

# The Significance and Inheritance of Huang Di Culture

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**Abstract**—Huang Di culture is an important source of Chinese culture. It is not mechanical, still and solidified but melting, extensible, creative, pioneering and vigorous. It is the root of Chinese culture and a cultural system that keeps pace with the times. Its influence is enduring and universal. It has rich connotations including the “Root” Culture, the “Harmony” Culture, the “Golden Mean” Culture, the “Governance” Culture. All these have a great significance for the times and the realization of the Great Chinese Dream, therefore, it is necessary to combine the inheritance of Huang Di culture with its innovation, constantly absorb the fresh blood of the times with a confident, open and creative attitude, give Huang Di culture a rich connotation of the times, tap the factors in Huang Di culture that fit the development of the modern times to advance the progress of the country and society, and make Huang Di culture still full of vitality in the contemporary era.

**Index Terms**—Huang Di, Huang Di culture, Chinese culture

## I. INTRODUCTION

Huang Di, being considered the ancestor of all Han Chinese in Chinese mythology, is a legendary emperor and cultural hero. His victory in the war against Emperor Chi You is viewed as the establishment of the Han Chinese nationality. He has made great many accomplishments in agriculture, medicine, arithmetic, calendar, Chinese characters and arts, among which, his invention of the principles of Traditional Chinese medicine, Huang Di Nei Jing, has been seen as one of the greatest contributions to Chinese medicine. Therefore, Huang Di culture, which has brought the descendants of Yellow River all together, has been taken an important source of Chinese culture for granted. The reason why Chinese civilization has lasted for 5000 years has been in the process of the continuous modernization of Huang Di culture, and moreover has been given the different connotation in different times. Since modern times, people have begun to refer to our everlasting culture on this land as a Chinese culture. From the perspective of the whole cultural system, Huang Di culture is the nickname of Chinese culture. Contemporary Chinese culture is the modernized Huang Di culture. Further study of the culture of Huang Di is of great significance for strengthening cultural confidence and for gaining the boundless power of national rejuvenation.

## II. THE CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE OF HUANG DI CULTURE

### A. *Huang Di Culture Is the Root of Chinese Culture*

The Chinese civilization has formed a rich and unique traditional Chinese culture for five thousand years, and the traditional Chinese culture is a powerful spiritual force to promote the development of Chinese society. Huang Di culture is the root of traditional Chinese culture. The Chinese civilization has been extended for five thousand years just because the root, Huang Di culture, has never dried up and its spirit have always occupied an important position in the minds of Chinese people. Since ancient times, Chinese people have called themselves the descendants of the Chinese people, viewing the Central Plains as the hometown of their souls, where the capital of Yan Huang is founded. The unification of China appears in the period of Huang Di. He is a great achiever of the Chinese civilization, and the influence of Huang Di culture has penetrated into time and space. His descendants have established more than 70 countries in various places, and produced more than 600 surnames. In the overseas, there are four great surnames known as “Chen Lin half sky, Huang Zheng row Street”, whose surname ancestors are all descendants of Huang Di. (Wang Quanying, 2017)

### B. *Huang Di Culture Is the System of Keeping Pace with the Times*

Many people have simply mistaken Huang Di culture for a culture of the Huang Di era. This understanding is unscientific and does not insist on looking at problems from a comprehensive and developmental perspective. In fact, Huang Di culture has been developing, and in a broad sense, Chinese culture is Huang Di culture. Its consistent development with times is also the fundamental reason why the Chinese nation and Chinese culture can last for 5000 years. If Chinese civilization is compared to a gigantic tree, Huang Di culture is the solid root of it. Confucian culture, Taoist culture, Mohist culture, Legalist culture and so on, are all integral parts of Huang Di culture and branches of it. In modern times, we generally call this big tree Chinese culture, so we can use this root, Huang Di culture, to express the

whole Chinese culture. Huang Di culture was first expressed in several aspects such as “golden mean” culture, “harmony” culture, “root” culture, “governance” culture. In the process of historical development, Huang Di culture has gradually developed into a cultural system covering all aspects. (Li Yanping, 2001)

### C. *Influence of Huang Di Culture Is Universal*

From the viewpoint of truth, the influence of China on Huang Di culture has not been fully understood. As a time-honored cultural symbol, Huang Di culture is the spiritual sustenance of Chinese at home and abroad. The values and concepts of “loving kindness, viewing people, upholding integrity, respecting justice, admiring harmony and seeking common ground” are rooted in the culture of Huang Di. (Li Yaozong, 2010) General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly stressed the importance of building a community of human destiny to provide China's programs and Chinese wisdom for human development, which requires us to dig out spiritual food from Huang Di culture. Toynbee, a famous British historian, also said that what the world needs most now is the essence of Chinese civilization---harmony. If China can not replace the West and become the dominant factor of mankind, the future of the entire human race is pathetic. (Toynbee, 2016)As he pointed out that Harmony is, indeed, the main content of Huang Di culture. However, in the past, we paid more attention to the influence of Huang Di culture on the root and kinship. In fact, Huang Di culture is an effective carrier for promoting public diplomacy and has a strong reference for global governance.

