

Resonance across Millennia: An Analysis of the Connection between Song Dynasty Culture and Generation Z

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Abstract: This paper delves into the characteristics of Song Dynasty culture and its resonances with Generation Z culture. First, through an analysis of the social and cultural background of the Song Dynasty, and using classic works such as “Song Ci” and “Along the River During the Qingming Festival” as examples, it reveals the unique charm of Song Dynasty literature, painting, and music. The paper analyzes the cultural characteristics of Generation Z in the context of digitization, globalization, and diversification, especially their values, aesthetics, and cultural expressions. Then, it discusses in detail the commonalities between Song Dynasty culture and Generation Z culture in their reverence for nature and expression of patriotism, as well as the inheritance and influence of Song Dynasty culture in contemporary times. Finally, the paper summarizes the connections between Song Dynasty culture and Generation Z culture, emphasizing the resonance across millennia. Facing the future, the paper proposes thoughts and suggestions on the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture to promote its sustainable development and integration with modern society.

Keywords: Song Dynasty charm; Generation Z; Song Dynasty Cultural Heritage; Points of Resonance; Traditional Culture Innovation

1. Introduction

Song Dynasty culture, with its gentle and bold poetry, delicate and vivid painting, and harmonious and melodious music, has become a treasure in the collective memory of the Chinese nation. In today’s digitized, globalized, and diversified world, Generation Z exhibits unique cultural characteristics, values, and aesthetics. However, these two seemingly

disparate eras actually share a cultural resonance that spans millennia. The Song Dynasty’s reverence for nature and expression of patriotism align with Generation Z’s acceptance and innovation of traditional culture, collectively reflecting humanity’s cultural pursuits and emotional resonance. This paper aims to explore this resonance, offering new perspectives on the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture, and inspiring more people to love and pass on Chinese culture.

2. Cultural Characteristics of the Song Dynasty Era

In the realm of literature, the Song Dynasty is renowned for its ci poetry. As a representative of Song Dynasty literature, ci poetry, with its unique artistic charm and rich emotional content, has become a treasure in Chinese literary history. In historical research, ci poetry serves as an important document reflecting various aspects of Song Dynasty society, economy, and culture. Studying ci poetry helps us understand the historical background, social customs, and humanistic spirit of the Song Dynasty.[1] Ci poetry itself is musical literature, a perfect combination of literature and music. Meanwhile, Song poetry also achieved high accomplishments, known for its philosophical reflections and emotional expressions, characterized by a fresh, natural, and subtle style.

In the field of painting, Song Dynasty artists took nature as their teacher, emphasizing the observation of real natural scenes and expressing them vividly through brush and ink.[2] Works such as “Along the River During the Qingming Festival” are renowned for their detailed brushwork, vivid scenes, and rich human figures. These works showcase the prosperity of the Northern Song Dynasty, holding high artistic value, reflecting the humanistic spirit of Song society, and embodying the artists’ reverence and praise for

nature and life.

In the domain of music, Song Dynasty music focused on the variation of melody and rhythm, forming a unique musical style. Song Dynasty music included both the solemn and elegant court music and the lively and vivid folk music. Through innovation and development, Song Dynasty musicians made music an important part of the social and cultural life of the time.

3. Cultural Characteristics of Generation Z

Generation Z, as the natives of the digital age, exhibits cultural characteristics and values that are distinctly different from those of traditional generations. Firstly, they are closely connected with the internet, forming a “net-self unity” life state. From birth, the internet has been not only a window for them to perceive the world but also an important field for the extension of their lives. This state of net-self unity imparts a certain degree of virtuality to their learning, work, and life, yet, simultaneously, the socialization functions of this virtual world are real and effective. Their lifestyle achieves a seamless transition between offline and online, with a complementary and homomorphic relationship between reality and virtuality, forming a characteristic of being “always online.”

In terms of values, Generation Z emphasizes equality, freedom, and respect. They are concerned about social issues, care about the fate of the nation, and possess a strong sense of responsibility and mission. The formation of these values is closely related to the context of globalization and informatization, allowing them to access information more conveniently, understand the world, and form more open and inclusive values. In terms of life values, Generation Z pursues “respect for the true self,” focusing on the realization of personal value and the expression of individual creativity. They are no longer driven solely by money but place more importance on promotion opportunities and honor rewards. With the help of digital technology, the values of Generation Z have become highly differentiated and decentralized, paying attention to the values of specific subgroups or even certain aspects of individuals.

Aesthetically, Generation Z demonstrates a fervent pursuit of individuality and diversity. They are enthusiastic about unique and novel art forms and cultural products, paying great

attention to cultural innovation and development. Through social media and online cultural platforms, Generation Z can easily access diverse art forms and cultural content, thus shaping distinctive aesthetic preferences and styles. They are not only adept at using these channels for cultural dissemination and exchange but also bravely express their views and emotions through short videos, music reviews, and articles, constructing a unique cultural landscape of the era.

