



# The generation and mutual learning of global symbols: Ritual practice and community imagination of the international communication of Dongpo culture

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**Abstract**— Taking the cultural phenomenon that *Le Monde* of France selected Su Shi as the "Millennium hero" as the breakthrough point, combined with James Carey's theory of communication ceremony, this paper systematically analyzes the international communication status and practice path of "Dongpo culture" from the dual perspectives of symbol construction and symbol interaction. The study found that: in the international communication, there are differences in the symbolic meaning of Dongpo culture between China and the West - the western media focus on Su Shi's "free soul" as a literary hero, while China's mainstream media endow it with the symbolic meaning of confidence in Chinese culture through themes such as poetry, festivals, food, etc., to report the development of historical sites and IP brand construction of cultural tourism in Huangzhou, Huizhou and Danzhou, and transform Dongpo culture into a concrete cultural landscape and urban spiritual symbol; International social media, on the other hand, promotes Dongpo culture to break through the barriers of context and form a global "top stream" phenomenon with the strategies of image narration, cross-cultural theme reconstruction and emotional resonance. The research further reveals the dilemma of the international communication of Dongpo culture, and puts forward the optimization strategies of constructing the Multi-Agent Coordination Mechanism, the decentralized communication path and technology empowerment. It provides a theoretical and practical reference for the global dissemination of Chinese cultural symbols, highlighting its role as a cultural link in the construction of a community of shared future for mankind.



**Keywords**— Dongpo culture; Sudongpo, the hero of the millennium; Symbolic communication; International Communication

## I. INTRODUCTION

Su Shi (Dongpo), as the epitome of Chinese literature and thought in the Song Dynasty, his achievements in poetry, calligraphy, and painting, and his ups and downs of life together created the unique cultural symbol of "Dongpo culture". In 2000, *Le Monde* of France listed it as the only

"Millennium hero" selected in the world and called it the embodiment of "free soul". This event not only marked the turning point of Dongpo culture from local classics to international top class, but also reflected the transmission tension of Chinese traditional culture in the context of globalization. Based on James Carey's concept of

communication ceremony as the theoretical framework, this paper focuses on the symbolic communication practice of Dongpo culture: gathering the two main bodies of domestic mainstream media and international social media, the research aims to respond to two core issues: first, how is the symbolic meaning of Dongpo culture interpreted and recreated differently in the context of China and the west? Second, how to realize the transition of traditional culture from "going out" to "integrating into" through technological empowerment and Path Innovation in the digital age? The exploration of this issue not only provides a practical paradigm for the international dissemination of Chinese culture but also injects the cultural gene of "harmony but difference" into the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Since the 1970s, James W. Carey's "communication ritual view" has become an important theoretical paradigm to break through the limitations of the traditional communication "transmission view". Kerry believes that communication is not only the spatial transmission of information, but also the process of maintaining social and cultural order through symbolic interaction and shared meaning. This theory takes religious rites as a metaphor and emphasizes the participation of communication, the function of cultural representation, and the construction of social community. [1] In recent years, domestic scholars have carried out multidimensional discussions around Kerry's theory, especially in the field of cultural symbol communication, media ritual practice, and cross-cultural communication, which has provided important theoretical support for this paper's analysis of the international communication path of "Dongpo culture". Dongpo's poems, festivals, and other elements have been transformed into symbols carrying the identity of Chinese culture through communication practice, which reflects the core logic of Kerry's so-called "building a meaningful world through symbol interaction".

In July 2000, in the special column "Millennium hero" of *Le Monde*, France. As the only Chinese selected, Su Shi ranked 11th (1037-1101 years of birth and death). Although he lived in the 11th century, a little later than the turn of the Millennium set in the column (about 1000 A.D.), he basically met the selection criteria of "having a far-reaching impact on the millennia of future generations", which

attracted widespread attention at home and abroad. [2] As far as "Heroes" are concerned, one is their actions, and the other is their influence on future generations. Editorial board member Jean Pierre Langriyer elaborated on the connotation of Su Shi as a literary Hero: Su Dongpo was a fusion of poet, thinker, painter, and politician. Even though he experienced ups and downs in his official career, he always maintained his independence from power. Its important way is to pursue the unity of nature and man through the art of calligraphy and painting, and to explore the inner law and defend spiritual freedom, which is a powerful manifestation of its heroic characteristics. [3]

