

The Essence of Cultural Trajectories: A Preliminary Academic Exploration of the Continuation and Transformation of Socio-cultural Practices

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ABSTRACT

This paper systematically discusses the reasons, factors, and associations related to cultural continuation and transformation through academic research, proposing several essential possibilities concerning cultural development, derivation, and change. It also provides a detailed exploration and analysis of various social impacts arising from the continuous integration and evolution of culture from the perspectives of cultural connotation, content, context, system, and ideology. The aim is to offer corresponding academic ideas on the rules of cultural transformation.

KEYWORDS

culture; continuation; transformation

1 Introduction

Culture is an important component of social life construction and one of the key spiritual entities of tradition, the present, and the future. However, with changes in the social environment, historical processes, changes in living efficiency and pace, and the impact of emerging technologies (such as artificial intelligence and big data) on its social functioning conditions, its existence form also undergoes rapid changes. Especially, traditional social culture has experienced various substantial transformations within the current social life context. Nostalgia for the past has become a gradually blurred and fading memory in the daily life of both individuals and groups.

As the original participants dwindle, these memories become gradually sealed in texts or objects, including once vividly carrying the characteristics of different historical periods of society, such as traditional skills belonging to various industries. If these traditional skills do not serve as cultural memories or symbols for specific preservation, most are also undergoing an irreversible decline.

As the structure of modern society becomes increasingly complex, with the continuous advancement of various information and technologies in the socio-cultural context worldwide, the connotation of "modern" is also transforming. "Modernization" is gradually being replaced by "modernity." People realize that "modern" is also "growing." In the process of society transitioning from traditional to modern and then to a renewed modern, the society itself is also continually generating corresponding new traditions.

Therefore, the notion that everything about society — the past being entirely replaced by the present and the future — becomes an apparent natural understanding. Consequently, some academic perspectives argue that under such circumstances, cultural continuation and transformation gradually become a subject suitable only for historical discussions. In such discussions, words like "continuation" and "transformation" are often implied or explicitly attributed to the exclusive meanings in past cultural contexts, suggesting that apart from symbols, customs, aesthetics, others have gradually disappeared. However, in reality, if we set aside these appearances, we find that within the scope of "others," there remains a vast space for discussion concerning the permanence, stability, transformation, and re-creation of cultural transformation. These are not merely negative segmentations of the "past," "present" and "future" for piecemeal period studies.

2 Interpretation of Cultural Continuation, Change, and Connotation Expression

In the perspective of anthropology, cultural transformation refers to the changes in cultural content or structure due to the development of society and culture itself or the interaction and integration with foreign cultures. The continuation, transformation, and connotation expression of culture occur within the scope of its subject, content, motivation, and context, exploring its transcendence of reality and various internal and external relationships. These involve elements related to the essence of culture, whether materialized, abstract, potential, or probable, and defined or undefined existences. All these are pointed out and perceived through the specific projection and reception, space, time, occasion, possibility, unity, and diversity presented in the inevitable structural meaning of cultural permanence. They also exert different guidance and influence on the universal daily life through a continually flowing pure norm based on the social environment (Figure 1).

