

# Traditional Culture and Construction of People's Basic International Communication Discourse

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## Abstract

From prehistoric civilization to ancient glory, from modern revolution and transformation to contemporary development and take-off, Zhejiang (a pioneering and leading province in China) has a long and profound culture and rich connotation, which is the internal force for it to create miracles today, the deepest force in the reform and development in the new era, and the most attractive highlight in building an “important window” and a demonstration area of common prosperity for the other provinces to learn. This article explores the outstanding historical Zhejiang traditions that achieve remarkable achievements, tells the origins of development outlook, fairness and benefit outlook, and world outlook of its people, narrates the stories of figures and achievements that embodies these three above-mentioned outlooks in its history, discusses how its traditional culture contributes to social development and progress, and constructs its people's basic international communication discourse, providing its wisdom and solutions for national and international governance.

## Keywords

Traditional Culture, International Communication Discourse, Development Outlook, Fairness and Benefit Outlook, World Outlook

## 1. Introduction

Zhejiang, as a pioneering land of China's reform and opening up, a demonstration area of common prosperity, and a rich and prosperous province in China, has excellent historical traditions and spiritual qualities, leading Zhejiang people to create economic miracle one after another. Zhejiang story constitutes an im-

portant component of China's stories, and the discourse reflecting Zhejiang traditional culture constitutes the discourse with Chinese characteristics. And discourse always carries national characteristics, and Zhejiang people's discourse is deeply influenced by Zhejiang traditional culture. Therefore, correctly handling Zhejiang international communication discourse with the world is the key to enabling it to exert international influence and generate global effects. We should construct the basic discourse internationally of Zhejiang people through its traditional culture, so as to carry forward Zhejiang humanistic spirit that reflects values of the times, and disseminate its contemporary cultural achievements towards international community. Time can dry history, but the world concepts and spiritual lineages contained in traditional culture can transcend time and space, and national borders. Harmony and cooperation vision, fairness and benefit dialectical relationship, global perspective can be regarded as outstanding representatives of Zhejiang traditional culture, which can present peace-loving, morality-valuing, and responsibility-shouldering features of Zhejiang and its people.

## **2. Narration of Zhejiang People's Development Outlook with Harmony and Cooperation Vision**

Harmony and cooperation vision is core concept of traditional Chinese culture, which is in line with concepts of solidarity, harmonious coexistence, and harmony among nations. It is integrated into thinking and behavior of the Chinese nation and reflected in relationships between persons, between nations, between humans and world, and between humans and nature. "Harmony" refers to peaceful coordination, while "cooperation" refers to joint efforts. This kind of inclusive quality that has been passed down since ancient times is a cultural concept that the Chinese nation has been pursuing (Xiao, 2021). In history, due to wars and southward migration of economic centers, Zhejiang has experienced multiple population migrations, with members of all 56 ethnic groups residing in Zhejiang. The continuous collision and blending of foreign and local cultures have shaped inclusive, enterprising, united, and innovative features of Zhejiang, providing rich soil for the inheritance and promotion of harmony and cooperation vision. Zhejiang people are gentle and good at getting along with emigrants, with a strong sense of social community. Building water conservancy facilities in various regions and treating floods in past dynasties reflect people's positive attitude in the construction of social communities, as well as the sound interaction between officials and people. What is even more precious is that Zhejiang has a fine tradition of helping the rich and the poor in its history, with a strong atmosphere of kindness, friendliness, and harmony. Fan Li, who was revered as the "Saint in Commerce" and the "God of Wealth", became very rich several times and helped the poor with righteousness, reaching the state of "balance between wealth and benevolence". Zheng Yimen, known as the "first family of honesty, thrift, filial piety, and righteousness", is a typical representative of "aspira-

tion for harmony” in Zhejiang spirit. Zheng family lived together for fifteen generations, nearly lasting 330 years, from the Song, Yuan, and Qing dynasties, which have passed down the tradition of respecting teachers and valuing education from generation to generation. They are renowned for their filial piety and righteousness, and are still a typical example of coexistence (Luo, 2009). In the contemporary era, harmony and cooperation vision is integrated into the social governance of Zhejiang, highlighting its world significance by establishing demonstrative “harmony community”, implementing the reform mechanism of “running at most once” for convenience of citizen’s personal business and “one thing” for convenience of enterprises, and carrying out the approval service of “Internet + government services” together with the construction of “urban brain”, etc.