In their attitude towards traditional culture, Generation Z respects tradition while daring to innovate. They learn about and engage with traditional cultural knowledge through online platforms and social media, actively inheriting and promoting the spirit of traditional culture. At the same time, they innovate and develop traditional culture in their own way, integrating it with contemporary life. In recent years, cultural programs such as “Chinese Poetry Conference” and “Everlasting Classics,” as well as dance dramas like “Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace” and “Only This Green,” have captured the interest of Generation Z, raising their engagement with Chinese traditional culture to a new height.[3] This attitude towards traditional culture reflects Generation Z’s inclusiveness and innovative spirit, showcasing their cultural consciousness and confidence as natives of the digital age.

4. Points of Resonance: The Connection between Song Dynasty Charm and Generation Z Culture

4.1 Reverence for Nature

In the writings of the Song people, landscapes were not just objective scenery but carriers of emotion and philosophy. Whether in Su Shi’s verse “Viewed horizontally, it forms a range; viewed vertically, a peak; far, near, high, and low, no two parts alike,” or Fan Kuan’s “Travelers Among Mountains and Streams,” the Song people’s deep appreciation and reverence for the beauty of nature are evident. For Generation Z, this reverence for nature is equally present, sometimes even more intense. In the rapidly changing digital world, young consumers represented by Generation Z have become aware of the environmental implications of their choices and the inherent value of ecological sustainability.[4] Through social media, photography, and other means,

they actively spread the beauty of nature, calling for people to cherish and protect the environment. In the cultural expressions of Generation Z, nature is no longer a mere background or element but has become an important carrier for expressing emotions and conveying values.

The Song Dynasty's view of nature and Generation Z's environmental ideals are fundamentally aligned. Song literati expressed their longing for harmony between humans and nature through their depictions and praises of the natural world; Generation Z, through their actions and cultural creations, calls for attention to environmental issues and the pursuit of sustainable development.

4.2 Expression of Patriotism

The Song Dynasty was an era imbued with a sense of crisis. Faced with invasions from foreign enemies and internal unrest, the Song people exhibited strong patriotic feelings. In their poetry, paintings, and other art forms, they often expressed their love for the country and concern for the state of affairs.

Generation Z similarly shows a concern for patriotism. Confronted with the challenges of globalization and complex social issues, they too feel the weight of their era's responsibilities and missions. Through online platforms and social media, Generation Z actively voices their feelings and concerns for the nation and society. Whether by focusing on social issues, participating in public welfare activities, or promoting cultural innovation and development, Generation Z demonstrates their understanding and expression of patriotism in their own way.

Although the forms of expression of patriotism in the Song Dynasty and Generation Z differ, the core is the same. Both are concerned with social issues and the fate of the nation and hope to contribute to society through their efforts.

4.3 Integration of Tourism and Song Dynasty Culture

In today's booming tourism industry, Song Dynasty culture has become an important resource for attracting tourists. By organizing "Song Dynasty Culture" experience lines into travel guides, the public's understanding of "Song Dynasty Culture" can be deepened, and their cultural literacy can be improved.[5] By restoring Song Dynasty architecture and recreating Song Dynasty life scenes, the

tourism industry allows visitors to experience the charm of Song Dynasty culture firsthand. This form of tourism not only brings considerable revenue to the local economy but also provides strong support for the inheritance and development of Song Dynasty culture.

For Generation Z, the combination of tourism and Song Dynasty culture is a new cultural experience. Through tourism, they can personally feel the unique charm of Song Dynasty culture and deepen their understanding and identification with traditional culture during their travels. This cultural experience not only enriches Generation Z's spiritual life but also promotes their inheritance and innovation of traditional culture.

4.4 Large-scale Cultural Programs and the Emotional Transmission of Song Dynasty Charm

In recent years, large-scale cultural programs themed around Song Dynasty charm have continually emerged. Programs like "National Treasure" and "Everlasting Classics" use modern methods and forms to convey the essence of Song Dynasty culture to audiences, allowing them to deeply understand its connotations and values while enjoying the programs. For Generation Z, these programs are not just a form of entertainment but also a means of cultural education. Through these programs, they learn about the unique aspects of Song Dynasty culture and feel the charm and power of traditional culture.

5. Dialogue and Inheritance across Eras: Song Dynasty Charm and Generation Z

5.1 Modern Society's Interpretation and Re-evaluation of Song Dynasty Culture

With the deepening of historical research and academic discussions, the value of Song Dynasty culture in modern society has gradually been revealed, and its evaluation increasingly reflects an objective and comprehensive perspective. Song Dynasty culture is not merely a segment in the river of history but a shining gem in the treasure trove of Chinese culture. From literature and painting to philosophy, technology, economy, and social systems, the Song Dynasty showcases its unique charm and profound influence.

Song Dynasty literature occupies an extremely important place in the history of Chinese

literature, inheriting the characteristics of Tang Dynasty literature and further innovating and developing them to achieve remarkable accomplishments.[6] Modern research not only highlights the artistic charm of Song Ci (lyrics) but also delves into its rich cultural connotations and the spirit of the times. At the same time, other literary forms such as Song Dynasty prose and poetry also have their unique characteristics, leaving a valuable cultural heritage for future generations.