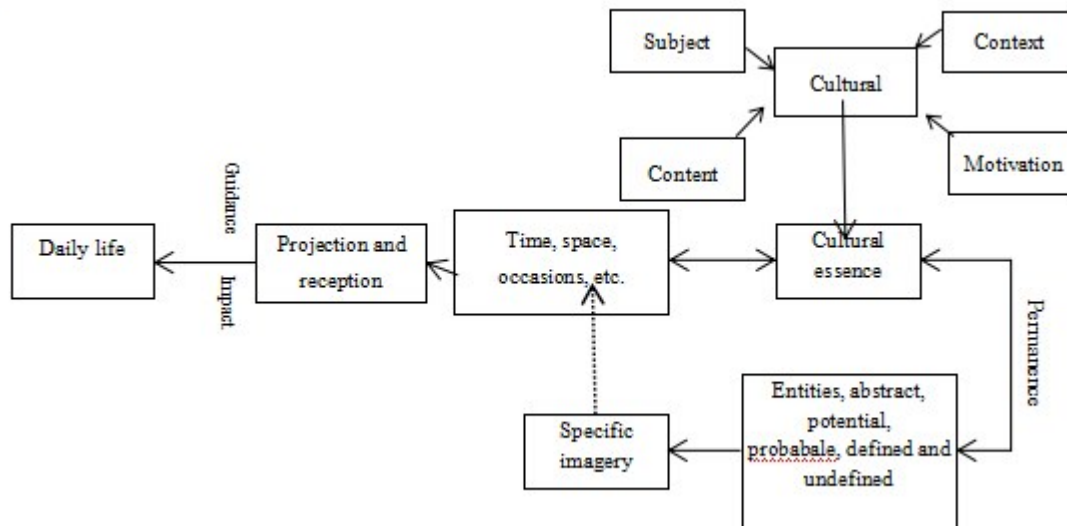


Figure 1 Relationship Between the Cultural Essence and Its Transformation and Daily Life

Under these conditions, any cultural continuation and transformation are important reflections and comprehensive cognitions of the cultural form and its connotation. According to Woods' induction, "In a certain sense, cultural transformation can be said to be one of the essential attributes of human culture." Therefore, it is necessary to step out of the related mental confinement and re-examine the subject through careful research. When scrutinizing cultural continuation and transformation, if the macrostructure of culture transitions from one stage to another while its connotation remains stable and retains its original attributes, it indicates that all cultural phenomena centered around this culture still exist to express its essence. In other words, the connotation has not undergone essential changes. However, through the process of continuation and transformation, the culture itself becomes entirely different from its inception or original state. This is due to certain reasons that will be discussed in this article, which prevent it from fundamentally changing its connotation or transforming it into a subsidiary of itself or external forms (That is, the original properties of the connotation are replaced and transformed, and the original connotation becomes a certain expression or form of the new connotation). Hence, at a certain stage, it becomes entirely realistic (an expression that adapts to social stages) within the "real" dimension and strictly maintains its uniqueness and cohesiveness within the social context. Nevertheless, its mode of existence indeed changes with social environment, technological level, mainstream values, market relationships, and social division of labor. In further interpreting its connotation, many elements in its appearance are transformed into corresponding relationships with specific meanings or expression characteristics. In this context, all symbolic images representing real objects are endowed with certain conceptual and type-related real attributes. The characteristic of this attribute is that its judgment criterion is limited to the specific connotation's scope. Consequently, both the culture itself and any external real elements must undergo corresponding transformations to become integral parts of the cultural system. This is through the intervention and expression of a certain connotation's objectivity, thus forming an abstract subordinate conceptual structure that can be universally understood and thought about. This unified and standardized (subordinate conceptual structure) object components and experiences can play corresponding roles within the culture's social attributes and become the premise for interpreting the connotation (a comparative attribute-based perception and revelation). In this context, the state of existence, content, and form of cultural connotation determine and influence the attributes related to cultural continuation and transformation. Therefore, from this perspective, cultural connotation can be revealed in the following three aspects: First, within the scope of the cultural context, the content involved in the connotation serves as a functional presentation within the cultural system, including perception, transmission, and experience. This is continuously achieved through a series of metaphors and symbols to construct cultural symbols (symbols are markers with certain representative meanings, agreed upon by people to refer to certain objects, and they can include all phenomena that show meanings through any form of perception) and to form and expand social consensus. Subsequently, it integrates and shapes in-depth associations with related cultural system subject characteristics in terms of universal values. Another aspect originates from the underlying motivation in the context attributes of the connotation. Although the factors involved in the motivation structure are relatively complex and exhibit various contingency and randomness characteristics on the appearance of existences, both the motivation structure itself and its functioning appearance are enriched and perfected in the attainable imaginations of the audience. A third aspect is that the connotation is ultimately encompassed within the scope of the relevant social environment. In the continuation and transformation of culture, it exhibits obvious attributes of diversification and continuous incremental creation. This characteristic highlights the structural association between cultural characteristics, cultural

concepts, and cultural connotations in social expressions. This further explains how cultural continuation and transformation are perceived by the audience and the trajectory of their states and time dimensions (Figure 2).

