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LETTING THE WORLD UNDERSTAND CHINA
AND LETTING CHINA UNDERSTAND THE WORLD

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News Report

The Second World Conference of Sinologists Successfully Held

On October 27th, the second World Conference of Sinologists was held in Nanping City, Fujian Province, under the theme "Understanding Chinese Civilisation to Jointly Promote Global Modernisation". The event was organised by the Chinese Association for International Understanding and the People's Government of Fujian Province. More than 200 political figures, sinologists, experts, scholars, representatives of non-governmental organisations, relevant Chinese departments and cultural sectors from 60 countries were present. The participants include Ji Bingxuan, Vice-Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the 13th National People's Congress of China and President of the Chinese Association for International Understanding; Liu Jianchao, Minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee; Zhou Zuyi, Secretary of the CPC Fujian Provincial Committee and Chairperson of the Standing Committee of Fujian Provincial People's

Congress; Zhao Long, Deputy Secretary of the CPC Fujian Provincial Committee and Governor of Fujian Province; Vong Soth, Second Vice-President of the National Assembly of Cambodia; Essam Sharaf, former Egyptian Prime Minister; Colin Mackerras, Australian sinologist and laureate of the Chinese Government Friendship Award; and Carsten B. ThØgersen, Danish sinologist.

Ji Bingxuan said, in July last year, General Secretary Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter to the third Dialogue on Exchanges and Mutual Learning among Civilisations & the first World Conference of Sinologists, which reflected the great importance attached and expectations for world sinology and sinologists by the CPC and the Chinese government. The second World Conference of Sinologists is held to actively implement the Global Civilisation Initiative and the spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's important congratulatory letter, and promote exchanges and dialogue between Chinese and other civilisations.

We should join hands to pursue the dream of development and contribute to the advancement of world modernisation. We should jointly build the foundation of security and contribute to world peace and stability. We should gather the light of civilisation and contribute to the inheritance and innovation of human culture. We should work together to build a bridge between the peoples and contribute to enhancing mutual understanding and friendship. China is ready to work with the international civil society and sinologists around the world to deepen exchanges and mutual learning between Chinese and other civilisations and contribute to the development and progress of human civilisation and the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Liu Jianchao said, at present, the CPC is leading the Chinese people to build a great country and move toward national rejuvenation on all fronts through Chinese modernisation. Chinese modernisation is not only a bright path for the

Chinese people to pursue a better and happier life, but also a just approach for world peace and development and the advancement of human civilisation. The key to understanding Chinese modernisation lies in grasping the rich heritage of Chinese civilisation. The Chinese civilisation values harmony, inclusiveness and common prosperity, and believes that the world is equally shared by all. It advocates and pursues modernisation that is characterised by lasting peace, openness and inclusiveness, shared prosperity and justice. We are ready to strengthen exchanges and dialogue with sinologists from all over the world, jointly promote international people-to-people and cultural exchanges and cooperation as well as the high-quality development of sinology in the world, so as to lay a new foundation of openness and inclusiveness for all countries to join hands on the road to modernisation and open up new prospects.

Zhou Zuyi said, Fujian, known for its rich cultural resources, has made unique contributions to the inheritance and development of Chinese culture and the exchanges with the world. During his recent visit to Fujian, President Xi Jinping earnestly hoped that Fujian would make unremitting efforts to strengthen cultural influence and showcase the province's image, injecting new vitality into Fujian's cultural heritage. Fujian will take this World Conference of Sinologists as an opportunity to implement the Global Civilisation Initiative, work together with all sides to build a bridge of cooperation and exchanges, cultural transmission, friendship and communication. We are willing to promote sinology research and international cultural exchanges for more solid and in-depth development, fully demonstrate the charm and style of Fujian culture in the new era, and jointly write a new chapter in the world civilisations. He warmly invited attendees to explore Fujian, experience Fujian's cultural diversity, and witness the advancement of Chinese modernisation in all its dimensions.

The guests extended warm congratulations to the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, saying that the time-honoured and profound Chinese civilisation is the precious treasure of mankind, and is of great significance to the development of China and the world. Vong Soth said, the Chinese civilisation has not only

promoted the friendly exchanges between the Chinese people and the people of other countries, including the Cambodian people, but also provided useful reference for building a united and modern world. Essam Sharaf said that the world is at the crossroads and it is necessary to save human civilisation through major changes. The building of a community with a shared future for mankind and the values it embodies such as trust, peace and development provide important guidance. Colin Mackerras said, culture plays an important role in the exchanges with other countries. Chinese culture underlines that a strong China will strive for a multi-polar world and advocate peaceful cooperation. Carsten B. ThØgersen said, the major initiatives put forward by General Secretary Xi Jinping are rooted in the excellent traditional Chinese culture, reflecting the values of harmony in differences, diversity and inclusiveness, and are conducive to promoting world peace, development and prosperity.

During the Conference, thematic sessions of cross-civilisation understanding and exhibitions of intangible cultural heritage were held. Participants engaged in in-depth discussions on topics such as Chinese modernisation underpinned by Chinese civilisation, Chinese civilisation reinvigourated by Chinese modernisation, and integrating world civilisations on the path to modernisation. Attendees emphasised the importance of dialogue and exchanges among diverse civilisations, especially in today's turbulent world. Sinologists expressed their commitment to actively sharing Chinese culture, promoting intercultural exchanges and mutual learning, enhancing understanding and trust, and supporting the implementation of the three major global initiatives for a better future.

Lu Kang, Vice-Minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, presided over the opening ceremony. Wu Xielin, Member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Fujian Provincial Committee and Secretary-General of the CPC Fujian Provincial Committee, Wang Yongli, Member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Fujian Provincial Committee and Executive Vice-Governor of Fujian Province, also attended the opening ceremony.

Gather in Nanping for Exchanges and Mutual Learning among Civilisations

Civilisation is colourful because of communication, and civilisation is rich because of mutual learning. On October 27th, the second World Conference of Sinologists was held in Nanping City, Fujian Province, under the theme "Understanding Chinese Civilisation to Jointly Promote Global Modernisation". More than 200 sinologists at home and abroad gathered to deepen exchanges among civilisations and enhance mutual understanding and friendship.

"The essence of Chinese culture centres around the concept of 'harmony' and western countries can draw nutrients from Chinese culture." Colin Mackerras, an Australian sinologist and honourary professor at Griffith University, said at the opening ceremony that civilisations should appreciate each other and live in harmony.

Mackerras first came to China to teach at Beijing Foreign Studies University in 1964, and frequently travelled between China and Australia in the following decades, conducting researches and delivering lectures, and earnestly introducing the real situation of China to Australia and the rest of the world. He said, "Building a beautiful, open and

inclusive world is an achievable dream, and we are encouraged to act together."

Carsten B. Thøgersen, a Danish sinologist, also believes that in today's world, cooperation and mutual understanding are more needed than ever. Over the past four years, China has proposed the Global Security Initiative, Global Development Initiative and Global Civilisation Initiative to enhance cooperation and trust. Confucius (551-479 BC) once proposed *"he er bu tong* (harmony in diversity)". Harmony is like a musical chord composed by different tones. Diversity is the precondition for harmony. Sustainability is based on respect for diversity. That is true to both nature and culture. He stressed that it is necessary to promote cultural exchanges for the continuation of civilisation and rejuvenation.

Sinologists are the messengers of Chinese civilisation, and they are also the activists in promoting cultural exchanges between China and other countries. Igor Radev, a sinologist from northern Macedonia in Europe, has been engaged

in China studies for a dozen years, translating a large number of classical and modern works into Macedonian. He said that sinologists can actively play their roles, enhancing understanding and exchanges among different cultures, and act as a bridge to connect different civilisations.

"The cultures of Europe and China are very different. Teenagers are the main drivers of cultural exchanges. They are good at learning and willing to absorb new cultures. Young people should be encouraged to study in China." Zainea Iustina Nora is the Chief Editor of the Chinese Editorial Department of the International Station of Romanian National Radio. When she was young, she also came to Shanghai for study. Influenced by the local culture, she still loves to wear cheongsam. She said that at present, more and more young people communicate with each other through the Internet, which is a very good and innovative way.

A group of young foreign scholars also actively participated in the opening ceremony.

At the thematic show "Messengers Connecting Chinese and Foreign Civilisations", five stories were jointly performed by foreign young sinologists and Chinese youth representatives, including *Timeless Tea Culture: Building Close Bond of the People*, introducing Wuyi tea culture, *Everlasting Classics—Romeo and Juliet & Butterfly Lovers,* combining Chinese and Western culture, *A Spontaneous Journey—Black Myth: Wukong and Young Sinologists' Magical Experience* combining with the game Black Myth: Wukong, *Wisdom across Time and Space—China and the World in Chinese Idioms* and *Silk Road Connecting World Civilisations, Sinology Pooling Strength of the Youth,* reflecting Chinese traditional culture.

"I didn't expect that I could come to Wuyishan, the starting point of the Tea Road, and drink Wuyi Rock Tea." Ryan, a young Russian scholar from Beijing Jiaotong University, said excitedly. He participated in the performance *Silk Road Connecting World Civilisations, Sinology Pooling Strength of the Youth.* He said, "Hundreds of years ago, the Tea Road connected China and Russia, and brought tea from Wuyishan to thousands of families in Russia. Nowadays, the Belt and Road Initiative proposed by China and people-to-people exchanges have brought the ties between the two countries closer."

