). When major festivals come, people’s preparations for the arrival of the festival have spread from home decoration, food of different festivals, and words with different meanings (GVCC) to modern society and life, which is also the successful inheritance of traditional Chinese festivals (GVCC) to Chinese active visual cultural norms (AVC).

8.3.2 COLOUR

Traditional Chinese festivals are customs summarised according to natural phenomena and changes in nature, seasons, and astronomy and are closely linked to people’s lives and production. The colors used in traditional festivals are culturally diverse and abstract, and the colors of traditional festivals reflect conventional Chinese aesthetics in various things, enriching the content of the celebrations, and are a reflection of the sincere expression of people’s emotions and the integration of festival culture into one. (Han Zhe, 2017) The primary colors can be divided into red, yellow, blue, white, and other primary colors.

Traditional Chinese colors are based on nature, life, beautiful legends, and other social aspects. Good wishes for life and the harmony of nature are the representative colors of traditional Chinese festivals, which are often appreciated and applied. The colors are also all part of the early Chinese Generic Visual Culture Code (GVCc).

The history of China has created festivals and festival symbols. The different colors of the various festivals make for an extra festive atmosphere. For example, the red New Year, the green Dragon Boat Festival, and the orange Mid-Autumn Festival all give a strong impression. These colors all reflect different festive emotions but mainly reflect the ideas of patriotism, loyalty, filial piety, and wishes for a better life, which are respected in traditional Chinese culture (Kang Shujing, 2015). The symbolic use of these conventional colors for traditional Chinese festivals transforms these Chinese General Visual Cultural Codes (GVCc) into Chinese Active Visual Cultural Codes (AVCc).

CONCLUSION

Generally, traditional Chinese festivals' cultural codes are diverse and inherited. Therefore, the symbolization of traditional Chinese festivals has become an important research topic for adapting to the rapidly developing market. Furthermore, the symbolization of traditional Chinese festivals can increase the circulation of traditional culture, retaining the unique effect of traditional Chinese culture while increasing its communication effect. Therefore, the cultural code (GVCc), which has also been following the aesthetic characteristics of the Chinese people with the changing times, has become China's active cultural code (AVCc). Analyzed from a semiotic point of view, based on the social environment and cultural development, the current Chinese traditional festivals grew to better adapt to the cultural development and people's daily life.

The innovation of the paper is to analyze the visual orientation of traditional festivals from a semiotic perspective, where traditional festivals gradually take on the festival's symbols, colors, and patterns, which is the emergence and development of traditional Chinese festivals. Zhong Jingwen, a famous Chinese folklorist, once pointed out, "Folk culture is a traditional culture, but folk culture will be eliminated by the people if the folk culture fails to maintain a flesh-and-blood connection with the real life of the people. If the study of folk culture leaves modernity, it likewise loses its value of existence." (Zhong Jingwen 1994) Therefore, through the theory of semiotics and cultural codes in the paper, traditional festivals are symbolized so that traditional festival sym-

bols can be better integrated into modern society, which is conducive to the development and innovation of traditional festival culture. One can learn about the unique Chinese cultural codes that the festivals contain from the visualized traditional festival symbols and from the paper, which is also clear that the successful combination of traditional culture and modernity is continuous cultural progress and development. Therefore, summarising the cultural codes of traditional Chinese festivals is a good reference for visualizing traditional culture.

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