## III. THE INHERITANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF HUANG DI CULTURE

### A. *The Inheritance and Development of the “Root” Culture*

Huang Di is the creator of Chinese culture, and Huang Di culture is the root of Chinese culture. The splendid civilization of the five thousand years in China is developed on the basis of Huang Di culture. Under the leadership of Huang Di, our ancestors carried out farming, planting mulberry, raising silkworms, inventing characters, and creating a country. Gradually, they formed common customs, a common way of life, a common language and a stable community in a common living area. The community is Chinese nation. The Chinese nation has grown and developed to form the Chinese nation today. The culture of "root" in Huang Di culture mainly includes the cultural roots of ethnicities, characters, surnames, and original canons. Nowadays, with the rapid development of the times, people often get lost and confused: who am I, where do I come from, where do I go? The uneasiness of the soul in lack of conversion prompts people to look for their own roots, and trace them back to the source of Huang Di culture eventually. Xinzheng, Henan Province, the birthplace and the capital of Huang Di, is the important origin of Chinese civilization. The worship of the origin of civilization can allow Chinese to find a haven for their own souls. Therefore, in recent years, the Chinese people at home and abroad set off a cultural “root-seeking boom”. (Sun Zhaogang, 2014)The root seeking boom can enhance the sense of identity and sense of belonging of the descendants of Huang Di to the motherland. And it can strengthen the cohesion of the country, and bring all the Chinese around the world together to contribute to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

### B. *The Inheritance and Development of the “Harmony” Culture*

In the era before Huang Di, there were constant conflicts between clan and tribe. Huang Di built the first harmonious society in China's history, whose connotation mainly covers four aspects: the harmony between man and man, man and nature, man and society and tribal harmony. There are specific descriptions of the harmonious society built by Huang Di in *The Three Ancient Tombs Emperor Xuanyuan Political Code and Huainan Zi The Hades for Reading Classics*. This is enough to show that Huang Di put the thoughts of “harmony” into practice and laid the foundation for us to build a harmonious society today. On the basis of the “harmony” culture of Huang Di, Chinese traditional culture has further enriched the thoughts of “harmony”. *The Book of Changes* says: “reserving the universal harmony” and “all nations are tranquil”. “The universal harmony” is the highest state of “harmony”. *The Book of Documents* clearly put forward the concept of “concord with all nations”, that is, “harmony among all States, the people are changing in time”. They believe that all countries live in harmony, and the people in the world will become friendly and harmonious. Dong Zhongshu, a great Confucian scholar in the Han Dynasty, believed that “heaven and man should be merged into one”. Harmony is more important to the world of today. Toynbee once said with concern, “human beings have mastered the highly technological and civilized means that can destroy themselves and their civilization. At the same time they are in the camp of politics and ideology that are extremely opposed. The most important spirit is the essence of Chinese civilization—harmony.” (Tian Guangqing, 1980) Therefore, we must unswervingly implement the concept of harmonious development, actively build a harmonious society, and strive to achieve the goal of a community of the common destiny of mankind.

### C. *The Inheritance and Development of the “Golden Mean” Culture*

Many documents show that Huang Di's birthplace is located in Xinzheng today, and the central area of his activities is in Mount Jvci. It is the place where Huang Di, the ancestor of the Chinese civilization was born, the capital of Xuanyuan was established, and gained fame and fortune. It is the focal point of the cultural relics and monuments of Huang Di. It is a national shrine for the Chinese descendants for thousands of years who go to pilgrimage and seek the roots of their ancestors. In the middle of Zhongzhou, the Central Plains and China, it is the birthplace of the Chinese

character “zhong (middle)” and one of the birthplaces of the Chinese nation. In the eyes of the Chinese ancients, it is the center of heaven and earth. When Mr. Ji Wenfu talked about the humanistic spirit of the Central Plains more than 70 years ago, he held that the traditional spirit of building Henan is characterized by “Ping Zheng Tong Da”. It is almost “middle”. “Middle” has the meaning of the “center” of nation, “right”, “unbiased”, “middle” in things. It can profoundly express the attitude, collectivism and patriotism of Henan people. After a long period of historical experience, the spirit has condensed into a solid, unique, conscious and lasting spiritual temperament. It mainly includes characteristics such as simplicity, loyalty, responsibility dedication, advancement, and tolerance. To carry forward the spirit is of great significance for the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the realization of the Chinese dream of great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It can encourage the Chinese children to be hard, open and enterprising, dare to sacrifice, take on their courage, and eventually become the strong power for realizing the Chinese dream. (Mao Jian, 2014)