"I feel very honoured to participate in this Conference. I like Chinese culture, and I especially admire Kung Fu superstar Bruce Lee, so my Chinese name is the same as Bruce Lee's. This young Egyptian scholar in Beijing Language and Culture University took part in the performance "A Spontaneous Journey—Black Myth: Wukong and Young Sinologists' Magical Experience". Although a

freshman, he speaks fluent Chinese.

"I studied Chinese in Egypt for three years." Bruce Lee said that in many respects, young sinologists are luckier than the elderly generation of sinologists because they have more diverse ways to engage with China. Nowadays, many foreign schools start to teach Chinese, and various Chinese teaching institutions are developing rapidly. They can also learn Chinese through online video tutoring.

Most young schloars interviewed spoke pretty good Chinese, and answered almost all questions in Chinese.

"I hope that there will be more cross-cultural communication platforms in the future, so that young people around the world can have deeper understanding of Chinese culture and history, be pioneers in integrating Chinese and foreign cultures and enhancing exchanges, and jointly promote cultural inheritance and development."

Chen Xiaoxian, a young Indonesian scholar at Beijing Jiaotong University, believed that the World Conference of Sinologists has set up a larger platform for young sinologists to exchange their understanding of sinology with young people from different countries and learn about their own cultures.

"Please come to the ancient oriental country. The civilisation here spreads to all corners of the world. Civilisations draw upon each other ..." Young scholars at home and abroad sang together and sent invitations to all the guest. The opening ceremony ended in the song of the "Silk Road Connecting World Civilisations, Sinology Pooling Strength of the Youth", which is a symphony with harmonious resonance. This special melody will cross the borders and promote the exchanges and mutual learning among civilisations and the connectivity among young people.

International Sinologists Embrace Cultural Exchanges at Wuyi Mountain

The Second World Conference of Sinologists opened on 27 October 2024 at the foot of Wuyi Mountain in Nanping City, Fujian Province.

Themed "Understanding Chinese Civilisation to Jointly Promote Global Modernisation", the Conference gathered over 200 dignitaries, sinologists, scholars and NGO representatives from 60 countries to exchange insights on Chinese culture and its global resonance.

The Tea Ceremony: A Cultural Emblem

As the hometown of Chinese tea culture, Wuyi Mountain sets the stage for cultural exchanges and dialogues. Igor Radev, a North Macedonian sinologist and Associate Professor of the North Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, savoured a cup of locally sourced oolong tea, lingering on its enduring aroma. Wuyi Mountain, the birthplace of oolong and black tea, marks the

starting point of the historic Ancient Tea Road and plays a pivotal role in the Chinese tea culture.

During the Conference, cultural activities like tea ceremonies from 1000 years ago (Song Dynasty)—featuring grinding, whisking and tasting—captivated all attendees. Daulet Fatimabibi,a Kazakh sinologist and Professor of Oriental Studies at National University of Kazakhstan, marvelled at the artistry over talks with other sinologists. She appreciated the sacred role of tea in Chinese tradition, "Learning the techniques of brewing and appreciating tea has deepened my understanding of its cultural symbolism," she said. Ragnar Baldursson, an Icelandic sinologist and former Minister Counselor and Deputy Head of Mission of the Iceland Embassy in China, pointed out that the Chinese character for "tea" (茶) is composed of the components of the Chinese characters 人 (person), 草 (grass), and 木 (wood). "This shows that the Chinese people, from ancient times, have attached vital importance to the harmony between human and nature, offering a timeless lesson for the world," he observed.

Scholarly Reflections: Bridging the Past and Present

Liljana Arsovska, a Mexican sinologist and Professor at Asian and African Studies Centre, College of Mexico, drew inspirations from Wuyi Mountain's landscapes, wondering whether the landscape admired by Zhu Xi, the Southern Song Dynasty philosopher (1130-1200 A.D.) revered as the "Master of Neo-Confucianism", mirrored today's views. Nanping, home to Wuyi Mountain, nurtured Zhu Xi's intellectual journey, where he synthesized Confucian thought with critical insights from diverse schools.

"Zhu Xi was the epitomiser of Confucianism and his legacy offers wisdom for today's cross-cultural dialogue," Arsovska noted. Since her first exposure to Chinese culture 20 years ago, Matej Zima, a Slovenian sinologist and Secretary-General of Sinološko Društvo Yuan, has gained a clear view which emphasised sinologists' role as bridges,

“Amid global complexities, we must courageously share and tell the story of China’s rapid and peaceful development, grounded in authenticity and personal experience.” Echoing this, Jibladze Marine, Director of Confucius Institute and Professor of the Free University of Tbilisi, Georgia, stressed that only through understanding Chinese cultural roots, can we have a proper interpretation of contemporary China.

Harmony in Diversity: A Global Imperative

"The world today needs cooperation and mutual understanding more than ever before," stated Carsten Boyer Thøgersen, a Danish sinologist and former Danish Consul General to China, who used musical harmony as a metaphor to illustrate the principle of "harmony in diversity" in international interactions. "Harmony is like a chord. Without unique and distinctive musical notes and tones, harmony cannot be achieved."

Thøgersen emphasised that diversity and inclusiveness form the prerequisite and foundation for harmony, noting that preserving uniqueness while respecting diversity serves as the cornerstone for harmonious coexistence. "Just as biodiversity enables the sustainable development of nature, cultural diversity nurtures inspiration, revitalisation, and the continuity of civilisations," he remarked.

"Today, languages, cultures, and civilisations exhibit such a rich diversity. It is precisely through this diversity that human civilisation gains greater vitality and richness through mutual exchanges," commented Abbas Jawad Kdaimy, Iraqi expert of the University of International Business and Economics. He argued that the mutual learning and exchanges among Chinese and the world civilisations will undoubtedly forge stronger bonds of friendship among peoples worldwide. Quoting a Chinese proverb, "A single flower does not make spring, while a hundred flowers in full bloom bring spring to the garden," Abbas further noted that the gathering of international sinologists for academic exchanges "demonstrates pluralistic approaches and a spirit of generosity, further validating this profound truth".

International Sinologists Praise China-proposed Global Initiatives

By Cao Desheng and Hu Meidong

The China-proposed Global Civilisation Initiative, which is rooted in the Chinese philosophy and advocates that harmony is the sum of diversity, is an invitation to various cultures across the globe to cooperate in building a better world, according to international sinologists.

The Initiative, together with the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, all proposed by President Xi Jinping, has great relevance in promoting world peace, development and prosperity amid the turbulent changes of the international landscape, they said.

Carsten Boyer Thøgersen, a Danish sinologist and former Consul-General of Denmark to Shanghai, said that in the world today, cooperation and mutual understanding are more needed than ever.

Amid mounting global challenges, China has proposed an array of global initiatives that are the continuation of ancient Chinese philosophy, he said.

Thøgersen made the remarks at the second World Conference of Sinologists, which was held on Sunday in Nanping, Fujian Province.

Valuable Treasure

At the Conference, international sinologists hailed the value of the initiatives proposed by China. They also said that Chinese civilisation serves as a valuable treasure for humanity and contributes to the development of China as well as the world.

Essam Sharaf, former Egyptian Prime Minister and President of the Sharaf Foundation for Sustainable Development, said that the China-proposed global initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative, are carefully infused with the values of connectivity, trust, peace and development, which are key elements in building a community with a shared future for mankind.

The BRI is a cooperation platform that aims to improve global connectivity through physical infrastructure projects and people-to-people bonding activities, and the Global Civilisation Initiative aims to foster trust and respect among individuals across cultures and civilisations worldwide, Sharaf said.

The Global Security Initiative aims to resolve conflicts through dialogue and consultation for peaceful resolution and to prevent returning to the Cold War era, while the Global Development Initiative presents a road map for development through a unique set of core concepts and priorities, he added.

"These initiatives guide us toward a world where everyone can enjoy a prosperous future and be part of a new world order defined by dialogue-driven international relations, globally governed by rules and genuine multilateralism," he added.

Regarding the Ukraine crisis, China, in upholding the Global Security Initiative, has jointly issued a six-point consensus with Brazil on resolving conflicts. It has also launched the group of Friends for Peace, together with other Global South countries, to promote early de-escalation and pave the way for political settlement.

Furthermore, Palestinian factions reconciled with one another in July in Beijing, marking a key step toward peace in the Middle East.

Since its introduction three years ago, the Global Development Initiative has helped make available nearly $20 billion in development funds and seen the launch of more than 1,100 projects.

When addressing the "BRICS Plus" leaders' dialogue last week in Kazan, Russia, Xi said, "The Global Civilisation Initiative I proposed is exactly for the purpose of building a garden of world civilisations in which we can share and admire the beauty of each civilisation."

He added that China "will coordinate with others to form a Global South Think Tanks Alliance to promote people-to-people exchanges and experience-sharing in governance".

