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Examining the Current Situation and Pathways for the Inheritance of Chinese Traditional Culture through the Success of Black Myth: Wukong — An Analysis from the Perspective of Cultural Security

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Abstract

The unprecedented success of the first domestically produced AAA game Black Myth: Wukong has sparked a wave of Chinese cultural export, providing insight into the current situation and pathways for the inheritance of Chinese traditional culture. From the perspective of cultural security, this paper analyzes how the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture faces opportunities arising from national economic development, heightened awareness of cultural security, improvements in national security systems, and globalization-driven cultural exchange. At the same time, it contends with challenges such as the concerning cultural environment, the plundering and loss of valuable cultural resources, and the immaturity of China's cultural discourse system. The success of Black Myth: Wukong also offers insights into the effective inheritance of Chinese traditional culture by emphasizing the need to harness the strengths of traditional culture, seize development opportunities, and enhance cultural security governance.

Keywords: Black Myth: Wukong; Chinese traditional culture; cultural security

Introduction

Recently, Black Myth: Wukong, the first AAA game produced in China, was launched globally. On its release day, it became the most-played game on the Steam platform, with over 2 million concurrent players. It quickly went viral on major short-video platforms both in China and abroad, maintaining a high level of popularity. The game is based on the Chinese classical literary masterpiece Journey to the West and tells the story of the player, as the "Chosen One," embarking on a fantastical and adventurous journey to

uncover the truth behind ancient legends. The success of Black Myth: Wukong has sparked great interest among overseas players in Journey to the West and significantly boosted domestic cultural confidence. Through the game's success, one can gain insights into the current situation and pathways for inheriting traditional Chinese culture, as well as safeguarding cultural security in China.

1. Traditional Chinese Culture and Cultural Security

Exploring the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture from the perspective of cultural security requires a clear understanding of the concepts of traditional Chinese culture and cultural security, and the relationship between the two.

(1) The Concept of Traditional Chinese Culture

To clarify the essence of traditional Chinese culture, we must first define "China," "tradition," and "culture." The term "China" originally referred to the region where the ancient Huaxia people established their capitals. As dynasties expanded their territories, the regions under their control came to be known as "China," a term that embodies the profound cultural heritage of the Chinese people and distinct national characteristics. Tradition refers to ideas, morals, beliefs, and customs passed down through generations, including both its essence and less desirable aspects. "The alternation of hard and soft is the heavenly principle; the restraint of civilization is human culture. Observing the heavens reveals changes in time, while observing human culture transforms the world" (I Ching). The term "culture" thus emerged, representing the spiritual products a nation condenses throughout its historical development, bearing national characteristics.

Traditional Chinese culture profoundly influences the spiritual world of the Chinese people, and its essence can be understood through three main aspects: First, the core ideology of "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trust." Second, traditional Chinese virtues, which provide moral judgments at multiple levels, such as "loyalty to the country," "diligence and camaraderie," "filial piety and trustworthiness," and "self-reliance." Third, the humanistic spirit of China, which encourages moral virtue and active progress.

Traditional Chinese culture is characterized by its distinct nationalism, openness, and inclusiveness, laying a solid foundation for building the nation's cultural soft power.

(2) The Concept of Cultural Security

The concept of cultural security extends from the notion of national security. At the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, President Xi Jinping stated, "National security is the cornerstone of stability and the fundamental interest of the

people of all ethnic groups" (Report to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China). Cultural security, as an integral part of national security, deserves significant attention. Chinese scholars define cultural security as "the state in which a nation's cultural survival and development are free from threats or dangers" (Hui Lin Hu, National Cultural Security Governance). It encompasses four main aspects: (1) Cultural-political security, which involves safeguarding ideology; (2) Cultural-economic security, including the development of cultural industries; (3) Traditional cultural security, protecting both tangible cultural heritage such as historical records and artifacts, as well as intangible heritage like language and customs; (4) Cyber-cultural security, addressing security challenges when the internet serves as a medium for cultural dissemination. In the new era, safeguarding China's cultural security requires not only protecting the nation's cultural survival and development but also enhancing national cultural confidence and competitiveness.

(3) The Relationship between Traditional Chinese Culture and Cultural Security

Traditional Chinese culture and cultural security are closely intertwined. First, maintaining cultural security relies on drawing nourishment from traditional Chinese culture. Only by upholding this tradition can we preserve cultural distinctiveness and avoid homogenization, thereby preventing the erosion of national identity by external, corrupt cultural values. Second, the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture cannot occur without the protection afforded by cultural security measures. A secure cultural environment provides the foundation for preserving and advancing traditional Chinese culture.

Cultural security raises new demands for the transmission of traditional Chinese culture, such as emphasizing the inclusion of Chinese cultural elements in cultural undertakings and industries and participating confidently in international cultural exchanges. The inheritance of traditional Chinese culture from the perspective of cultural security is characterized by its nationalism, innovation, inclusiveness, and mass appeal.