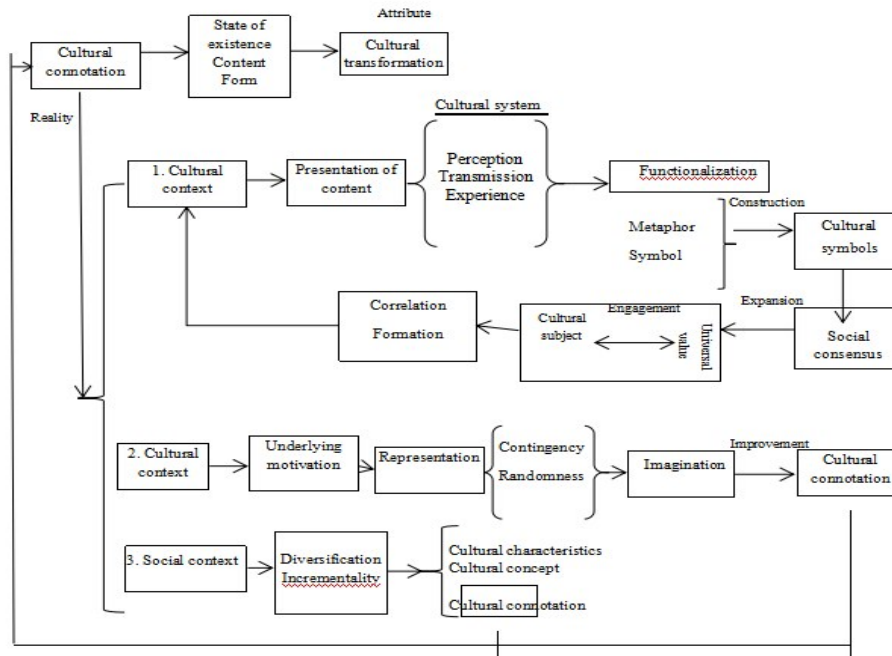


Figure 2 Attribute Correlation of Cultural Connotation and Its Relationship with Cultural Transformation

Within the cultural context, the content involved in the connotation serves as the necessary carrier and starting point of the cultural system. Its relevant perspective, logic (cultural logic), images, principles, purposes, rituals, and images ultimately form logically definable references for the scope: that is, the reason why content can become the abstract structure of its related connotation expression and construct a form of interaction among the most basic units forming the cultural system ontology is that this structure and form are continuously adjusted and associated through a certain ideology within the cultural context. Elements ultimately reflect the relationship between subject and object through metaphors, symbols, consensus, etc., and operate to construct cultural communication channels. In this way, in addition to being logically defined, it can also fully ensure the establishment and continuous improvement of the cultural system, so that it will not become dogmatic due to the limitations of its own structure within the logical reference of the structure and form, influenced by the contextual attributes of a particular stage. Simultaneously, it prevents excessive structural expansion driven by the connotation's external attributes, strengthening the interaction of content and system components and causing confusion in the cultural system ontology. From the perspective of the role and intention of ideology, whether it is the cultural system itself or the content for the logical reference within the cultural context, they are merely forms of the content involved in the connotation. The part of the connotation represented by the content is a higher-level cultural integrative structure (Figure 3).