#### D. *The Inheritance and Development of the “Governance” Culture*

The strategy of ruling the country during the reign of Huang Di mainly includes the following three aspects, which still has important reference significance for our political development today. The first is to put people prior to everything. The core of Huang Di culture is people-oriented thought, which is also the main core of Chinese culture. Huang Di once pointed out that the issued order which was only acceptable to the people can be obeyed by them. Only when the ruler is selfless and loving can the people respect the ruler. Huang Di was close to the people, loved the people, paid attention to the law of nature and the public opinions, all for the benefit of the people. In order to solve the problems of the people, he ran through the whole country and educated the rulers of future generations to live up to the earth and heaven and care about the lives of the people. The thinking is of great significance for today’s emphasis on putting people first, serving the people wholeheartedly and adhering to the people-centered development thought. It is an excellent component of Huang Di culture, so we should vigorously carry forward and inherit it. The second is to govern the country by virtue and law. To rule the country by virtue is to govern the country with benevolence and righteousness. Huang Di encouraged the people to be honest, to act with benevolence and to do righteousness. And it asked the ruler to treat the people benevolently instead of ruling them cruelly. To govern the country by law is to formulate legal provisions to regulate behavior, which is an important means of governing the country. Huang Di pointed out that the source of law is Tao. The function of law is to measure right and wrong, regulate people’s behavior, and punish the violators to regulate order. Law enforcers need enforce the law strictly to ensure its sanctity. The strategy of governing the country by law we are pursuing today is also based on the Huang Di culture and the whole traditional culture, and the core socialist values have also been developed on the basis of ruling by virtue, so they have profound cultural heritage and sound foundation. With the development of times we should constantly give new meaning to the era of ruling by law and virtue. The third includes three measures. First, officials are elected by the people. The officials in the Huang Di period mainly include three categories: one was the national leader, which was produced by election. And Huang Di was elected as the emperor by the tribal leaders of the country after the defeat of Chi Yu. The other is the chief officials who assist Huang Di, that is, “seven assists” (seven resourceful saints in ancient time), which are produced on the basis of the recommendations of the various tribes. There is a functional official created by appointment. The second is democracy in political affairs. That is to say broadly and widely to the people, so that the people can speak freely and supervise the rulers to ensure the implementation of benevolent government. Huang Di has set up a special place for the people to discuss politics, and actively listened to the voices of the people. The third is the implementation of the incorruptible politics. Huang Di believed that greed for pleasure and unrestrained accumulation of wealth will lead to the scourge. In order to maintain political stability and achieve the goal of a unified society, Huang Di and officials had made six chapters on saving money and property, which requires officials to build a model of frugality in all aspects and create a clear and clean political environment for the people. The “rule” culture formed during the period of Huang Di had a great influence on later generations and had different emphasis and manifestations at different historical stages. (Qing Hongyuan, 2013)

#### IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WORSHIPPING HUANG DI

The ancients said, “Affairs of state, worship and military matters.” (Zuo Qiuming, 2016) In ancient China, there was a saying that “God does not care for things but sacrifices his people offer, and the people do not worship non-clan.” (Zuo Qiuming, 2016) During the evolution of the 5,000-year-old Chinese civilization, sacrifices have always been a matter of strict hierarchy. Huang Di is the common ancestor of humanity, the root of blood and the soul of the Chinese people. Legend has it that after the death of Huang Di, people at that time set up temples and altars to worship Huang Di with various exquisite artifacts. According to the inscription, during the Warring States Period, Tian family of Qi State saw Huang Di as a distant ancestor for sacrifice. After the reunification of the Qin Dynasty, emperors of all the following dynasties inherited the tradition of offering sacrifices to Huang Di as one of gods. It can be said that people in different historical periods have never ceased to worship Huang Di. It can be seen from this that the worship of Huang Di is of great significance to the development of the Chinese nation.