2. The Current Situation of Traditional Chinese Cultural Inheritance from the Perspective of Cultural Security

The phenomenal success of *Black Myth: Wukong* sheds light on the opportunities and challenges faced in the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture in the modern era.

(1) Opportunities for Inheriting Traditional Chinese Culture from the Perspective of Cultural Security

The success of *Black Myth: Wukong* reflects the opportunities for inheriting traditional Chinese culture, including rapid national economic development, increased awareness of cultural security, the improvement of national security systems, and the deepening of global cultural exchanges.

First, the rapid growth of the national economy has facilitated the transmission of traditional Chinese culture. Economic foundations determine the superstructure, and in the new era, as China's economy continues to progress, the fundamental societal contradictions have shifted, and people's pursuit of spiritual life has increased. This has drawn greater attention to the rich and profound traditional Chinese culture. Furthermore, the significant financial investment in cultural preservation provides material support for cultural transmission. The success of *Black Myth: Wukong* reflects the public's appreciation for high-quality cultural exports rooted in tradition.

Second, awareness of cultural security has deepened at the national, societal, and individual levels. Nationally, the central government places great emphasis on cultural security, actively strengthening its construction. Academically, schools, as centers of theoretical research, delve into issues like cultural hegemony and soft power, providing theoretical guidance for the inheritance and development of traditional Chinese culture. Additionally, some cultural enterprises have begun to prioritize social benefits, producing films, TV series, and variety shows that effectively tell Chinese stories and convey China's voice. On an individual level, rising education levels have enhanced national pride and confidence, leading people to proactively defend traditional Chinese culture while opposing cultural appropriation. For example, the recent uproar over Dior's appropriation of the Chinese "Mamianqun" skirt sparked public outrage, and with the emergence of *Black Myth: Wukong*, many foreign netizens mistook "Wukong" as a Japanese anime character. Chinese netizens actively explained the origins of "Wukong" and promoted traditional Chinese culture, thus safeguarding China's cultural security.

Third, the improvement of national security systems has provided strong protection for the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture. The establishment of the National Security Council has ensured a robust leadership mechanism for cultural security. Moreover, the continuous refinement of national security governance and legal systems ensures the efficient handling of cultural security issues, providing institutional and legal guarantees for cultural security.

Finally, the deepening of globalization has created a more open international environment for the transmission and development of traditional Chinese culture. Cultural exchanges between nations help break down stereotypes about Chinese culture, as evidenced by policies such as the 144-hour visa-free travel to China, which allows

foreign tourists to break through cultural barriers and gain new perspectives on China. The progress of globalization also requires nations to creatively transform and innovate their cultures. What is unique to a nation can resonate globally, and only by rooting itself in national culture while embracing innovation can a nation's culture stand out on the world stage.

(2) Challenges to the Inheritance of Traditional Chinese

Culture from the Perspective of Cultural Security

The success of *Black Myth: Wukong* also highlights the long-standing challenges faced in the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture, including a deteriorating cultural environment, the plundering and loss of valuable cultural resources, and the underdevelopment of China's cultural discourse system.

First, the deteriorating cultural environment is evident in two aspects: the erosion caused by corrupt cultural influences and the rampant spread of cultural hegemony. The infiltration of negative cultural elements and values is corroding the cultural environment, exacerbated by globalization and the rapid spread of information through the internet, which brings not only convenience but also cultural invasions. Ideological influences from foreign cultures are eroding the values of the Chinese people, posing cultural security challenges. Furthermore, misunderstandings and misrepresentations of traditional Chinese culture spread by Chinese netizens with incomplete knowledge also distort perceptions and have adverse social effects. Additionally, cultural hegemony, particularly from Western countries led by the U.S., has long promoted double standards. While advocating for freedom and democracy, they attempt to disrupt the development of other nations. By manipulating human rights issues, these nations aim to brainwash the Chinese people with so-called universal values, distort national values, and diminish national culture, hoping to achieve peaceful evolution. Over time, American superhero characters like "Captain America" and "Spider-Man" have significantly influenced how many Chinese view American culture. However, the emergence of *Black Myth: Wukong* has presented the world with a Chinese-style superhero, "Wukong," reflecting the public's long-suppressed desire for traditional Chinese cultural products.

Second, the plundering and loss of valuable cultural resources is a long-standing issue. Historical events such as the burning of the Old Summer Palace by the Eight-Nation Alliance and modern incidents like the appropriation of traditional Chinese cultural elements by foreign brands (e.g., the "Mamianqun" skirt incident) or the reappropriation of Chinese cultural concepts in foreign films illustrate the continuous erosion of China's cultural heritage. Such acts of cultural theft are often subtle and go unnoticed by the public, but they chip away at the foundation of cultural identity, making it difficult to safeguard and transmit traditional culture over time.