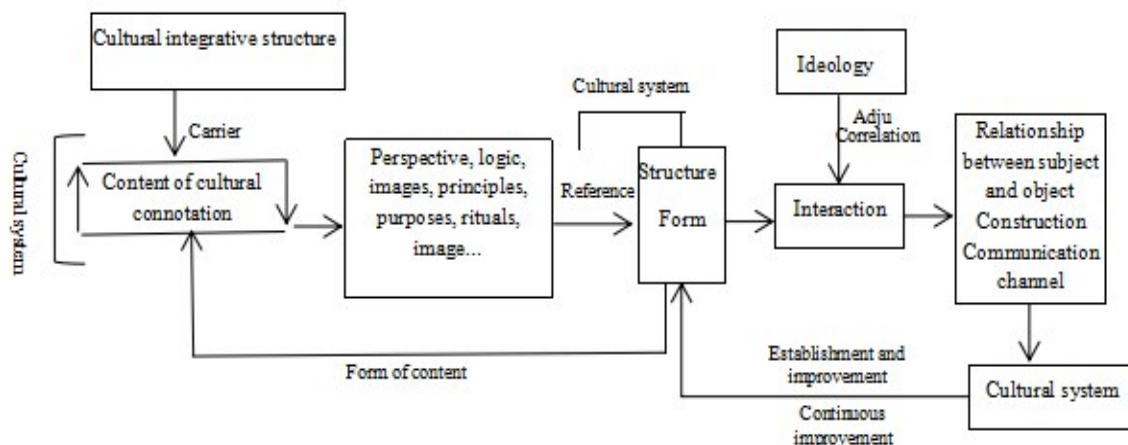


Figure 3 Structural Relationship Between the Content of Cultural Connotation and Cultural System

It is important to note that the specific ideology mentioned here refers to the process of ideological transmission mapped by content during the interpretation of connotations within the cultural context. It also refers to the manifestation of a certain ideological structure traced back to a specific process scope as the ultimate concrete form of connotation. The audience's perception, transmission modes, experience results, etc., within the specific cultural form in the context are closely related to the ideology, both approaching and intersecting with it (Figure 4).

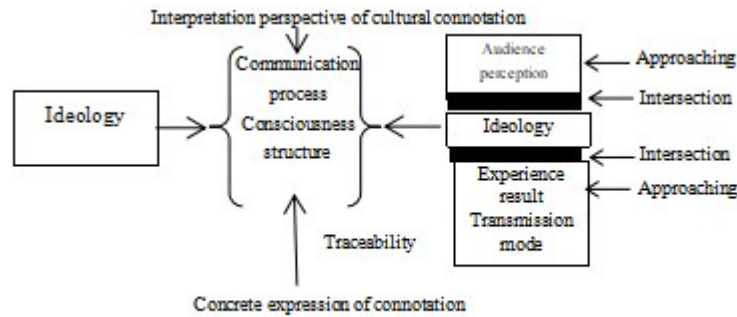


Figure 4 Analytical Framework of Ideology

In this context, audience perception is a specific experience feedback on the cultural context and its forms. It is the intention encompassing and experience constructing the specific expressions involved in the functioning of ideology. The form of feedback within this has significant meaning and function, as the intentions and experiences involved in the perceived objects do not have only one connotation interpretation perspective and content origin. In other words, the perceived object itself is passive relative to the audience but at the same time is an absolute existence that can be interpreted in various ways (not simply divided into subjective and objective existences; the meaning of existence here belongs to a perspective under certain absolute rational hypothetical conditions). Its specific attributes vary with the results derived from different functioning methods (for example, a particular graphical symbol has vastly different meanings under different cultural interpretations). Only when activities led by the audience's subjectivity interact and associate with the perceived objects under certain conditional forms within the relevant ideology does specific feedback occur. Intentions and experiences can build a complete expression intention based on feedback. At this time, related social cultural activities derived from the cultural context, such as aesthetics, art, rituals, customs, craft production, etc., can form the unity and specificity in the "real" state through their perspectives, logic, images, principles, purposes, rituals, images, etc. — that is, the cultural system within a specific humanistic time, space, events, and objects will emerge. It should be emphasized that for the overall intentions and experiences involved in the perceived objects, this is not unique and inevitable (Figure 5).

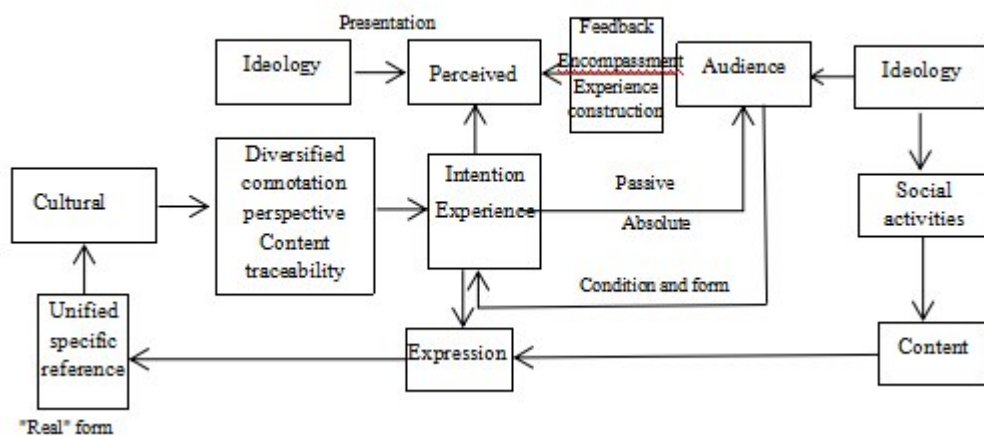


Figure 5 Relationship Between Experience Feedback and Ideology and Cultural System