Harmony and cooperation vision has laid a deep cultural foundation for China’s peaceful development path, which is conducive to dispelling the doubts of the international community about China’s peaceful development, breaking the thinking cage of “Thucydides Trap”, and removing shackles and cognition derived from the inherent concepts. We should construct international communication discourse based on the Zhejiang story under the guidance of the vision to tell the world about Zhejiang development concept, use the vision as a symbol of China’s peaceful development, and showcase to the world genes of Zhejiang and Chinese people who love peace. The vision not only conveys value essence of Zhejiang and even Chinese traditional culture, but also adds new era connotation to bridging cultural differences and optimizing global governance, and provides ideological sources for building a community of shared future for mankind. At present, COVID-19 repeatedly occurs, geopolitical tensions continue, the global governance deficit is increasingly prominent, international situation is constantly changing and intertwined, in a word, the world has entered a new turbulent stage. To effectively improve the current situation, harmony and cooperation vision can provide the world with Chinese wisdom. It upholds valuing harmony and seeking harmony in diversity, and advocates coexistence in inclusiveness and harmony, and prosperity in cooperation. It is consistent with historical trend of communication and integration in human civilization, and with needs of solidarity and response to difficulties of the times. It is precisely Zhejiang and China wisdom that world urgently needs today. Entering the post-pandemic era, we should take a civilized and harmonized road with it to actively maintain diversity of world civilization, communicate voice of world peace with it and comprehensively push transformation of global governance system, promote people all over the world to know each other better and build a community of shared future for mankind.

### **3. Narration of Zhejiang People’s Fairness and Benefit Outlook with Fairness and Benefit Dialectical Relationship**

Fairness and benefit dialectical relationship is the core issue of traditional Chi-

nese thought, occupying an important position in Chinese civilization history. It appeared and flourished in the late Spring and Autumn period and developed until today. “Justice” emphasizes collective interests and moral pursuits, while “profit” individual interests and freedom demands. Confucius and Mencius from the Confucian school advocated value orientation of “prioritizing justice before profit” and “reflecting justice upon profit”, while Mozi from Mohist school proposed profit-based relationship theory of “valuing justice” and “pursuing profit”. Under the guidance of “pursuing both fairness and benefit” value, Zhejiang merchants gradually formed the outlook of honesty, trustworthiness and faithfulness through ages. In the late Spring and Autumn period, Fan Li, the merchant saint, advocated way of doing business by “making profits from business with qualified products in a proper and lawful way”, which required that products should focus on good quality and adequate supply, profits should be made through legitimate channels, prices should be moderate. Ye Shi, who carried forward Yongjia School, proposed utilitarian theory of “balancing fairness and benefit”, while Chen Liang, who founded Yongkang School, proposed theory of “pursuing both fairness and benefit”. Both of them once strongly criticized ministers and strategists who were ungrateful and mercenary, believed that “justice” must exist within “profit”, and emphasizing that “profit” is the foundation of national survival and people’s livelihood, and a cause related to “rejuvenation of a country” and “natural law and people’s willingness”. Contemporary Zhejiang merchants who are passionate and righteous adhere to millennium business philosophy of “pursuing and combining both fairness and benefit”, and are committed to rejuvenating Zhejiang through doing business. They are honest in starting a business and proactive in serving the country and their hometown, no matter when or where they are (Wang, 2006). In contemporary times, fairness and benefit dialectical relationship is increasingly integrated into social governance. Over the past 40 years of reform and opening up, Zhejiang economy has made a historic leap, with social harmony, prosperity as well as stability, continuous improvement in Zhejiang people’s well-being. Significant progress has been made in building a moderately prosperous society at a high level in all respects. All the above-mentioned achievements are directly related to values of “upholding justice by making profits” and “pursuing both fairness and benefits” advocated by Zhejiang people. In Zhejiang people’s world outlook, social fairness and justice are the main themes. In real life, when faced with conflicts between the public and private, and between fairness and benefit, Zhejiang people not only focus on personal gain, but also consider national and collective interests, i.e., legitimate personal profit demands and dedication spirit to repay society.