##### A. *Strengthening National Identity and Cultural Identity*

Identity is the premise of unity. Without identity, there is no solidarity. Identity is the foundation of unity. Without identity, unity is the water of nowhere and the tree without roots. General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed it “to strengthen the recognition of the great motherland, the identity of the Chinese nation, the identity of the Chinese culture, and the identity of the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics.”(Xi Jinping, 2014) Cultural identity is the basis of ethnic identity, and ethnic identity is the premise of national identity. A nation without cultural heritage, a nation without its own identity, is hard to develop. It is also difficult to stand alone in the forest of nations in the world. Fei Xiaotong pointed out: “the Chinese nation, as a self-conscious national entity, has emerged in the confrontation between China and the Western powers in the last hundred years, but as a free national entity, it has been formed in the course of thousands of years of history.”(Fei Xiaotong, 1989) In the process of the formation of the Chinese nation, the sacrifice to the cultural ancestor of Huang Di played an irreplaceable role in making people together in hearts. As a pious ritual, sacrificing Huang Di is helpful for the Chinese people to enhance their recognition and understanding of the general characteristics of the history and present situation, national memory and national symbols. March 3 of the Chinese lunar calendar is the birthday of Huang Di, the first ancestor of the Chinese nation. Mount Juts is the place where Huang Di was born and his tribe lived. In the Central Plains region, since ancient times, there has been the tradition of “February two, the dragon rises, and March three, the sacrifice of Xuanyuan”. Since 2006, Henan has consecutively held the grand ceremony for worshipping Huang Di in his hometown with the theme of “the same roots, the same forefather, the same origin, peace and harmony”. Every year millions of compatriots from all over the world come to Xinzheng to worship Huang Di. With the continuous expansion of the influence of Huang Di's hometown worship ceremony, the Chinese descendants at home and abroad have raised a craze for worshipping the ancestor. The grand ceremony of worshipping the ancestor awakened the recognition of the Chinese people at home and abroad to the hometown of the Chinese people in the Central Plains, and enhanced the common national memory of the Chinese at home and abroad. The promotion of the ancestral ceremony of Huang Di in Xinzheng into the national level one is beneficial to further expand the influence of sacrificing for Huang Di, to unite the global Chinese more widely, to strengthen the ethnic identity, the national identity and cultural identity, and to enhance the cohesion and centripetal force of the Chinese nation.

#### *B. Realizing Cultural Self-confidence, Cultural Self-conscious and Cultural Self-strengthening*

Culture is the soul of a nation and a country. If the culture is prosperous, then the country will be prosperous. And if the culture is strong the country will be strong. Without a high degree of cultural self-confidence and cultural prosperity, there would be no great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Cultural confidence is a more fundamental, broader and deeper self-confidence. Cultural consciousness determines the future and destiny of a nation and a political party. The self-reliance of culture is the basis and destination of cultural self-confidence and cultural consciousness. The aim is to make our culture have strong attraction and influence, strong vitality and creativity, strong strength and competitiveness. The outstanding Chinese traditional culture, which has been developed from Huang Di culture with a history of more than 5000 years, has accumulated the deepest spiritual pursuit of the Chinese nation and represents the unique spiritual mark of the Chinese nation. In order to realize cultural self-confidence and cultural self-improvement, we must first have a full and correct understanding of Huang Di culture, the source of our culture. In recent years, Zhengzhou City has done a lot of fruitful work in carrying forward the culture of Huang Di. In particular, the grand ceremony for worshipping our ancestor Huang Di held in hometown, has promoted the influence of Huang Di culture. The worship ceremony insisted on innovating and developing in the inheritance. It combines classical music and traditional culture, and incorporates various sacred ritual movements such as treading, worshipping, respecting heaven and wiping face, so that Chinese who participated in the worship from all over the world can be touched with awe and solemnity. Additionally, they will inspire their admiration for and worship of national culture in the depths of the soul. This is cultural consciousness. As an intrinsic spiritual power, cultural consciousness is the ideological basis and prerequisite for promoting cultural prosperity and development. The awakening of a nation is, first of all, cultural awakening. “Today, what really determines the process of social development is neither capital nor land and labor, but culture.” It can be said that whether there is a high degree of cultural self-confidence and cultural consciousness is not only related to the revitalization and prosperity of the culture itself, but also determines the future and destiny of a nation. As a cultural symbol, Huang Di has become a spiritual bond that unites the Chinese people around the world. Realizing cultural self-confidence, cultural self-consciousness and cultural self-reliance, objectively requires us to highlight the ritual sense of worshipping Xuanyuan Huang Di. This is the realistic basis for raising the ceremony of worshipping Huang Di in his hometown Xinzheng to a national-level one.