It is important to note that the characteristics of the feedback forms here include both directness and indirectness in the transmission mode within the social context. Directness can be understood as the background form and interactive subject where subjectivity acts on the perceived object without any distance. It is present, immediate, intertwined, and once it occurs, it has a structure where various structures coexist. It is a generalized action and background; simultaneously, it has definite effectiveness in constructing the audience's perception. The background itself only provides a certain degree of experiential characteristics. Therefore, it only establishes the foundation for subjective

activities to occur when it becomes the support of the interactive subject with specific material connotation. Indirectness is the transcendence and reconstruction of the background form and interactive subject. It is a supplementary original consciousness act based not only on the audience's past experiences in other cultural activities but also on the attempts to recreate arbitrary and more perceptions and experiences in new activities. This is an intentional change based on the perceived object itself. However, its expansion at the levels of imagination, free creation, and perceptual experience is constrained by cultural connotation. Through the structure of the cultural system, it equates the existence form (state) of the content with the overall transmission mode.

Therefore, considerations of the cultural system should first be based on the content analysis of the cultural context. The scope of the cultural context also distinguishes the boundaries between social reality and cultural reality. Within the cultural context, it is essential to consider the authenticity of culture first. However, since social existence is the foundation and premise of cultural subjects, cultural reality cannot be absolutely separated from specific social reality, but it must be clearly distinguished. Social reality, to a certain extent, reflects its state of existence during social changes, even though social changes are influenced by various factors such as productivity, science and technology, ideology, and cultural dissemination.¹ The basic elements or important premises between the two remain unchanged, with the former fundamentally characterized by survival and ethnic continuity, while the latter forms on the basis of the former and presents a relatively independent worldview. A single ethnic group's social existence can concurrently coexist or integrate and replace multiple entirely different cultural systems. In other words, social reality and cultural reality in social existence are two different dimensions of reality, and thus cannot be conflated, nor can the cultural system be generally understood as an inevitable and natural result of social reality.

Therefore, any phenomena and activities within the scope of cultural connotation expression can be preserved relatively completely through the layered construction of content in a relatively fixed manner, thus displaying a primordial comprehensive core. In the process of cultural system transformation, although there are varying degrees of mutual penetration, cohesion, and escape effects among different cultures on this core, each cultural subject can still continuously iterate, change, and update itself in this situation while maintaining its unique characteristics. This gradually forms a super-stable structural form that transcends social strata and time flow — a cultural system (without discussing the extreme form of cultural transformation — cultural extinction, this is an ideal interpretation of cultural vitality) (Figure 6).

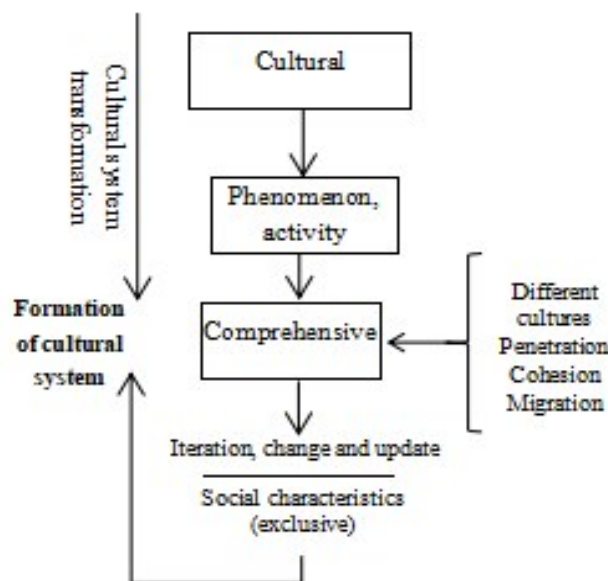


Figure 6 Analysis of the Formation of Cultural System

The formation of cultural systems is also due to the objectively irreversible and continuous transformation of productivity and social change, which are always in a state of motion. This state, by its nature, exhibits a timeless structure, but people can only distinguish and perceive it through the dimension of time. If time is set aside, it consistently shows a continuous transcendence of the present and the self. This transcendence manifests as a certain cohesion within the continuous movement in the cultural domain: the force of human social ontology on culture — a field force structure and