Fairness and benefit outlook in the vision of their dialectical relationship highlights China’s responsibility as a great country in maintaining world peace and international justice in the international community, which effectively promotes development of democratization in international relations. Currently, with the rise of populism and anti-globalization trends, the international community is witnessing a phenomenon of imbalance between fairness and benefit.

A few developed countries, such as US and West Europe benefited, while most developing and underdeveloped countries, such as China, Russia, and India have lost. The situation of prioritizing profit over justice is worsening. The Western developed countries, led by capital logic, adhere to pure individualism and contractual principles based on rational calculation, breeding a narrow view of national interests, which breaks the balance between fairness and benefit, resulting in increased social division, widened wealth gap, and unbearable political systems (Chen, 2018). We should construct international communication discourse based on fairness and benefit dialectical relationship, and tell the world about Zhejiang people's fairness and benefit outlook through typical cases in social governance of Zhejiang and balance between fairness and benefit of Zhejiang merchants. We regard fairness and benefit outlook as internal driving force to promote building a community of shared future for mankind, fully recognize dialectical relationship of transformation and unity between fairness and benefit, and symbiotic relationship between morality and interests, in order to strive to achieve balance between fairness and benefit (Wu, 2020). We should tell the world that Zhejiang is building a national common prosperity demonstration zone with high quality, carrying out a series of social reforms marked by narrowing the regional, urban and rural, and income gap, solving the realistic problems such as unbalanced and inadequate economic development, and exploring a feasible way to achieve national common prosperity; Zhejiang businessmen, the developed private economy representative throughout China, under leadership of Zhejiang Commerce Chamber and Federation of Industry and Commerce, are reaching consensus on common prosperity by consolidating the foundation for it, cultivating its fashion, and shouldering its responsibility so as to achieve the goal. The joint participation of various subjects from the official to the private sector in Zhejiang is a vivid portrayal of fairness and benefit unity.

#### **4. Narration of Zhejiang People's World Outlook with Global Perspective**

Global Perspective, reflected in Chinese traditional "world" concept, is a long-standing unique consciousness for the Chinese nation. It refers to magnanimity that can accommodate all things. "World" mentioned above is called "the world under heaven", which is not limited by geography, time and space, instead, can be a natural world, a country, or can be abstracted to specifically refer to an ideal or belief (Zhang, 2022). Throughout Zhejiang history, there have emerged many people with global perspective in the long social practice, from Da Yu who was dedicated to water management to Gou Jian who endured hardships to accomplish his dream, from family Qian who protected territory and ensured people's well-being to Hu Ze who served as an official and benefited people, from Yue Fei and Yu Qian who were loyal to the monarch and devoted to state to Fang Xiaoru and Zhang Cangshui who were righteous and unyielding by sacrificing themselves to state, from Shen Kuo who was erudite and worried about common people to Chu Coching who seek truth lifetime and saved the