Right Path Forward

Colin Mackerras, an Australian sinologist and honourary professor at Griffith University in Australia, said that international cooperation is the right path forward. It is China that is promoting international cooperation, while the United States and the West in general seem more willing to provoke and compete than to cooperate, he added.

"It seems to me that the idea of harmony has been adopted by the Chinese people to a very significant and substantial degree," he said.

"It is high time that the West begins to take the Chinese culture and ideas seriously, and abandon its assumption of superiority," Mackerras said.

Sinologists Explore Chinese Civilisation's Role in Global Modernisation

By Bi Mengying

The China-proposed global initiatives are "not only a very good solution to our world's problems, but also an expression of traditional Chinese culture," noted Australian sinologist Colin Mackerras at the ongoing Second World Conference of Sinologists.

The Conference opened on Sunday in Nanping, East China's Fujian Province, with a focus on understanding Chinese civilisation and promoting global modernisation.

Co-organised by the Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAFIU) and the People's Government of Fujian Province, it gathered over 200 representatives from 60 countries across the world.

Rooted in Ancient Wisdom

The purpose of holding the Conference is to actively implement the Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI) and promote dialogue and exchanges between Chinese and international civilisations, said Ji Bingxuan, President of CAFIU, at the opening ceremony.

Colin Mackerras, who recently celebrated his 60th anniversary of teaching in China, noted in his keynote speech that the essence of Confucian philosophy in China centres on the concept of

"harmony." Similarly, Carsten Boyer Thøgersen, a former Danish diplomat to China, pointed to the phrase *he er bu tong*, which originates from Confucian thought, as China's ancient wisdom - harmony in diversity.

The three Global Initiatives proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping are rooted in traditional Chinese culture, reflecting values like harmony in diversity and inclusiveness. "These principles foster global peace, development and prosperity," Thøgersen told the Global Times.

"All the three Initiatives have great appeal, especially for the developing countries of the Global South. Many in Pakistan view, as China revives the old Silk Road under the Belt and Road Initiative, that the GCI is another chance for China to make greater contribution to the world. On the other hand, it is a great and unique opportunity for the world to understand China better," Zafar Uddin Mahmood, former Special Envoy for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, told the Global Times.

Strong Tradition Pride

"There is a need that the deep philosophical contours of the GCI be understood, adjusted to the local conditions of each country while remaining focused on the course of modernisation based on the aspiration of the people," said Mahmood.

While agreeing with Mahmood, Slovenian sinologist Matej Zima noted that China's modernisation not only entails the development of China itself, but the world at large, and especially the Global South.

While cross-cultural interactions have collectively driven social progress and influenced the trajectory of global civilisations, sinologists have often played a unique bridging role in these exchanges, actively contributing to the deepening of the mutual understanding between civilisations, said Ding Jianning, President of Yangzhou University in East China's Jiangsu Province.

To understand China in the New Era, it is essential to grasp how traditional Chinese culture is closely integrated into modern development. The Conference held three parallel sessions for sinologists to reflect upon the relationship between Chinese Civilisation and Chinese modernisation.

Mackerras has made frequent trips to many regions in China with ethnic minority populations such as Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region and North China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. "I admire the way China uses traditions to advance modernisation, as well as for the minority nationalities," Mackerras told the Global Times.

Using his personal observation in Xizang for example, he noted that local ethnic cultures have been very well preserved in various aspects such as language, clothing, food, architecture and religions.

He noted that the trend of Chinese people taking greater pride in their own traditions, especially among the younger generation, is growing stronger.

"I think that a vibrant economy does contribute to this." Mackerras gave some examples, arguing that the passing on of traditional cultures depends on education systems. Money is needed to build a theatre in a place where you can promote local performing arts. And the achievements cannot be separated from the government's dedication.

Moving Forward

For sinologists to shoulder the responsibility and mission of fostering cultural integration in the global pursuit of prosperity, Ding turned to three key aspects for discussion.

Sinological research should delve deeply into Chinese cultural heritage and compare it with other cultures in the world. Sinology-related education should also be strengthened. Meanwhile, promoting collaboration among international sinology research institutions and academic organisations is essential.

Argentinian sinologist Gustavo Girado highlighted the importance of promoting sinology and enhancing understanding of China in general within universities. "The goal is to engage more students and ensure they graduate with a genuine understanding of China. Graduates from these programmes often go on to work in local and national government institutions, where they play vital roles in deepening understanding of and fostering collaboration with China."

Drawing from his journey of being a sinologist, Zima called on sinologists to study China through first-hand experiences of working in and on contemporary China, so they can better serve as bridges between the Chinese civilisation and their own cultures. "China is changing rapidly, and sinology is changing rapidly as well," he told the Global Times.

The Beauty of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Shared Beauty for All

On October 27th 2024, the Second World Conference of Sinologists was held in Nanping City, Fujian Province, under the theme "Understanding Chinese Civilisation to Jointly Promote Global Modernisation."

To tell the stories of fine traditional Chinese culture and promote Chinese civilisation to embrace the world, this Conference had a special arrangement of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition, attracting guests from China and other countries.

Under the theme “The Beauty of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Shared Beauty for All”, the exhibition had 21 programmes including innovative practice programme including Fujian Lacquer Art and traditional incense (Fujian incense) making. These programmes not only displayed the fruitful results of the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage in Fujian Province, but also manifested the burgeoning vitality of fine traditional Chinese culture in inheritance and innovation.

I. Prominent Theme Tells the Beauty of Intangible Cultural Heritage

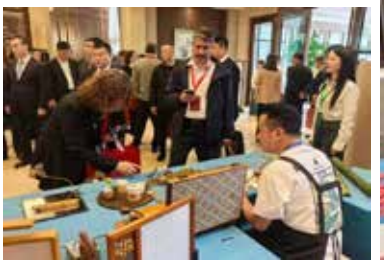
Under the theme "The Beauty of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Shared Beauty for All", this exhibition aimed to show the splendid and ingenious intangible cultural heritage, champion mutual appreciation and mutual learning in cultural exchanges, jointly promote the inheritance and innovation of intangible cultural heritage, thus promote the development of cultural diversity and the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

II. Rich Content Shows the Charm of Intangible Cultural Heritage

This exhibition covered various genres, such as classical music, traditional Chinese drama, traditional fine art and traditional crafts, to name some. There were also items listed as the UNESCO intangible cultural heritages as well as intangible cultural heritages at the national, provincial and municipal levels respectively.

III. Interactive Experience Promotes Cultural Exchanges

To allow the guests know more about intangible cultural heritage, there were display and interactive experience section at the exhibition. The guests tasted Wuyi tea together with intangible cultural heritage inheritors, enjoyed the fragrance of Fujian incense, listened to Guqin (a traditional Chinese instrument), appreciated the Jian tea wares, and tried out bamboo weaving. They were comprehensively immersed in fine traditional Chinese culture, which promoted mutual understanding and respect between cultures of China and other countries.



At the exhibition, representatives from both home and abroad expressed strong interests in and gave much attention to Fujian intangible cultural heritage. They stopped at each programme and enjoyed this cultural feast. Some listened carefully to the detailed and vivid explanation. Some experienced the exquisiteness and magic of intangible cultural heritage skills. They all felt the profound legacy and charm of fine traditional Chinese culture.

International Sinologists Visit Fujian

Delegations of international sinologists participating in the Second World Conference of Sinologists visited cities in Fujian Province, including Nanping, Fuzhou, Xiamen and Zhangzhou, to immerse themselves in the rich cultural heritage and modern development achievements of Fujian.

In Nanping:

Sinologists explored Wuyi Mountain Scenic Area (a UNESCO dual World Heritage property) and Ruiquan Tea Culture Museum. They admired cliff inscriptions, picturesque landscapes, and participated in tea ceremonies, gaining insights into the profound tea culture. At Zhuxi Garden, they learned about the life and global influence of China's famous Neo-Confucian master, Zhu Xi. Teruyuki Kubo, Associate Professor of Yokohama College of Commerce, remarked, "For Asian nations like Japan and Korea, there is still much to be unveiled about Zhu Xi's philosophy. And it requires sustained efforts to promote it to the West." Maratbek Abdykulov, Head of Department of Osh State University, Kyrgyzstan, captured the beauty of Tianyou Peak with his phone, exclaiming, "This is my first time here in Nanping. The natural and cultural charm is utterly different from my country—it's amazing!"

In Fuzhou:

The delegation visited the China Maritime Museum, Kuliang Mountain and Sanfang Qixiang (Three Lanes and Seven Alleys). At Kuliang, they explored historic sites tied to Fuzhou's "Kuliang Stories". In Sanfang Qixiang, they delved into China's modern history and intangible cultural heritage. Danish sinologist Carsten Boyer Thøgersen praised the maritime culture's emphasis on "self-reliance and openness," stating, "China's cultural depth is its secret weapon. Through our efforts, more foreigners will discover and love this captivating nation."

In Xiamen:

The delegation engaged in academic exchanges with Xiamen University and visited Yundang Lake, witnessing the city's ecological restoration efforts under the guidance of President Xi Jinping's "Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" philosophy. Bai Zhimin, Associate Professor of University of La Rochelle, France, compared the city of Xiamen to La Rochelle, expressing eagerness to foster partnerships between universities. "Both are vibrant port cities with prestigious universities—I'd love to help bridge deeper collaboration between the two universities."