Finally, China's cultural discourse system remains underdeveloped. Western nations have long used their own cultural systems to reinterpret and replace Chinese culture, disrupting China's efforts to build its cultural framework. The international cultural discourse remains imbalanced, with Western media dominating global narratives and limiting China's ability to project its voice internationally. Although China has gained more influence in recent years, challenges remain in ensuring accurate communication of cultural meanings. For instance, during the development of *Black Myth: Wukong*, some uniquely Chinese cultural terms could not be accurately conveyed to a global audience, highlighting the need for further development of China's cultural discourse system.

3. Pathways for Inheriting Traditional Chinese Culture from the Perspective of Cultural Security

The success of *Black Myth: Wukong* provides valuable insights into the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture, emphasizing the need to tap into the inherent strengths of traditional culture, seize development opportunities, and strengthen cultural security governance.

(1) Leveraging the Strengths of Traditional Culture

First, fully utilize the advantages of cultural resources. *Black Myth: Wukong* draws on the rich background of *Journey to the West*, one of China's Four Great Classical Novels, and incorporates famous Chinese historical sites such as the Dazu Rock Carvings in Chongqing, Xiaoxitian in Xixian County, Shanxi, and Lingyin Temple in Hangzhou. This highlights the need for stronger protection of cultural resources in the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture, avoiding over-exploitation and ensuring the integrity of cultural heritage. Legal frameworks and policies should support flexible protection strategies tailored to specific cultural resources.

Second, take advantage of technological advancements. The application of science and technology is crucial for revitalizing traditional Chinese culture. Historically, China's gaming industry has been plagued by an imbalance between the development and consumption levels of domestic games. The success of *Black Myth: Wukong*, with its impressive graphics and smooth gameplay, marks a significant milestone in Chinese game development technology. Moreover, media promotion plays a pivotal role. One of the key reasons *Black Myth: Wukong* sparked global interest in traditional Chinese culture is media coverage. Mainstream media should actively guide the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture globally, promoting socialist core values and spreading awareness about cultural security. Additionally, flexible and innovative approaches through self-media are essential for showcasing the richness of traditional Chinese culture. The success of *Black Myth: Wukong* and the renewed interest in *Journey to the West* were significantly influenced by media promotion.

Lastly, actively mobilize key actors. The inheritance of traditional Chinese culture must be for the people and rely on the people. The success of Black Myth: Wukong would not have been possible without public support and advocacy. Efforts should be made to cultivate professionals dedicated to preserving and promoting traditional Chinese culture. Public participation in cultural activities, such as community-organized riddles or cultural performances, should be encouraged. People's wisdom should be harnessed to contribute to cultural preservation, and exemplary figures should be recognized to inspire broader engagement in cultural heritage preservation.

(2) Seizing Opportunities for the Development of Traditional Culture

First, achieve the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional Chinese culture. The creative transformation of traditional culture involves bringing it to life. Historical texts and relics are difficult to attract public interest without emotional value. Black Myth: Wukong captured the opportunity for traditional culture's development by infusing the character "Wukong" with vibrant life, successfully achieving a creative transformation of traditional culture. Innovative development requires aligning traditional culture with modern life. The AAA game Black Myth: Wukong caters to contemporary tastes while promoting traditional Chinese culture through entertainment.

Second, enhance public identification with traditional Chinese culture. Public recognition is fundamental to the inheritance and development of traditional Chinese culture. The popularity of Black Myth: Wukong is largely due to the public's deep identification with traditional Chinese culture. Strengthening this recognition requires bolstering history and political education to foster correct perspectives on history and values, ensuring that people can discern the essence and flaws of traditional culture while maintaining an open attitude towards both Chinese and foreign cultures.

Finally, adopt a global perspective and promote the international dissemination of traditional Chinese culture. Cultural defense alone is insufficient in the face of foreign cultural influences. To safeguard China's cultural security, it is essential to enhance the global recognition and discourse of traditional Chinese culture. Black Myth: Wukong showcased the allure of Chinese culture to the world, elevating its international image.

(3) Strengthening Cultural Security Governance

First, improve institutional governance to protect traditional cultural heritage. The leadership of the Communist Party in cultural security must be upheld, ensuring ideological security by maintaining Marxism as the guiding ideology and promoting

socialist core values. Additionally, efforts should be made to strengthen legal frameworks for cultural security, ensuring that laws are in place to address cultural security concerns.

Second, innovate in network governance to safeguard the transmission of traditional culture. Big data and cloud computing should be used to identify and track harmful cultural content, and media should play a critical role in correcting misinformation about traditional culture. Diverse methods should be employed to popularize knowledge of traditional culture, fostering a societal atmosphere that values, recognizes, and promotes traditional Chinese culture.

Conclusion

In today's world, where cultural security is increasingly significant, the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture must be prioritized. By leveraging the strengths of traditional culture, seizing development opportunities, enhancing public recognition, and adopting an international perspective, while also strengthening cultural security governance through institutional and network innovations, the success of Black Myth: Wukong can be sustained rather than a fleeting phenomenon.

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