

Application of Tai Chi Cultural Semiotic Symbols in Chinese Construction of National Image

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Abstract: In recent years, a rapid growth of the global economy has strengthened the competition among nations. To be at a favorable international advantage under such an environment, a positive national image is necessary. As a result, this paper analyzes the application of Tai Chi cultural semiotic symbols in Chinese construction of national image under the discussion on the selection of culture symbol in Chinese construction of national image, as a base, through its positioning with an introduction of Tai Chi - Chinese unique culture symbol. Finally, this paper explains the application tactics in Chinese construction of national image by Tai Chi culture symbol, laying a good foundation for the improvement of Chinese international status.

Keywords: National image; Tai Chi; Culture symbol

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1. Introduction

In Chinese developed history over 5,000 years, there have been much cherished traditional culture, among which Tai Chi is one of the excellent as a Chinese culture symbol of great importance. By such a culture symbol, we could go beyond merely building a better image for China, and even help China and foreign exchange under a harmonious promotion of the development in China and even among the whole world. Consequently, application of Tai Chi culture symbol in Chinese construction of national image provides crucial help in a better application of Tai Chi culture symbol in Chinese construction of national image.

2. Positioning of Chinese National Image

In current generation during a national development, image and statehood was a vital content. Only an accurate positioning of national image results in a better development. During the image positioning, it is necessary to develop an image according to the national characteristics and the exclusive national features. For instance, "Creative

Nation" of Germany, "Dynamic Nation" of Korea and "Enthusiasm" of Columbia, these image positioning have all been developed in accordance with national features. Therefore, it is also needful to develop Chinese image positioning on the basis of current development practice and Chinese exclusive features. During the process of Chinese national image positioning, due to the influence by Confucian culture, there was a common feature, harmony, despite different guiding principles over various developing periods, for example, "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" in early new China era and "Harmony in the world" in current generation. Hence, "harmony" is a priority in Chinese national image positioning^[1].

3. Selection of Culture Symbol in Chinese National Image-Building

3.1 Construction of Culture Symbol

From the angle of symbol, culture is a symbol system listed through relevant methods. All the cultures can be represented by symbols. Every culture covers much implied meanings, abstract and indirectly perceived. A direct perception of the cultural implication needs a correspond-

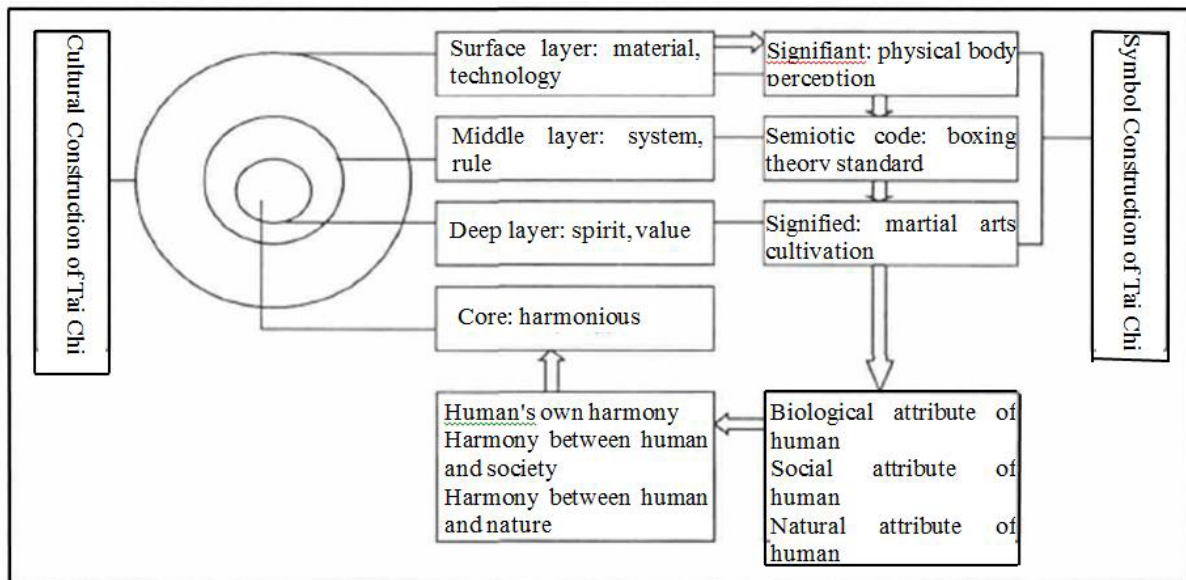


Figure 1. Construction of Tai Chi Cultural Symbol

ing carrier to express visually the cultural implication through transformation of culture by the carrier. And the so-called carrier is symbol. In a symbol, "significant" and "signified" are respectively dual character responsible for the gradual evolution of the symbol into culture and the building of the internal structure of cultures to reflect the cultural essential in use of the symbol. Thus a certain symbol is the substitute of culture in construction of national image using the cultural symbol to make an expression in culture. From this way, it is a must to select a cultural symbol concerned "harmony" in the Chinese construction of national image^[2].

3.2 Selection Principles of Cultural Symbol

Cultural Symbol is a precious wealth left in a long-term national development. China, as one of the oldest countries over the world, owns a 5,000-years' history and leaves numerous cultural symbols, traditional Chinese medicine, Tai Chi, paper cuttings and diet included. Their own stories lie among these cultural symbols, carrying various spirits^[3]. A cultural symbol should be selected, accordingly, under the principles as follows in the construction of national image: Firstly, Chinese national image can be mainly "harmony" through analysis above. Thereupon, it is necessary to maintain a meaning of "harmony" in the selection of cultural symbol to achieve the goal. Secondly, China is a multi-national country with 56 nations inland, each of which has its own lifestyle and cultural deposits. Then, it is necessary to select a cultural symbol that shows such a character on the ground of the multi-national feature during selection, express a distinctive national style through such a cultural symbol and strengthen the under-

standing of Chinese multi-national culture by the world; finally, a cultural symbol can spread widely and domestically. And the Chinese will identify the established national image only when they understand such a cultural symbol in detail.