¹ Xiao Jiannan. On Adhering to the Fundamental System of the Leading Position of Marxism in the Ideological Field [J]. Academic Exploration, 2021 (02): 21-27.

trajectory.

Thus, it is reasonable to believe that at the center of this structure and trajectory is a cultural ontological core in its primordial state. Surrounding it are various foreign cultural radiations trying to penetrate, break through this structure, alienate, and disintegrate the core, along with the structure's rejection and assimilation of these influences. It is precisely this opposing state that forms the field force, presenting a relatively balanced internal steady-state structure when there is no obvious force imbalance in the cultural system. This continually maintains and retains the audience's perception and changes regarding the cultural context they are in (the form of cultural memory). The process of system transformation is the result of the selection through the collision, integration, and abandonment among different cultures. It is also the continuous reinforcement of the core attributes through orderly progressive iteration of structural forms to distinguish itself from the original forms while retaining the fundamental attributes and characteristics. This makes differentiation, integration (intersection and local penetration of different cultural system boundaries), continuous iteration, stability, continuity, and unity in cultural transformation possible. Here, the changes in the field force structure within the cultural system and its connotation scope intersect or overlap to varying degrees (Figure 7).

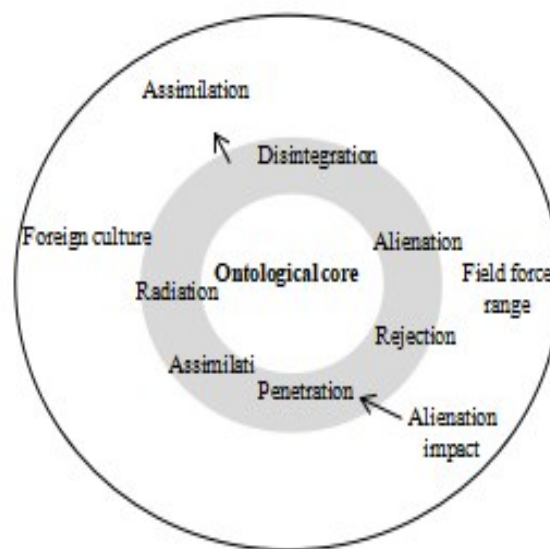


Figure 7 Internal Steady-State Structure of Equilibrium in Field Force Changes within the Cultural System

The same connotation, with its variations in expression tendencies in different social environments and cultural differences, can form extremely rich cultural perspectives (including perspectives). This is mainly reflected in two aspects: one is the necessary construction in social life based on the concrete presentation of the social environment and the mode of survival and development; the other is through various carriers and the relationship between carriers and connotation to prove its "real" existence under different cultural perspectives. Therefore, from the audience's perspective, there is no single "reality" in the external world; there is only the "substance" under certain perspectives.

3 Conclusions

In summary, the continuation and transformation of culture are the results of the interaction between context displacement and the original core structure field force under complex and comprehensive factors. This process forms a certain social consensus and expansion through the functional presentation and symbolic construction of connotation, content, and systems within the scope of the cultural context. It is a development and change process that forms necessary connections and shaping of universal humanistic values and cultural subjects. Only from the established facts in time, space, events, etc., can these seemingly elusive subjects like "connotation," "system," and "structure," which directly affect social existence, become apparent. This process can also be attributed solely to the function of a certain ideology, but at the same time, it is a self-consistent entity for culture itself. Therefore, in such established facts, the continuation, transformation, and connotation expression of culture that can be recognized by the audience occur within the scope of their subject, content, motivation, and context, exploring their transcendence of reality and various internal and external relationships. This is also the "whole" that can be directly experienced and participated in at the levels of social behavior and perception.

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