In Zhangzhou:

The delegation of sinologists explored attractions such as Yunshuiyao in Nanjing County, Tianluokeng, and Yuchang Building. Surrounded by mountains, the sinologists admired the Tianluokeng Tulou Cluster, experienced the "Five Blessings of Nanjing" rubbing craft, watched Kung Fu tea ceremony performance, and were briefed by heritage conservation experts from Nanjing County on their efforts in protecting and inheriting cultural heritage, as well as cases of revitalizing Tulou Cluster. They deeply appreciated the unique charm of Fujian's intangible cultural heritage and ancient World Heritage architecture.

Melaku Mulualem Kelemework, Director General of Ethiopia's Institute of Strategic Affairs remarked, "What struck me most during this visit is the local culture of openness and pragmatism, which helps explain why Fujian has achieved such remarkable success in advancing Chinese modernisation. In recent years, through the joint construction of the BRI, Ethiopia's infrastructure has been significant improved, fully reflecting the pragmatic and mutually beneficial nature of Africa-China and Ethiopia-China cooperation."

Remarks in Parallel Sessions (Excerpt)

Parallel Session I
Perspective of Sinologists: Chinese Modernisation Underpinned by Chinese Civilisation

Jibladze Marine, Director of Confucius Institute and Professor of the Free University of Tbilisi, Georgia:

My topic today is, "Understanding Chinese Cultural Roots to Interpret Contemporary China".

The society never ceases to amaze us with the diversity of its cultures. Apart from exploring common ground, we also need to find out and understand the differences among us.

Firstly, it is essential to gain a better understanding about the uniqueness of Asian and Far East countries, especially China, compared to the rest of the world. Till now, there are still some people holding serious misunderstandings about China and the Chinese people, which would definitely hinder the relationship between China and the world.

The development of Sinology contributes to mutual understanding and promotes global peace and development. Sinologists serve as a bridge connecting people across various fields. Through research, translation and teaching efforts, the Sinology community can deepen the understanding of diplomats and general public regarding China, promote friendly exchanges among countries, and encourage people to pay attention to and learn about the diligence, wisdom and skills of the Chinese people.

Secondly, it is also necessary to introduce the "Great Unity", which has been adopted as a national ideology by China since ancient times. With its vast territory and large population, China has undergone repeated ethnic and cultural integrations throughout history, gradually coalescing into a pluralistic yet unified Chinese nation. This helps the world understand the Chinese attitude toward material and moral civilisation. Mencius said, "For humans, having food, clothing and shelter without education is akin to being beasts." The pursuit of both material and spiritual fulfillment is deeply ingrained in the unique and profound genetic code of traditional Chinese culture. From this, we can see the great importance attached by China to education and culture.

Confucian philosophical thoughts such as "harmony", "benevolence" and "propriety" are integrated in the contemporary Chinese diplomacy featuring “peaceful coexistence”, “international cooperation” and “mutual respect”. These expressions are cited and interpreted in many ways on different occasions.

Based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, the People’s Republic of China, after its founding, established formal diplomatic relations with most countries globally within a short period of time and actively developed cooperative partnerships on equal and mutually beneficial terms. Guided by the philosophy of good neighbourliness, China’s foreign policy has achieved remarkable success in fostering relations with neighbouring countries. The cornerstone of China’s international relations lies in strengthening cooperation with all nations, regardless of size, strength or wealth.

Sinologists play a crucial role in promoting friendly exchanges and collaboration between nations. Only by understanding its cultural roots can the world interpret contemporary China.

Thank you very much!

Ngo Bayiha Jeanne Berthe, Chief Inspector of Chinese Language Teaching, Ministry of Secondary Education, Cameroon:

My topic today is the same as the Parallel Session, that is, Perspective of Sinologists: Chinese Modernisation Underpinned by Chinese Civilisation.

I. Definition of Civilisation

According to Wikipedia, civilisation (originated from the Latin word “civilis”, meaning "urbanised" and "citizen-oriented," extended to "division of labour" and "cooperation") refers to a complex society characterised by large urban communities, social stratification, governance structures, and cultural symbols/communication systems (e.g., characters, literary works). It represents an advanced state of social and cultural development and the development process, encompassing national identity, technological and cultural levels, ethical norms, religious thought, customs, and scientific development, etc.

II. What Are the Differences between Culture and Civilisation?

Culture reflects the diversity among peoples, while civilisation embodies their commonalities. Culture encompasses all human activities, processes and outcomes, be it essence or dreg. Civilisation, however, is relevant to subjective values, representing the positive and beneficial achievements of culture. Thus, it is inherently a positive concept.

III. How Does the Chinese Civilisation Underpin Its Development?

Chinese civilisation is unique featuring its repetitious cycles of wars and peace, territorial shifts, division and unification under different rulers through various dynasties.

Speaking of philosophy, China is the birthplace of Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism and other schools that profoundly influenced culture, governance and daily life.

Technology and inventions-wise, ancient Chinese innovations like gunpowder, paper, printing, the compass, silk and porcelain are of great influence globally, contributing to the acceleration of global civilisation process.

Geographically, as the world's third-largest country, China spans over 5,200 km east to west, featuring diverse landscapes.

In terms of culture, the traditional Chinese culture encompasses religion, martial arts, literature, music, gardens and games, etc. Religion, in particular, blending lifestyle, folk beliefs, philosophy and spiritual movements, remains integral to the life of the Chinese people.

IV. Perspective of Sinologists: Chinese Modernisation Underpinned by Chinese Civilisation

Knowing and experiencing China is a top priority for us sinologists. As a Cameroonian sinologist, I know that the experience of modern China is rooted in its culture. Being open to the world while rooted in one's own culture is a very economical development strategy that prevents disorientation. Modernisation should not lead to the loss of traditions, but rather become a means of the survival and preservation of traditions. In moving towards development, we should be friends with those who help us to keep ourselves different from them as a particular entity. Accepting our differences, respecting our particularities and accepting those differences is shrouded in a constructive cohesion that keeps us away from alienation and makes us strong.

Precisely for this reason, I would like to end my remarks with a quote from Berthold F. Hoselitz, "A culture is conducive to economic development firstly and condusive to the creation of political and social institutions that encourage high-level social mobility if it is able to disseminate technological progress and innovation."

Thank you!

Chandra Setiawan, Professor of President University, Indonesia:

The topic of my speech today is the same as that of this Parallel Session, that is, Perspective of Sinologists: Chinese Modernisation Underpinned by Chinese Civilisation.

Today I will present manifestations of Chinese cultural influences within Indonesia's diverse ethnic contexts. My report mainly covers the following aspects.

Firstly, the historical presence of Chinese culture in Indonesia.

The history of Chinese migration to Indonesia dates back to centuries ago. Understanding this period of history is crucial for grasping the cultural exchanges between China and Indonesia. Chinese migration has become a significant phenomenon in Indonesian history, particularly since the 17th century when increasing numbers of Chinese from Fujian and Guangdong provinces came to Indonesia seeking new economic opportunities and reuniting with family members already settled there. The integration of traditional Chinese culture with local Indonesian culture can be observed in various aspects of life, including festivals and religious practices.

For instance, Zheng He visited Indonesia multiple times, each time leading hundreds of crew members. We even have a Zheng He monument in Indonesia. Many Chinese Indonesians practice religions such as Buddhism, Taoism or others, which have influenced Indonesia's religious landscape. The Chinese-Indonesian community plays a vital role in Indonesia's economic structure, often engaging in trade and commerce-related work while also facilitating Chinese investment and

trade.

The Chinese-Indonesian community frequently faces complex identity issues. For instance, they need to balance their traditional cultural characteristics with Indonesian national identity, particularly given historical tensions between the two. Meanwhile, they also express their cultural identity through modern approaches. The Indonesian government's policies towards the Chinese community have influenced how Chinese culture integrates into the national narrative. In recent years, rapidly warming China-Indonesia relations have fostered broader cultural exchanges that impact both countries' modernisation processes. For example, the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Rail, Indonesia's first high-speed railway, has addressed many local transportation issues. Additionally, over 2 million Chinese tourists visit Indonesia annually, while more than 800,000 Indonesians travel to China. Leaders of both countries have signed cooperation agreements, committing to establishing equal and mutually beneficial bilateral relations.

And about Chinese festivals in Indonesia. Observing how Chinese New Year and other traditional festivals are celebrated in Indonesia reveals how these customs have become integrated into local culture. The Chinese Lunar New Year has become a national holiday in Indonesia. For instance, the Chinese lunar year 2024 corresponds to 2575 in the Indonesian calendar system, and we designate this festival as an official public holiday.

I would like to address how Confucian ethics influence the economic interests for Chinese entrepreneurs, including important values like benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and trustworthiness as well as the concept of yin-yang. Through these Confucian values, we can better understand their impact on business strategies. This case study illustrates the complex interaction between Chinese cultural heritage and Indonesia's modernisation process, highlighting the resilience of cultural identity, particularly against the backdrop of globalisation and enduring historical legacies. The Chinese Indonesian community has played a crucial role in shaping Indonesia's national identity.