Swedish linguist Ferdinand de Saussure divided symbols into signifier and signified as the connection between the exterior and the interior. According to the theory of modern semiotics, all things can be classified as symbols. Dongpo culture is regarded as a unique and representative cultural symbol in China, and the cultural connotation is expressed by the specific IP image (signifier) of Dongpo and the spirit (signified) of Su Shi's philosophy and art.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This paper uses Dow Jones database to retrieve news using the keywords of "(sushi or) and Sudongpo" and "(sushi) or Sudongpo" respectively. It takes the past three years, from 2022 to December 2024 as the time slice, and limits the countries and regions. A total of 216 news reports were collected. Based on the data scale, the subject analysis and comparative study were carried out.

In terms of time, the number of published papers shows an upward trend. In 2022, there were 43 relevant reports from five media, 85 in 2022, and 88 by December 2024. On the basis of "subject" and frequency of occurrence, the themes related to Dongpo culture are classified. The artistic value of Dongpo culture includes the artistic characteristics and achievements of poetry, calligraphy, painting and other works (65), Dongpo's urban culture and tourism (56), festivals (48), catering culture (32), celebrity news (10), and other topics.

## III. DISCUSSION

### Poetry painting: from classic text to era symbol

Su Shi's poetry and painting are a treasure of Chinese traditional culture. Its "broken circle" communication not only depends on the deep excavation of cultural value, but also needs the help of the multiple innovations of modern media strategy. Based on the reporting practice of mainstream media, its breaking path can be divided into the following two strategies. First of all, the mainstream media endows Su Shi's art with modern value connotation, breaks through the unity of traditional cultural narrative, and endows his works with economic value and political value. In 2022, China Daily reported that the painting of dead trees and rocks by Su Shi was auctioned for HK\$450 million, attracting the public's attention to traditional art with the label of "sky-high price". For example, the overseas edition of the people's Daily quoted the orange of "I hope people will live long and share the beauty of a thousand miles" in the report "poems, cakes together in mid autumn" on the celebration of the Mid Autumn Festival by the Chinese and American embassies in 2023, aiming to build an emotional community of "poetry+Festival". Dongpo culture has been brought onto the world stage through poetry, and has become one of the symbols of the times in China.

#### **From the tip of the tongue to the heart: the taste narration of Dongpo cuisine**

Everywhere Sudongpo went in his life, he was closely related to food. Dongpo meat, Dongpo elbows, Dongpo cakes, and other delicacies are full of color, flavor, and taste, and these delicacies also contain Dongpo's understanding of life and optimistic attitude. China's mainstream media take this as a starting point to spread China's unique food culture to the world through Dongpo food. In the Song Dynasty poem Su Shi's appetite for exotic foods, it introduces the origin of Dongpo meat, so that foreign audiences can feel the unique exotic flavor. The mainstream media also broke through the rigid label of "regional cuisine" by mining the cultural commonality of Dongpo cuisine and associating it with universal values. For example, Xinhuanet focused on jixiangju in the streets of Paris. With the concept of "Chinese stomach" Ji "rescue car", it improved the stick and praise with pickles, which not only satisfied the curiosity of overseas audiences about "exotic customs", but also touched the feelings of Chinese with "crisp taste" and "hometown flavor". This strategy upgrades Dongpo cuisine from "taste experience" to "cultural experience", which fits

the curiosity of overseas audiences about Oriental philosophy and life wisdom.

#### **Symbol construction in the changes of urban culture and Tourism -- Huangzhou, Huizhou, Danzhou**

Su Shi's life trajectory is all over the north and south of the river. Wherever he goes, his poems, paintings, and food narratives have been turned into cultural symbols and deeply ingrained in the city. Compared with poetry and ode, the external reporting of urban culture and tourism is more acceptable to foreign audiences and reduces cultural barriers. Dongpo's works in Huangzhou, Huizhou, and Danzhou are favored by news reporters and scholars at home and abroad. His years in these three places are the peak of his literary creation, witnessing the change of Su Shi's temperament and his literary achievements. [4]