4. Tai Chi - An Exclusive Cultural Symbol in China

Any nation on earth has its own distinctive cultural symbol, including the Samba of Brazil, the temples of Thailand, the pyramids of Egypt and the romance of France, etc. For China, following cultural symbols are always involved: "Tai Chi", "Chinese Food", "china" and "silk", etc. This paper takes Tai Chi cultural symbol as the research object, aiming at the selection principles above.

4.1 Construction of Tai Chi Cultural Symbol

Tai Chi, an important Chinese intangible cultural heritage, covers much implication, which makes a difference from other physical activities. During the development, Tai Chi exerts the wisdom from the masses. And a long-term accumulation has bred current Tai Chi culture. Such a culture includes multi-aspect knowledge as Chinese boxing and health perseverance. As one of the good Chinese cultures, it is effective to analyze Tai Chi through cultural dimension theory to build a relevant structural model^[4]. In such a model, Tai Chi culture includes three levels. First is the surface layer, namely the material layer, shows through actions. Second is the interlayer, namely the system layer, makes a specification for the action. Thirdly, deep layer, namely the spirit layer, expresses the implied meaning

that Tai Chi covers. While all the cultures express through symbol to satisfy its features. Therefore, to analyze construction of Tai Chi from the semiology angle is a must. That is to say, Tai Chi is constructed by two parts, "signifier" and "signified". The former means that cultural symbol of Tai Chi is composed by symbols while the latter means the content inside the symbol. Meanwhile, between the two, there are some symbolic regulation, semiotic code and also the practice rule of Tai Chi which attains the covered implication to achieve harmony using the practice of Tai Chi. The cultural symbol construction of Tai Chi is as shown in Figure 1.

4.2 Tai Chi is the Cultural Model of Pursuing Harmony

In the philosophy of Tai Chi, "harmony" is the leading content included among many. On the whole, Tai Chi focuses on the harmony of body and mind as well as the combination of mind and body. It reflects harmony primarily in spirit rather than just in actions while covering the harmony based on both. The idea of every at once exists in Tai Chi. Not just a good science of health perseverance, but there are still scientific martial art actions^[5]. Sports are necessary to complete the effective integration of these contents. In consequence, body is a significant component and the carrier of cultural transmission in Tai Chi culture. Since the start of Tai Chi, body has undertaken all the movements to achieve the awakening state in vivo using appearance forms. It is to complete the cultivation through the coordination among aspects including spirit, will and breathe to show the harmony in human itself. In addition, Tai Chi has integrated the idea of Chinese law, discipline and rite to cultivate one's moral character and healthy and good personality traits through martial arts in order to better survive in the society and build the harmony between human and society^[6].

5. Application Tactics in Chinese Construction of National Image by Tai Chi Cultural Symbol

5.1 Application of the Material Layer

It is mainly the application to the Tai Chi action system when referring to the application to the material layer, namely the systematicness of routine, work method and counterwork, making the three as a whole with a hierarchical expression. During the promotion of Tai Chi, we shall build a scientific and good grading system under a positive publicity, connecting grades and every action together among the whole Tai Chi culture. The low dan of Tai Chi should take basic work method, action and routine as the principal. When it comes to enhancing difficulty of work method and action with a big increase in the grade,

the Tai Chi learners can learn Tai Chi simply but deeply. Contemporarily, strengthen the integration of Tai Chi actions and split some tedious actions into simple and basic ones and combine the basic actions gradually with Tai Chi principles in learning to acquaint people with Tai Chi theories under their access to Tai Chi actions. We should, moreover, rationally translate the name of Tai Chi, which, as the cultural symbol of national image construction, needs contact with other nations. An inaccurate translation leads to their misunderstanding of Tai Chi to make a negative impact on national image^[7].

5.2 Application of the System Layer

Primarily, during the construction of national image, the nation shall pay more attention to the cultural symbol of Tai Chi under a rational top-level design and a comprehensive analysis to know the strength and weakness and design a scientific development planning while building a cultural brand and industry of Tai Chi. However, the supervision of specialized agencies is a must to expect a better development of Tai Chi cultural industry. For example, "the national feat" has been set during the development of Taekwondo in Korea. And relevant administration agencies shall be built during the development of Taekwondo in China to complete various activities concerning Tai Chi promotion. Next, organize international Tai Chi competitions to promote the development and international status of Tai Chi through international communication. In the end, make Taekwondo related movies and videos by present science and technology to upgrade the quality and efficiency of the propagation, turning Tai Chi more charming and build a better Tai Chi image^[8].

5.3 Application of Spirit Layer

During the outward promotion of Tai Chi, we should accurately seize the cultural connotation and express Tai Chi culture and Taoist culture, and health maintenance of Tai Chi. We should build a Tai Chi cultural brand, accelerate the influx of Chinese traditional culture into the world, reflect the value of the Chinese and enhance the recognition of Chinese image by other nations and areas to increase the participation in the international market through these excellent cultures. Simultaneously, in Tai Chi culture, the thought view of "unity of heaven and man with learning from nature" agrees with the international value. Through the national image construction by Tai Chi, only who attains the extensive recognition home and abroad can be really in charge internationally.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, national image remains a vital element in its development. Only satisfaction of national develop-

ment requirements plays a maximal role. During Chinese development, "harmony" keeps a main thinking. Therefore, during national image construction, "harmony" is the primary with implication covered in Tai Chi, satisfying the requirements of national image construction.

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