#### *C. Gathering the Great Power for the Realization of the Dreams of National Rejuvenation*

A nation has its own national dream. A country has its own national dream. Achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream of the Chinese nation in modern times. In the past more than 100 years, especially since the founding of the Communist Party of China, through hard struggles and unswerving efforts, we have continuously made new and brilliant achievements in the realization of the Chinese dream. And a vigorous China is standing high in the east of the world. Today, we are closer to the goal of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation than at any time in history, and we are more confident in and capable of achieving this goal than at any time in history. To achieve this goal, we must follow the path of China, must carry forward the spirit of China, and must unite China's strength. As the ancestor of the Chinese nation, Huang Di has become a spiritual force that unites the Chinese nation

firmly. Every year, the grand ceremony attracts many Chinese at home and abroad to seek their roots and ancestors. Their hearts are more closely attached together in the activities of praying for the prosperity of China and wishing for peace in the world, and they have gathered together into great power to revitalize China. The Chinese dream is a national dream and a dream of every Chinese. As long as each of the descendants of Huang Di is united, and strives to achieve a common dream, the power to realize the dream is immense. It is necessary to summon people to form a strong sense of mission through pious rituals or worship activities, which in turn will unite people and form synergies. General secretary Xi Jinping asked to “establish and standardize the etiquette system, organize various forms of commemorative celebrations, disseminated the mainstream value, and enhance the sense of identity and the sense of belonging”. The worship ceremony in Huang Di's hometown, Xinzheng, is the worshipping activity that can enhance the sense of belonging of Chinese throughout the world. We should stand on the height of the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and raise Huang Di's hometown Xinzheng as “the national sacrifice”, and build the hometown Xinzheng into “the holy land of the Chinese people and the spiritual home of the Chinese nation”. We should give full play to the important and unique role of the worship ceremony, to unite the Chinese people at home and abroad to the maximum and to bring together the great power of realizing the Chinese dream.

#### D. Promoting the Inheritance and Development of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture

Culture is the blood of the nation and the spiritual home of the people. Chinese culture originated from the Huang Di culture has a long history and splendid glory. The excellent traditional Chinese culture, bred in the development of more than 5000 years of civilization, is the rich nourishment of the Chinese nation. It is the fertile cultural soil for the roots of the socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is the outstanding advantage for the development of contemporary China and plays an important role in the continuation and development of Chinese civilization and the advancement of human civilization. Henan, the birthplace of Huang Di, is an important birthplace of the Chinese nation and the Chinese civilization. The State Council has approved the construction of the Huaxia Historical and Cultural Heritage and Innovation Zone in the Central Plains region with Henan as the core, which is of great significance for promoting the inheritance and development of excellent traditional Chinese culture. In recent years, we have been committed to building a global cultural shrine for Chinese people at home and abroad, and strive to make Henan the main bearing place for the mental homeland and spiritual hometown of the Chinese nation. The tenth Party Congress of Henan Province clearly proposed “building an important cultural highland in the country”, and “speeding up the establishment of a global Chinese holy land” as a specific goal. Henan is the main origin of the Chinese surname and the location of the major counties. According to statistics, 78 of the top 100 surnames originated in Henan; more than 90% of the Chinese surnames are from Huang Di and his descendants.(Ren Min, 2015) After being promoted to the provincial worship, the worship ceremony in Huang Di's hometown Xinzheng played an indispensable role in inheriting and developing the fine traditional Chinese culture. At present, the worship ceremony has become a major event of great concern at home and abroad every year. It has brought a great reputation to Zhengzhou and triggered waves of “Henan fever” and “root-seeking fever” at home and abroad. The reason why such a hot effect is produced is that, as a cultural symbol, Huang Di culture carries the concentrated expression of the Chinese people's ideas, customs, lifestyles and emotional styles. To carry forward the fine traditional Chinese culture, in any case, cannot avoid it. Raising the provincial worship ceremony to the national one will help to inherit the ways of life of seeking common ground while reserving differences and keeping harmony in differences.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Huang Di culture includes politics, economy, military, science and technology, culture and art, customs and ideology. It is not a mechanical, solidified culture, but a culture of fusion, initiative, radiation, extensibility, pioneering and vitality. Obviously, we have an insufficient understanding of the importance and influence of Huang Di culture at present. To promote the inheritance and development of the Huang Di culture, we must have a correct understanding of the rich connotation of Huang Di culture and correctly understand the inheritance and the process of modernization of the Huang Di culture.

The Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation cannot be achieved without cultural strength and spiritual support. Huang Di culture is the source of Chinese culture and the carrier of Chinese spirit. We must combine inheritance with innovation, keep absorbing the fresh blood of the times with confidence, openness and creativity, endow Huang Di culture with the rich connotation of the times, explore the factors that are suitable for the development of the modern era in Huang Di culture to promote the progress of the country and society, so that the Huang Di culture is still thriving in the modern world.

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