The development of urban cultural tourism with the help of historical celebrities' IP can not only stimulate people's respect for outstanding figures, but also enhance the radiation of relevant cultural symbols. [5] Li Lin, a scholar, believes that Su Shi formed the Dongpo culture during the period of Huangzhou. [6] In "companies in solidarity", the Global Times paid attention to the characteristic Huangzhou red cliff. This paper discusses how to integrate the core meaning of Dongpo culture into the renewal of historical blocks in Huangzhou to create a "historic urban landscape". [7] In "Huizhou looks to upgrade its industrial mix", the Global Times pointed out that Huizhou will expand the creation of "Dongpo landscape" to the construction of cultural and tourism brands, combining economic benefits with social benefits. [8] Compared with Huangzhou and Huizhou, Danzhou's Dongpo culture research started late. In 2022, the China Daily Book shed new light on the classic poem's famous ode at Hainan Temple, paying attention to Dongpo's poems in Hainan, such as "zongbi" and "farewell to Hainan Li Min Biao". Compared with other regions, Dongpo's poems in Hainan are often paid little attention, which requires the media to speak out at home and abroad.

#### **Daily Dongpo: the connotation of "Dongpo culture" on the international social media platform**

To understand the international view of Dongpo culture and the communication effect of mainstream media on Dongpo culture, it is necessary to analyze the trend of international social media, research and use the crawler

technology, and take the relevant information of Su Shi (Su Dongpo) as the main statistical object. During this statistical period, 21000 pieces of relevant information were generated. From January 16, 2021, to December 31, 2024, 21195 network information related to Su Shi (Sudongpo) was monitored. Among them, 10510 tweets; 6808 websites; YouTube 3366; Facebook 431; TikTok 43; Gettr 37. It can be seen from the analysis of information sources that Twitter is the main communication platform for information related to monitoring topics.

The core function of ritual communication is to convey specific emotions to build an "imagined community", rather than simple information sharing. [9] Dongpo culture is characterized by more pictures and fewer words on overseas social media. It attracts overseas audiences with rumors, anecdotes, food culture, and other content. It carries out cultural exchanges and responses in posts and comment areas, and puts more emphasis on Dongpo's daring to challenge and being a literati and gourmet. Su Shi's life situation when he was an official was the concern of foreign audiences, because it was full of uncertainty and challenges, but Su Shi could always respond optimistically and explore the local fun. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory showed that western countries tended to tolerate risk-taking behavior because of its low uncertainty avoidance. Netizens commented that "he is a genius, a child and a madman." in the face of political pressure, he chose not to yield and rose up to resist. In the face of demoted adversity, he worked hard like a child to find his own fun, but in these circumstances, he also exercised his cultural talent, which can be described as an all rounder. This this point coincides with the characteristics of Western adventurous and humorous, which explains why Su Dongpo's pioneering and challenging spirit can arouse overseas resonance. Su Shi's personality charm has deeply attracted foreign audiences.

Most of the comments or posts of Dongpo culture are presented in the form of pictures and essays, and most of them are pictures, which greatly reduces the understanding cost for foreign audiences. Unlike China, whose only meaning can not be expressed in words, the West has a high degree of direct acceptance of information, and is not willing to spend more money to understand the meaning. Especially in the production of Dongpo food, Japanese netizens pay attention to Dongpo meat. "Dongpo meat, with

bright red color and rich flavor, is delicious and melts in the mouth. It is worthy of being one of China's famous traditional dishes." Porpoise meat "makes" Chinese cuisine "a Chinese food made of Dongpo meat and pork, using food graphics to arouse the appetite of foreign audiences. Not only that, Japanese netizens also explored what kind of image Dongpo is: a beautiful teenager or a kind old man? Most overseas audiences' understanding of Dongpo's character image also comes from their posts. Based on the picture of Dongpo bamboo hat in Danzhou, Hainan, a kind old man with a cane and a bamboo hat has become the most widely recognized and widely disseminated character image in foreign countries.