Therefore, strengthening bilateral exchanges can better preserve traditional Chinese culture in Indonesia, including language, arts and customs, thereby promoting mutual understanding, respect, and enhancing social cohesion. Chinese investments in Indonesia will boost Indonesia's economic development, subsequently facilitating cultural exchanges and collaborations in arts education.

Thank you!

Parallel Session II
Reflection of Sinologists: Chinese Civilisation Reinvigorated by Chinese Modernisation

Matej Zima, Head of Secretariat at Sinološko Društvo Yuan, Slovenia:

Nowadays, we have heard more and more stories about the rapid progress and development of China. At the start of this century, when I first embarked on this academic journey, my aspiration was to become a western sinologist. Back then, modernisation was a topic we discussed frequently, both in our study and in our life. Although I am majored in sinology, I am not going to focus on academic discussion today. Let me get straight to share my personal experiences in China.

My first visits to China were in 2005 and 2006, about two decades ago. What struck me most upon arrival was the stark contrast I observed. I felt the Taiwan region was more developed. I still remember complaining about air pollution to a European colleague who was studying philosophy in Nanjing University at that time. He suggested we look into this issue from the historic perspective. He pointed out that during the Industrial Revolution, the European capitalists probably caused more pollution. From the works by Marx and Engels, he noted that the working class in the 19th century endured far worse conditions than what China was experiencing then. He believed that the situation in China would improve with regard to its size and volume and the strategic planning of its leaders.

Although I was initially doubtful about his opinion, my 20-year experience in China revealed that his only mistake was having underestimated the timeline of China's changes. Today, China has paid more attention to residents' quality of life while addressing previously neglected social issues such as health care, tourism, leisure, green energy, environmental protection, etc. China has evolved beyond a modern global manufacturing hub. It has become a sought-after destination for international friends to visit and even establish their careers.

Looking into the future, I believe China will make more astonishing achievements. China has risen to prominence on the global stage in just two decades, which is a fact that even the most developed western countries cannot overlook.

Last but not the least, back to the academic field of sinology and China studies, which has also witnessed rapid development. From the

perspective of classical philological methods established by previous sinologists, the gap between the developed North, West and the developing South, East shall be bridged by scholars of the next generation. The modernisation of China demands not only its own development, but also that of other countries especially those from the Global South. Meanwhile, an increasing number of people in Europe and North America have distanced themselves from globalisation, which in their minds is not in line with their endangered interest, while China has already charted a development path that benefits all.

After immersing myself in China's 5000 years of cultural heritage and experiencing contemporary China during my study and work, I believe sinologists and Chinese experts are capable of serving as a bridge between Chinese civilisation and other civilisations. Every one of us is qualified to share our views and tell the story of rapid and peaceful development of China. In today's complex international landscape, it is more than ever relevant to reveal the real China and support the narrative with your own experience.

Due to the time limit, I did not fully articulate my opinions on how sinologists shall facilitate this process. However, I believe this forum will provide both structured and informal opportunities for us to make greater contribution in the future.

Thank you!

Abbas Jawad Kdaimy, Iraqi Expert with the University of International Business and Economics:

This is my second time to participate in this conference. It is rich in content, of great vitality, contains precious and strong vision. I'd like to wish all of you great and continuous advancement in your research and studies.

The world today is undergoing profound changes, with a series of challenges for human beings. Against such a backdrop, this year's gathering is more significant since it helps enhance mutual learning, establish closer contact and deepen mutual understanding and friendship. Language serves as a key for mutual learning. It is of no doubt that a stronger bond will be forged among peoples from all over the world when the Chinese language, the history and contribution of the Chinese civilisation are integrated with the achievements of global civilisations. Our visions for the future of the world will share more in common.

My work and life experience in China have granted me profound insights into this ancient nation's literary heritage, culture and civilisation. The more I understand its culture, the more my affection for it grows. I could not wait to share with those dedicated to fostering friendship among peoples of the world. Decades of working experience as a translator, and a witness to Chinese companies' active participation in Arab book fairs, have reinforced my conviction that mastering foreign languages will greatly foster friendship, enhance mutual understanding and build broad consensus. For example, the translated Chinese literary works has gained great popularity in Arab countries and received warm responses from readers. It showcases their eagerness to further understand the Chinese people and learn the Chinese language, its cultural heritage and development.

China's development is a miracle in human history. I'm honoured and passionate, eager to contribute to a stronger bond and more comprehensive understanding between Arab and Chinese

communities through my endeavours. Over the past 30 years, we have witnessed a remarkable surge in translated and published Chinese works globally, with an increasing number of Confucius Institutes worldwide including Arab countries. Last week, I was impressed by a video online showing a group of Arab girls speaking fluent Chinese. Our gathering today has highlighted the diversity of global languages, culture and civilisations. Thanks to that, human civilisations are endowed with diverse contents and vitality through exchanges. Our meeting today has strengthened my conviction that cooperation and innovation is needed more than ever. We shall transform the Chinese language, culture and civilisation into bridges connecting world civilisations, through which we remain united and stride for a brighter future.

I wish to conclude my speech by quoting Chinese President Xi Jinping, "A single flower will not make a spring, while hundreds of flowers in full blossom bring spring to the garden." Your presence today embodies both the diversity and generosity of the spirit, and further proved that the world will fall into dullness and despair if there's only one single flower. The Chinese language, cultural heritage, civilisation as well as that of other nations are invaluable treasures of mankind. Let us work together to cherish and safeguard these gifts together.

Thank you!

Gustavo Alejandro Girado, Professor of the National University of Lanús and Professor of the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina:

Although many people may have limited understanding about China, the gap in comprehension has not checked the growing prominence of China on the global stage. As a matter of fact, China has profound impact on our daily life. The pace of China's development is not hindered even when the policy makers have little or even no knowledge of China. What I wish to emphasise is that, the decision makers along with those who know little about China are equally important in our daily life.

There exists another group of people: the broad working class who toil and moil every day. They may not have enough resource or time to further understand China, as China seems distant in their daily lives. However, their life is still affected by this giant economy. As China has such a huge impact on so many people's life, it signifies that the interest, value, norms and related standards will all have severe impacts on people's life worldwide.

Among those who shape our lives, policy makers undoubtedly hold pivotal positions. At the same time, the study of China has equally important implications for us. In this process, universities emerge as indispensable pillars. Located everywhere in the world, universities are not only symbols of social progress, but also representation of social capability. It bears the hope of many families, who have pinned high expectations on their children. Universities serve as launch pads for dreams. Whether personal dreams or the aspiration of mankind for a brighter future, all can be achieved here.

In my country, universities are considered an important factor measuring social development. Indeed, not everyone attends university. But if a nation is willing to invest in education, it can chart its own destiny more independently without excessive reliance on other countries. Countries with heavy investment in education will far more

likely have a brighter future. Driven by the goal of enhancing mutual understanding among people, universities play a pivotal role.

Universities must fulfil a vital role. As I just mentioned, they are beacons of hope for many families and the dreamland for many people. Meanwhile, they are also cradles for leaders. Therefore, whether the policy makers or people with ordinary background, they all get the opportunity to make their dreams come true in universities.

Another important function of universities is translation. Why is that? The integration and mutual learning among various culture and civilisations is much needed nowadays, the decoding of different civilisations and the exploration of the unknown areas are therefore a necessary path to achieve this goal. Universities serve as pivotal institutions for this process. Universities exist in China and beyond, in areas where China seeks to understand and where communities don't understand China and aspire to learn about it. Nations can enhance mutual understanding in universities. In China, universities help students understand the world and abroad, they enable foreign students to understand China. Based on my experience of studying and working in Western Universities, I discovered that the West emphasises on training students to understand the world. Take sinology as an example, understanding China help facilitate their academic work so as to uncover the world especially the unfamiliar areas like China. It benefits both the leaders and people. That's why both leaders and ordinary people need universities regardless of political fluctuations or transformation. Universities nurture future talents in the long run, and they help the West to enhance the connection with and the understanding of China.

Our mission is to facilitate people's understanding of China in universities. It begins with promoting the studies of China and developing related academic events in universities. We should attract more students to join the programmes and make sure they can finish the programmmes with comprehensive understanding of China. If our academic study is not focused on a certain area, the students are likely to get disoriented. Today, many university graduates are working in municipal, provincial and national institutions, where they play a vital role to enhance our understanding of China and strengthen cooperation with the nation.

In this process, it is urgently needed to enhance cooperation and coordination among different countries and in the meanwhile improve our representation in cultural aspects. We are also dedicated to the exploration of a greater role that sinologists can play in promoting Chinese culture. Today's conference is a great platform. However, from our point of view, the promotion of Chinese culture is not only the job of sinologists. We have already spent years studying and learning about China, and we must also expand the understanding of other institutions to enhance cooperation. These institutions boast rich resources and will help us deepen our understanding of China. Many experts in universities can facilitate this process, as universities serve as hubs of knowledge. For example, Latin American universities are home to numerous academic institutions focused on China studies, offering degree courses as well as short-term courses and seminars. Specialised professors and researchers can contribute to advancing these programmes to a wider scope. This not only presents us with opportunities to enhance mutual understanding, but also enables participants

to expand the boundaries of their knowledge. Simultaneously, leaders of universities shall implement policies so as to encourage broader participation. We shall forge a win-win model that benefits all. Besides, other groups such as parents of students may perceive China as somewhere distant or inaccessible. Through the participation in our events in the university, they get to know the Chinese culture. This is how we enhance the understanding of China and bring benefits to more people.