Song Dynasty painting also reached artistic heights, with painters emphasizing sketching and realism, striving for a sense of authenticity and deep artistic conception in their works. Their creations not only hold high artistic value but also deeply reflect the social landscape and people's lifestyles of the time. Modern scholars, through their research, not only appreciate the superb techniques of Song Dynasty painting but also profoundly experience the unique charm of Song Dynasty culture.

In philosophy, technology, economy, and social systems, the Song Dynasty also achieved remarkable success. Neo-Confucianism, the dominant philosophical thought of the time, had a profound impact on Chinese culture. The advanced technological level of the Song Dynasty, which saw the birth of the three great inventions, also garnered the attention of later generations.

The re-interpretation and evaluation of Song Dynasty culture not only help us to more comprehensively recognize and understand this historical stage but also allow us to draw wisdom and nourishment from it, providing valuable references and inspiration for contemporary social development.

5.2 Generation Z's Acceptance and Innovation of Traditional Culture

Generation Z, as the new generation of cultural inheritors and innovators, shows great interest and enthusiasm for traditional culture while being highly attentive to emerging trends. Through online platforms and social media, they actively spread and share the knowledge and charm of traditional culture. They also innovate traditional culture in their own ways, integrating it with contemporary life.

Firstly, Generation Z's acceptance of traditional culture is comprehensive and profound. They focus not only on the forms and techniques of traditional culture but also on

its connotations and spirit. Secondly, their innovation of traditional culture is diverse and unique. They interpret and express traditional culture in their own ways, making it more aligned with contemporary aesthetics and needs. In the field of music, many Generation Z musicians combine traditional instruments with modern musical elements to create works with unique charm and style. In the field of fashion, Generation Z integrates traditional cultural elements into modern design. By using traditional patterns and colors, they design fashion products such as clothing and accessories that are rich in Chinese traditional cultural characteristics. Transforming traditional culture through innovation and combining it with modern design effectively uses product carriers and digital technology to showcase the contemporary aesthetic and emotional value of traditional culture, achieving the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture.

Additionally, Generation Z actively spreads and shares traditional culture through social media and online platforms. By publishing cultural videos, writing cultural articles, and more, they introduce the charm and value of traditional culture to a wider audience. For example, some Generation Z bloggers share their experiences and insights while learning traditional arts such as calligraphy and Chinese painting on social media, attracting a large following and interaction. This method of dissemination not only broadens the channels for spreading traditional culture but also enhances its influence and appeal.

6. Summary and Recommendations

By thoroughly exploring the cultural characteristics of the Song Dynasty and the Z generation, we can discern the profound connections and resonances between these two distinct eras. The Song Dynasty, a period of cultural flourishing in Chinese history, possesses a unique cultural charm that transcends a millennium, still resonating with and captivating the contemporary Z generation. This resonance is evident not only in the shared expressions of reverence for nature and patriotic sentiments but also in the deep acceptance and innovation of traditional culture.

The "Song Charm" embodies the cultural heritage of the Song Dynasty, reflecting its

unique cultural connotations while also showcasing an elegant aesthetic and artistic conception.[7] Modern scholars, through research and interpretation of Song Dynasty culture, have not only re-evaluated its significant status in the history of Chinese culture but also provided contemporary society with new intellectual resources and cultural nourishment. This in-depth exploration and re-evaluation of traditional culture offer us a broader perspective and deeper insights into understanding Song Dynasty culture.

As cultural inheritors and innovators of the new era, the Z generation also innovates traditional culture in their own ways, combining traditional elements with modern aesthetics to create culturally rich and contemporary products. By cleverly integrating traditional elements and modern aesthetics, artists find unique ways to express themselves in their designs, preserving cultural heritage while endowing it with new contemporary significance.[8] This acceptance and innovation of traditional culture enrich contemporary cultural expressions and infuse new vitality into the inheritance and development of traditional culture.

The Z generation's understanding and inheritance of Song Dynasty culture are reflected not only in reading and appreciating classic works but also in deeply comprehending and embodying the spirit of Song Dynasty culture. They actively disseminate and share knowledge and the charm of Song Dynasty culture through social media and online platforms, allowing more people to understand and appreciate it. Additionally, they express their love and admiration for Song Dynasty culture in their own ways, such as participating in traditional cultural activities and purchasing traditional cultural products, thereby integrating Song Dynasty culture into their lives.

We must also recognize that inheriting and innovating traditional culture is no easy task. In the context of digitalization and globalization, effectively passing on and promoting traditional culture to make it shine anew in modern society is a challenge we must address. Therefore, we need to enhance education and popularization of traditional culture, raising public awareness and recognition. We should also encourage and support young people to participate in the inheritance and innovation of

traditional culture, providing them with more opportunities and platforms, making them a vital force in this endeavor.

Looking to the future, we hope to see more young people deeply understanding and inheriting traditional culture, integrating it with modern life, and creating culturally rich and contemporary products. We also look forward to seeing more cultural institutions and scholars strengthening research and interpretation of traditional culture, providing deeper theoretical support and intellectual guidance for its inheritance and development. Only in this way can we make traditional culture shine anew in modern society, contributing to the cultural confidence and renaissance of the Chinese nation.

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