#### IV. SUGGESTION

##### **Building a multi subject Dongpo cultural communication mechanism**

Although the folk and mainstream media are different in content and form, they can learn from each other to form a joint force to maximize the dissemination of China's excellent traditional culture. [12] On the one hand, the mainstream media can introduce and interpret the contribution of Dongpo culture to the construction of the community concept in many fields, such as government foreign affairs visits and regional summits. The 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Egypt is a good example. The friendship between the two countries, "thousands of miles together," makes the world understand Dongpo's poems. On the other hand, the power of the folk multi-subject can not be underestimated. Domestic colleges and universities can actively develop academic forums that reflect common consciousness from the perspective of international audiences and ideological and literary works based on Dongpo culture. Local enterprises can use the Dongpo culture IP to attract domestic and foreign tourists and boost the development of local culture and tourism. For example, the first Dongpo noodles conference held in Huizhou used litchi as the media to create a Dongpo culture-themed party integrating audio-visual and interactive activities, bringing an immersive experience to the audience. The relationship between the two countries lies in the affinity between the people, and the affinity between the people lies in the connection between the hearts. The general public can start

from ordinary individuals and use individual cases to narrate, such as taking photos of Su Shi's scenic spots and interpreting Su Shi's poems combined with their own experience, so as to provide clear clues for foreign audiences to understand Dongpo culture.

### **Carry out regional and mass communication**

From a regional point of view, cultural language, geographical environment, historical background, and so on may become cultural conflicts and communication obstacles. Therefore, Dongpo culture is often blocked in Western countries, mainly in the United States and Europe. However, in areas with similar cultures, the spread of the past is twice as effective as half the effort. For example, in Southeast Asia, there are more Chinese groups in these areas with convenient communication and high recognition of Dongpo culture; In addition, the Chinese media and other media have been providing assistance for the dissemination. There are also Japan and South Korea, which have deep historical ties with China and often carry out exchanges and studies. Su Dongpo's poems and characters have long been popular among the people, and have carried out exchanges and cooperation activities between countries many times. [13] Some scholars believe that Southeast Asia can also be called the "third Han cultural circle". They are deeply influenced by traditional Taoism, Confucianism, and Legalism, and Su Shi happens to be a typical figure of the three cultures. By setting up a model, it is convenient for the dissemination of culture and thought. In the future, the dissemination of Dongpo culture can take the lead in choosing these regions to complete the construction of Dongpo symbols.

### **Optimize communication content and strengthen audience communication with technology**

Using science and technology to strengthen the international dissemination of traditional culture is one of the main ways in the world today. [14] By using the latest technology and innovating Dongpo's cultural style, Sudongpo, the first 3D realistic digital person in the country jointly created by Zhongguancun Shijingshan park culture and technology enterprise diting vision and Zhonghua Book Company, landed on CCTV's 2023 "Chinese poetry conference" to have a dialogue with the contestants across the ages; At the forum of "inspired China's digital Dongpo" in Sichuan, the whole process was hosted by suxiaomei, a

digital person; The "Dongpo live shopping at the consumer Expo" launched by the new media of Hainan Daily allows Su Dongpo to travel through time and space, talk with the mascot "mechanical ape" of the consumer Expo, and use live broadcast and VR to take you online to the consumer Expo in real time. Such cultural practice shortens the distance of the audience, produces a "sense of companionship", and reduces the cost of cultural exchange. Audiences no longer need to go to the scenic spot to enjoy the products of Dongpo culture, thus completing the construction and interaction of ritual scenes.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

As a typical representative of Chinese cultural symbols, Dongpo culture shows a unique cross-cultural communication tension in the context of globalization. This study reveals the differences of symbolic interpretation of Dongpo culture in different contexts of China and the west through the theory of the concept of communication ceremony: comparing the two main bodies of China's mainstream media and international social media. The western media constructed Su Shi as a literary hero symbol of "free soul", while China sublimated it into a multidimensional symbol of cultural confidence and urban spirit through concrete carriers such as poetry, festivals and food. The research also shows the paradigm transformation of cultural communication in the digital age. With the help of image narration, emotional resonance and cross-cultural theme reconstruction, the international social media platform makes Dongpo culture break through the context barrier and form a global top stream phenomenon. The global communication practice of Dongpo culture shows that when the traditional cultural symbols and modern communication technology form a resonance, and when local knowledge is transformed into universal value, the world narrative of Chinese culture can truly realize the mutual learning picture of civilization of "each beauty has its beauty, beauty and common".

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