In conclusion, those who understand China shall express gratitude to China as well as the institutions and individuals who are dedicated to China studies. Those who understand China will explain China's situation, and those who know little about China will gradually deepen their understanding because of the more affordable and high-quality products and services provided by China. Those who understand China well can help promote Chinese products and tell its stories. Racism will thus recede along with growing mutual understanding.

Thank you.

Parallel Session III
Wisdom of Sinologists: Integrating World Civilisations along the Path to Modernisation

Melaku Mulualem Kelemework, Director General of Ethiopia's Institute of Strategic Affairs:

Today, I'd like to talk about China's modernisation and how the Global Civilisation Initiative builds bridges among civilisations and promotes the progress of world modernisation.

In the long history, there have emerged many ancient civilisations including China, Greece, Egypt, Rome, Persia and Ethiopia. Since the 18th century, modernisation has been gradually developing around the world. It is commonly recognised that civilisations came into being before modernisation. Civlisations can exist without modernisation. But modernisation won't be possible if not based on civilisations. The comprehensive transformation of modernisation involves not only culture, but also many other key areas. China's modernisation is not limited to economic development. Rather, it is also dedicated to improving the living standard of the Chinese people. This is no doubt exciting good news. China has cleverly integrated traditional knowledge in the process of promoting modernisation, manifesting its unique wisdom. Although influenced by Western countries in certain aspects, modernisation is not equal to Westernisation. We are not from the West, and cannot blindly imitate the Western mode. During the colonial period, Western powers plundered resource-rich regions such as Africa in the name of civilising the barbarians. They mistakenly believed that there should be just one type of civilisation and only the Western one is recommendable. However, modernisation won't be possible by simply copying the West. We should choose its path according to our own national realities and cultural background. In this aspect, China has set an excellent example by displaying how to achieve modernisation while preserving its own cultural features.

When comparing the modernisation of the West with that of China, we can see the distinctiveness of Chinese modernisation. What are the special features of Chinese modernisation compared with other countries? First, Chinese modernisation is led by the Communist Party of China. It's not limited to a certain field, but has a comprehensive layout. Second, unlike the Western path to modernisation, Chinese modernisation is by no means simply

copying models of other countries, but based on its national realities and more suitable for its conditions. Third, Chinese modernisation is one that pursues peaceful development. Once suffering from colonisation, China is determined to take the path of peaceful development. Fourth, Chinese modernisation is focused not only on urban areas, but also on rural areas, which makes it different from others. Fifth, Chinese modernisation is also the modernisation of harmony between humanity and nature. Nature is vital to other areas of modernisation. Sixth, Chinese modernisation not only pursues the accumulation of wealth, but also lays importance on spiritual enrichment, another integral part of Chinese modernisation. Seventh, the aim of Chinese modernisation is to promote the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and to realise the Chinese dream. Eighth, given China's long history and rich civilisation, China's path to modernisation has a historical foundation for 5000 years. Ninth, Chinese modernisation also has a very clear timeline. China has set up its goal of basically realising socialist modernisation from 2020 to 2035, which is another prominent feature of it.

China is ready to share its experience of modernisation with other developing countries. One piece of the valuable experience we have learnt from China is that to eliminate absolute poverty and promote the development of humanity is the premise for one country to achieve comprehensive modernisation. Another piece is that modernisation won't be possible if we simply copy and paste other countries' development experience. We have to combine that with our actual situation and make adjustments accordingly, so as to display the special features of our own.

We have realised that modernisation faces challenges in many aspects including sluggish economy, draining resources and loss of jobs. President Xi Jinping also emphasised these challenges and pointed out that we should foresee and tackle them in time. To realise modernisation, China established different mechanisms to ensure the smooth progress of Chinese modernisation. Chinese modernisation not only promotes the development of China itself, but also provides strong support for the modernisation of other countries. For example, China supports the development of developing countries like Ethiopia through technology transfer. With China's support, Ethiopia successfully launched a satellite into the space for the first time in its history. Meanwhile, the Belt and Road Initiative proposed by China also helps Ethiopia connect with Djibouti through railways and completed many other infrastructure construction projects under the BRI. Apart from that, China also put forward the Global Development Initiative and the Global Civilisation Initiative, which both aim to share the benefit of Chinese modernisation with other countries. These initiatives not only promote economic cooperation, but also enhance exchanges and dialogues among civilisations.

The 2024 Beijing Summit of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation set up the clear goal of helping African countries achieve modernisation together with China. To advance modernisation in different countries, we can use different methods to connect their civlisations. That includes carrying out exchanges and strengthening dialogues among civilisations, promoting the harmonious coexistence among different countries, appreciating the diversity of culture and nations, sharing experiences and so on. For example, we can encourage different civilisations to respect each other, find common needs and achieve mutual

benefits and win-win results. These mechanisms can effectively enhance mutual exchanges and understanding among civilisations and contribute to the advancement of global modernisation.

To conclude, the Global Civilisation Initiative is a significant bridge connecting different civilisations. Ethiopia is dedicated to promoting the diversity of civilisations and mutual respect with other civilisations. The proposal of the Global Civilisation Initiative and China's successful mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia are perfect examples of exchanges among civilisations. In a word, there is no unified civilisation in the world. Instead, there are many different civilisations and they are all equal. Clashes exist due to interest rather than civlisations. The clashes among civilisations that the Western countries claim to exist are actually clashes among interests. Therefore, researches on civilisations should be prioritised to push forward modernisation in the future. In this field, sinologists play a pivotal role. Chinese modernisation serves as a benchmark, especially for developed countries and the Global South. Let us commit ourselves to enhancing mutual learning among different civilisations, upholding the basic principles of modernisation, joining hands on the path towards modernisation and contributing to the common development and prosperity across the world.

Thank you!

Samah Abdelkader, Professor of the University of Carthage, Tunisia:

The topic of my speech is: Sinologists are the Envoys of Cultural Exchanges and Mutual Learning among Civilisations. The diversity of world civilisations and connection among them are of profound significance to promote exchanges and mutual learning among world civilisations and to push forward modernisation progress. Chinese civilisation boasts a long history and continues to enrich itself and develop in the exchanges and mutual learning with other civilisations. Chinese modernisation contains rich cultural heritage. Since ancient times, China has been dedicated to enhancing the exchanges and mutual understanding with other cultures and widely conducting cultural communication and integration.

North Africa is an integral part of the Belt and Road Initiative, which indeed facilitates in-depth cooperation between China and North African countries in various fields. As ancient civilisations, both Tunisia and China have carried out close, friendly and practical cooperation ever since we established diplomatic relations in 1964. The relations between the two countries have made substantial progress in different areas. The year 2024 witnesses the 60th anniversary of the founding of diplomatic relationship between Tunisia and China. This important milestone testifies the deep foundation and sustained development of our bilateral relations. In recent years, China has been focusing on enhancing cooperation with African countries in different areas. Although Tunisia, a participating country of the BRI, is far away from China, our bilateral relations are getting closer with the completion of cooperation projects in many fields.

For a long time, Tunisia and China have kept close exchanges and cooperation in such fields as economy, trade, culture, education and public health. Our cooperation has not only boosted the economic prosperity of our two countries, but also deepened the friendship and understanding between our two peoples. With the strong support and concerted efforts of relevant government

departments of the two countries, the mutual learning of civilisations and cultural exchanges between the two sides has been strengthened consecutively and achieved fruitful results. These achievements are closely related to the hard work of Tunisian sinologists. As messengers of the integration of Chinese civilisation and civilisations of other countries, sinologists from various countries have made increasing positive efforts to promote cultural communication between China and other countries, enhance mutual understanding, and promote beneficial cooperation. They have actively devoted themselves to theoretical research, depicting China's prosperity and development from multiple perspectives, and disseminating China's development concepts and experiences. Tunisian sinologists have used the language and knowledge they have learned to deepen mutual understanding between the two peoples and have achieved important research results. In local educational institutions, sinologists continue to promote cultural exchanges between the Chinese and Tunisian peoples through academic research, cultural activities and translation of Chinese works.

As a Tunisian sinologist and translator, I have a deep bond with China. Over the years, I have been studying the Chinese language, translating Chinese books and works, and participating in various Chinese academic conferences, through which I have become more and more fascinated with the unique charm of the Chinese culture. I believe that books can help people understand the Chinese culture and strengthen exchanges between our two peoples. Therefore, I try to promote Chinese books and Chinese culture in Tunisia through my own actions. The Chinese people have many interesting sayings, such as strict self-discipline, which are very worthy of our study. These ideas have opened my horizon as a sinologist and have continuously enriched my understanding of China. I believe that I have the responsibility to share China's fine traditions with my compatriots in the motherland.

Tunisian sinologists and translators have been committed to translating and introducing Chinese books in various fields. Through translating books and organising relevant activities, they show the charm of China to Tunisian locals, helping them better understand China, and providing them with a broad platform to know and understand China's history, society and contemporary life.