country through science, from Chen Liang and Ye Shi who pursued both fairness and benefit to Huang Zongxi who bemoaned universe state and pity mankind fate, from Wang Chong and Wang Yangming who advocated a benevolent governance and proposed people-oriented policies to Gong Zizhen and Cai Yuanpei who cared for world, country, and people, from Hu Qing Yu Chinese Pharmacy, a century-old shop that honored credibility and opposed cheating to Ningbo and Huzhou businessmen who are diligent, respectful and prudent. They all have cultivated ideas of caring for and improving people's livelihood, rationality of down-to-earth and self-awareness, and perspective of everyone's coexistence everyone and man's integral part of nature (Xie, 2015). In the contemporary era, especially since the reform and opening up, Zhejiang has always maintained development philosophy of promoting reform and development through open-up policies, and has deeply integrated into global economy with an incredibly strong determination to advance and an open attitude towards the world. In terms of external circulation, Zhejiang enterprises, based on local industrial chain, promotes rational and optimized allocation of resources and enters the international market, which pushes forward internal driving force of Zhejiang enterprise development and effectively re-feeds economy through "Yiwu-Ningbo-Zhoushan (three Zhejiang trading cities with the world)" open channel and "Yiwu-Xingjiang-Europe" new international logistics land channel. In terms of internal circulation, Zhejiang fully innovates and develops various advantages, such as digital economy, port economy and private economy, actively promoted integration of Zhejiang province into the Yangtze River Delta Economic Belt, and allows resources to cluster and flow in a larger range, which creates a new growth pole in building Dual circulation. While actively exploring new development paradigm of Dual circulation, Zhejiang continues to carry out a series of public welfare projects in Xinjiang, Tibet, Sichuan and other areas, such as helping students, the elderly, the disabled, and midwifery. In the event of major disasters and epidemics at home and abroad, Zhejiang donates materials, aid funds, and sent experts, which is full of conscientiousness and responsibility.

Global Perspective reflects Chinese people's pursuit of peace, amity and harmony, moral character and great mind, which complies with the trend of human development and correctly handle relations between countries. In today's economic globalization, the resolution of issues such as whether global supply chains complement each other's advantages, whether regional industrial chain layout is optimized, and whether regional economic development is balanced depends on joint participation and cooperation of various countries and governments at all levels around the world. The degree to which various problems encountered in the process of economic globalization are solved completely depends on their sense of responsibility which lies in whether they have global perspective and resolution to contribute to world progress. Under the influence of trade protectionism, anti-multilateralism, political isolationism and other anti-globalization waves (Chen & Tao, 2018) global perspective is gradually fading in some countries, especially the developed countries led by US, which narrowly

attributed the domestic gap between the rich and the poor, class contradictions, unemployment and other issues to globalization. They withdrew from The Paris Agreement, United Nations Human Rights Council, abused long-arm jurisdiction, made trade barriers, and so on, which hindered building a community of a shared future for mankind. We should construct international communication discourse with Zhejiang people's global perspective, by telling the world about their world outlook, displaying great practice and fruitful results of Zhejiang, i.e. building a common prosperity demonstration area for high-quality development domestically, promoting high-quality development at a high level internationally, and actively contribute to domestic and international charities. We should transform this global perspective into a global responsibility for Zhejiang, and demonstrate to outside world through practical actions that Zhejiang has confidence and ability to promote common development and prosperity, and build a better home together around the world with an open and inclusive attitude and mutually beneficial policies.

## 5. Conclusion

The development outlook, fairness and benefit outlook, and world outlook in Zhejiang's traditional culture reflect the sense of community of Zhejiang people, and form a shared cultural identity, concept of values, and sense of belonging, which become a necessary condition for overall development of Zhejiang and long-term stability of society. In the context of globalization and rapid economic development, this sense of community can provide a Zhejiang solution for the modernization of national governance. It determines the future development of a country and nation, by promoting coordination & cooperation and mutual benefit between official and civil institutions, and among all members of society, and promoting comprehensive development and progress of the economy, society, and culture in various regions. It forms a strategic foundation for national governance system and governance capacity, by promoting idea unity, educational propaganda, cultural exchange, and other works among citizens, and improving relationship between different ethnic groups. It becomes an important force in building a peaceful and harmonious world, by encouraging a nation to actively participate in international governance and contribute to world peace and international cooperation in the process of constantly promoting the building of a community of shared destiny. Therefore, it has positive significance and value to transform Zhejiang's traditional culture into basic international communication discourse.

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The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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