In his congratulatory letter to the World Conference on China Studies-Shanghai Forum sent on November 24, 2023, President Xi Jinping expressed his hope that experts and scholars from various countries would act as messengers connecting Chinese and other civilisations, uphold inclusiveness and openness, continuously promote China studies worldwide, foster mutual exchanges of civilisations, and inject intellectual and cultural strength into the flourishing garden of world civilisations. As messengers connecting Chinese and other civilisations, sinologists should also help the world gain a deeper understanding of China both in history and today.

Let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority. This will encourage countries around the world, on the basis of respecting each other, to champion the common values of humanity and unite the strength of civilisations to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

Thank you!

Pham Khánh Linh, Vietnamese Expert from Beijing Foreign Studies University:

Today, I'd like to share some stories from a temporal perspective or a more microscopic perspective. Through these stories, I hope we can together understand the importance of language in cross-cultural and cross-field communication, so as to better comprehend the theme of this conference.

In an era of globalisation and integration of diversified cultures, language is not only a tool of communication, but also a way to understand the world. I have been thinking about what language learning brings to us. Language is inseparable from history. The Chinese language records the development of Chinese culture for thousands of years, and connects the economic, cultural and academic resources worldwide in the contemporary world.

Just like "harmony in diversity", a Chinese idiom that impressed me at the Opening Ceremony this morning, learning a foreign language allows me to see how diverse cultures establish deep connection and bring about new opportunities and endless possibilities. When I chose to learn Chinese at the age of 18, I never expected this language would bring so many opportunities to my life. Today, I want to share how I felt my way forward. Before I was 18, I was actually quite confused because my family members were all engineers and no one took language as a major. Yet I had no interest in science and technology subjects. I chose the Chinese language as my major simply because I was curious about this mysterious language. And the required score for it was relatively high, so it was quite challenging. However, after I started my study, I surprisingly won the second prize in the Chinese Bridge- Chinese Proficiency Competition in Northern Vietnam. Through this fulfillment, I felt the confidence this major has brought me for the first time, which strengthened my determination to move forward. After that, I was honuored to be sent by the school to participate in the China-Vietnam Youth Gala on the 60th and 62nd anniversaries of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Vietnam. During the second time, I was so proud of joining the reception group for President Xi Jinping. These opportunities allowed me to feel the profound connection between our two countries. Furthermore, they made me be aware that as a Chinese language learner, I also shoulder the responsibility of cross-cultural exchanges.

The first time I stepped on the land of China was in 2010. The wonderful scene of mountains and rivers in Guangxi and river snail rice noodle without river snails are still vivid in my mind up till now. After that, I was admitted to Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU) to pursue my master's degree, where I met friends from all over the world. There, I not only focused on learning the Chinese language, but also attended crosstalk lessons taught by Master Ding Guangquan where I experienced the humour in Chinese expressions and cultural differences. At the same time, I also took part in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei International College Students Debate Contest and the "Star of Chinese Language" competition on behalf of BLCU and won the first prize in both contests. These experiences helped me build up confidence in cross-cultural exchanges step by step. Therefore, learning the Chinese language has gradually become a bridge for me to understand and appreciate the Chinese culture. It has also allowed me to grow from a confused young woman to a cross-cultural communicator, thus opening up

unlimited possibilities.

These possibilities and opportunities continue after my graduation from school. They followed me into my career. I used to work in ICBC Hanoi Branch for 6 years. I also served as a bilingual host of both Vietnamese and Chinese in the opening ceremony of ICBC Ho Chi Minh City Representative Office. This allowed me to be exposed to professional financial knowledge and relevant work. From this, I saw the unique advantage of combining language and professional skills in an increasingly intertwined world economy. Besides, I also participated in an English-to-Chinese translation programme of the book *The Essentials of Financial Compliance,* which was a very precious experience. My biggest surprise in learning the Chinese language is that I met a special friend from Portugal in BLCU. We were competitors on the stage, then friends, and now husband and wife. The Chinese language was the matchmaker that brought together the two of us from different cultural backgrounds and helps our relationship grow deeper and deeper. Even now, Chinese is the language we use the most in our daily communication. Today, I'm more than a language learner. I've become a language teacher. When I teach in Beijing Foreign Studies University, I often lead the students to explore and understand the culture, history and meaning in the contemporary world behind languages. I hope they can also find their unique experience in learning a foreign language. Similarly in translation lessons, I teach them theories and practices. But more importantly, I ask them to go beyond the literal meaning and understand the cultural connotation and how to use technical terms in different occasions. Only when they truly understand, can they deliver an accurate translation.

Speaking of Vietnam and China, we are linked by mountains and rivers and boast a lasting friendship. In recent years, our two countries are deepening cooperation in multiple fields including export of agricultural products and China-Vietnam Railways, tapping the great potential of economic development for both sides. In this way towards modernisation and full of opportunities, the Chinese language is a part of self-actualisation for me and many people from Vietnam and other countries who learn the Chinese language. It makes us a part of cross-cultural communication.

To sum up, language is a bridge of communication, a key to understand the world, and a window towards another culture. The Chinese language brought me from a tiny starting point to a much broader platform, showing me the endless possibilities cross-cultural communication can bring about. In the future, I will continue to do my best to promote cultural exchanges. I look forward to seeing more and more young people join us to create a brighter future with language and culture.

Thank you!

Remarks in Academic Sessions of Beijing Forum (Excerpt)

Respecting Differences and Pursuing Transcendence: Léon Vandermeersch's Characters-Oriented Cross-Cultural China Studies

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It is a great honour to participate in this forum and share my research. The title of my presentation is *Respecting Differences and Pursuing Transcendence: Léon Vandermeersch's Characters-Oriented Cross-Cultural China Studies.* The Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy and China Reading Weekly jointly launched the selection of "Top 10 Hot Topics in Humanities Research in China in 2018 ". The 5th among the top 10 stated that "the passing of eminent sinologists including Jao Tsung-i and Jacques Gernet resulted in the gradual fading of the Continental European Sinology traditions". Later, I had the favour to talk about this topic with an editor from the *Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy,* who argued that the fading of traditions should at least be postponed to 2021, after the demise of Léon Vandermeersch. His view shows exceptionally high praise for the achievements of Léon Vandermeersch in Sinology.

At the same time, through discussions with relevant scholars, we unanimously agreed that European Sinology has an extremely long-standing tradition and its distinctive internal theories also contain infinite vitality and energy. Europe in the 20th century was home to remarkable sinologists, who are still not yet fully explored. We firmly believe that with the development of academic research and further exchanges among scholars from different countries, these European sinologists' values will be then recognised and clarified. Next, let us move to the focus of today's discussion, which is divided into the following 4 sections.

I. Introduction

After the passing of Léon Vandermeersch, Professor Michel Espagne, who majored in cross-cultural studies at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, France, expressed profound sorrow, saying "French Sinology has lost a master, which is true in every sense". In 2018, during his first state visit to China, French President Macron notably mentioned in his speech in Xi'an that, from Édouard Chavannes to Léon Vandermeersch, from Marcel Granet to Francois Jullien, from Henry Maspero to Anne Cheng, generations of eminent sinologists in French Sinology school have all

been tirelessly working to decipher the broad and profound Chinese thought. These statements all demonstrate the vital contributions of Mr. Léon Vandermeersch to the research of Sinology.

From the spatial horizontal perspective, Léon Vandermeersch's Sinology research has not only inherited the research traditions of his own country, but also integrated and absorbed the research achievements and intellectual resources of Japanese Sinology, Vietnamese Sinology and Chinese traditional studies, ultimately forming a unique framework for cross-cultural China Studies.

From the historical vertical perspective, Léon Vandermeersch's Sinology research has not only inherited the orthodox branch of French Sinology from Édouard Chavannes to Paul Demiéville, based on Textology and Linguistics, and adhered to the traditions of historical Chinese studies, but also achieved overall transcendence and systematic integration on this basis, promoting further development of French Sinology.

Domestic research and discussions on Léon Vandermeersch's research achievements are still far from sufficient. Mr. Léon Vandermeersch's works are abundant and fruitful, involving multiple fields such as Chinese Palaeography, Confucianism, Legalism, ancient Chinese political system, Chinese literature and Chinese ideology and culture.

II. Chapter One

The Logical Turn: A Difference-Oriented Cross-Cultural Research Paradigm

In Léon Vandermeersch's construction of cross-cultural China Studies system, there is a fundamental research tendency that cannot be neglected, which is his academic turn from Western-subject-centric logic to Chinese-ontology-centric logic. Such academic turn embodies Léon Vandermeersch's difference-oriented research attitude.

When encountering "Other" cultures, conducting research from the cultural dissimilarities or from the shared cultural backgrounds and emotional experiences represents two completely different research orientations, which once ignited intense debates within European Sinology field, notably represented by Jean François Billeter and François Jullien.

The choice between difference-orientation and commonality-orientation constitutes a prerequisite presupposition that cannot be neglected for the effective practice of cross-cultural research. The perspectives and positions on this issue will affect the basic attitude in cross-cultural research, as well as the methodology and boundary of implementation in conducting such research. In this debate, Léon Vandermeersch unequivocally supports François Jullien's stance. In his own works, he repeatedly emphasises, "Chinese culture and Western culture are, fundamentally, different cultures. The approach to analyse one phenomenon cannot be applied to analyse the other." He also thinks that "the approach to understand culture from the commonalities of all cultures stems completely from wrong inferences" and cannot serve as the foundation of research.

In his research, Léon Vandermeersch consistently adhered to and implemented the difference-oriented research paradigm, and repeatedly emphasised the necessity to "recognise Chinese cultural principles through Chinese cultural characteristics", and argued that "to explain the features of Chinese culture, one must apply the

phenomenon provided by Chinese culture itself."

There are three preconditions in Léon Vandermeersch's difference-oriented cross-cultural research.

a. It is definite that the concept of "Heterotopia" proposed by Michel Foucault exists in fields of culture and thoughts, which means space of absolute dissimilarities exist between two or among more cultures.

b. When studying "heterogenous cultures", it is necessary to explain such cultures through their own histories and materials. Only through this approach can research be real and well founded, and achieve validity and rationality.

c. In Léon Vandermeersch's view, the simplistic grafting of theories or parallel transplantation of concepts is oversimplified, crude and impractical. The authentic research of "Other" culture should be conducted based on the historical experiences and academic logic within the culture itself.

To put it briefly, Mr. Léon Vandermeersch advanced the research of Sinology based on his recognition of superficial similarities and substantive differences among cultures.

III. Chapter Two

Primitive Rationality: A Study of Chinese Ideology and Culture Based on Linguistic Philosophy

On the basis of his inheritance of the traditions of French Sinology, and influenced by French Annales School and Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Knowledge, Léon Vandermeersch chose to take his study of Chinese characters as a pivot to promote in-depth exploration of Chinese ideology and culture. Combining his unique research theories, abundant resources of Chinese and Western thoughts and distinctive view on Chinese characters, he developed the study of Chinese ideology and culture based on linguistic philosophy. Léon Vandermeersch began to learn Chinese characters as early as during his middle school years. He showed extraordinary language talent during his teenage years, and learned many languages such as French, Latin, Greek, etc. It was this rich linguistic knowledge accumulated during his middle school that allowed Léon Vandermeersch to perceive the profound differences between Chinese and other languages upon his first encounter with Chinese, which attracted his strong interest, lasting attention and thinking. From 1945 to 1951, Léon Vandermeersch studied philosophy and law at the University of Paris while concurrently learning Chinese and Vietnamese under Paul Demiéville at the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilisations in Paris, France. The combination of philosophy, language and rational training of law propelled him onto the path of linguistic philosophy research.

In 1961, Mr. Léon Vandermeersch systematically studied the Chinese Palaeography under Jao Tsung-I, and became the first scholar in the history of European Sinology to master inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells. It is worth noting that before learning inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells, Léon Vandermeersch had already established a rather rigorous philosophical thinking system. Therefore, rather than directly continuing adopting traditional Chinese research methods such as textual criticism and exegesis, he naturally embarked on the path toward linguistic philosophy. Based on this, he conducted cross-cultural China studies.

The establishment of Mr. Léon Vandermeersch's view on Chinese characters is a fundamental

premise and important basis. There are three features of his view on Chinese characters.

First, he argues that "the most significant phenomenon provided by Chinese culture itself is Chinese characters", thus Chinese characters are important historical materials to understand the development of Chinese thoughts. Second, Léon Vandermeersch believes that the formation of written language is a vital symbol of civilisation, which contains different forms of thinking patterns. Therefore, the formation of Chinese thoughts and society is closely related to written language. Third, Léon Vandermeersch holds the view that Chinese characters are unique compared to other languages in the world. Firstly, unlike Western phonetic writing system, Chinese characters, Sumerian scripts, and ancient Egyptian scripts belong to the category of ideographic writing. Secondly, unlike Sumerian cuneiform and ancient Egyptian script, inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells possess ideographic and oral characteristics, with a unique attribute of written-spoken language independence. Thirdly, Chinese characters are highly systematic and rational.

Chinese characters are the product of rational development, which is core to Léon Vandermeersch's view on Chinese characters. Mr. Léon Vandermeersch believes that prior to inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells, there were no characters in China. In the early stages, the inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells had a complete system because it was not applied as tools for language communication but as scientific tools for Divination, which were the product nurtured by the gradually complete Divination. Divinatory activities evolved through three stages, from turtle-shell divination, complex turtle-shell-cracking techniques to the digitalisation, which cannot be separated from the dominant development of thinking and rationality. Thus, the form of Chinese characters, developed from divinatory activities, also showed high rationality. Based on solid research and inferences, Mr. Léon Vandermeersch thus identified two forms of rationality in Chinese thoughts, namely divinatory rationality and ideographic rationality. Regarding the divinatory rationality, Léon Vandermeersch thinks that, divinatory activities involve specially processing and burning tortoise shells or animal bones to predict certain omens according to the patterns of cracks. Its creation is to symbolise the supernatural operation of things and the super-phenomenal rationality of changes in the universe. As for the ideographic rationality, the ideographic characteristics of Chinese characters show a thinking pattern of the focus and emphasis on the correlation between things.

Therefore, the writing system of Chinese language promoted and shaped the maturity of Chinese thinking development, ultimately forming a "méta-cosmique" that transcends but covers causal relationship.

IV. Chapter Three

Pursuing Transcendence: Exploring the Potential Characteristics of Chinese Culture through Comparative Analysis

Léon Vandermeersch grew up in France and possessed a natural Western way of thinking and structure of knowledge. At the same time, he had also dedicated decades to China studies, inevitably encountering the collision of "heterogenous cultures" in his research. The starting point and foothold of his cross-cultural Chinese studies were based on a cultural perspective of both Chinese and Western directions, which gave him the

opportunity to explore the potential characteristics of Chinese culture through in-depth comparisons.

The perspectives of transcendence and comparison can be found everywhere in Léon Vandermeersch's works, which are also key to his theories. This is most typical in his comparison of Chinese and Western spoken and written languages. I listed the main aspects of Mr. Léon Vandermeersch's comparisons of China and the West as mentioned in this book. Léon Vandermeersch also had a rather concise conclusion that the foundation of Western culture is theology, with Biblical Hermeneutics as its main body, and has developed a metaphysical causal-thinking pattern. In contrast, the foundation of Chinese culture is Divination, with Confucian classics as its main body, and has developed a correlative-thinking pattern of "méta-cosmique" that transcends but covers causal relationship. The following outlines some of its main comparisons.

a. In transcendence and comparison, it is essential to respect the values of each culture, instead of pushing any singular cultural value to extremes or misunderstandings.

b. Given the complexities of cross-cultural research, Léon Vandermeersch advocates exploring the origins of cultures in research to minimise biased misinterpretations.

c. Some cultural phenomena or values are not unique to a single culture, so we must examine the proportion of these values and concepts in each culture, and consider "where the Chinese and Western societies place these values in their respective social constructions and how to evaluate these values".

Léon Vandermeersch believes that the true value of cross-cultural studies lies not in judgments of cultural superiority but rather in discovering the potential characteristics of each culture through comparison, thereby achieving a holistic transcendence of two cognitive systems. To establish an effective space for equal dialogues between China and the West, it is necessary to ensure that both cultures have vibrant vitality and creativity in the meantime. Therefore, Mr. Léon Vandermeersch repeatedly emphasised the necessity of preserving the cultural resources and identity of our country, because only by truly establishing the subjectivity of our culture can we have the ability, the condition, the method to absorb and transform the ideological resources of "Other" culture. Mr. Léon Vandermeersch's China studies never avoid or deny the differences between Chinese and western cultures and problems in cultural exchanges. At the same time, he transcends these differences, continues exploring the universal truths embedded within cultural uniqueness, and deeply probes the shared values behind such universal truths, effectively constructing bridges for dialogues between China and the West.

Starting from the uniqueness of Chinese civilisation, Léon Vandermeersch's China studies focus on the cultural experiences that can be found and learned from two civilisations, ultimately achieving a holistic transcendence from dissimilarity to universality.

Chang Kwang-chih, a renowned archaeologist once said, the development of human history is parallel to the ground, yet there was a sudden vertical upward fracture in the West 400 years ago. When this vertical upward trajectory suddenly returns to the horizontal direction, is the West or the world well prepared? Over the past century, our society has been expanding with a traverse and upward tendency. How can we better confront

the following problems, survival dilemmas and moral crises? The series of problems have deeply sunk into our society in different forms, making philosophical discussions vague and empty. But at the same time, these problems constantly suspended in the air and entangled in various disputes in the ideological field. Transcendence and comparison undoubtedly become the key to break this impasse. However, how to hold genuine and effective cultural dialogue among different cognitive systems and explore the potential characteristics of each culture, and how to establish more objective evaluative criteria and methods to truly discover and transform favourable ideological resources within each culture, are still faced with challenges. Léon Vandermeersch's research practices and innovative achievements have reignited the reality aspects of this problem, offering inspiration and reflection to us.

Léon Vandermeersch once said, "The Western world is getting to know China, but it has yet to recognise the universal significance of uniqueness of Chinese culture." This is also a major topic that we must constantly face.

Thank you!


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