

Cultural Continuity and Transmission: From the Case Study of Innovative Works of the *I Ching* and *Tsao Shu*

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Abstract: Cultural continuity and transmission carried out only through the work of government and schools with the traditional methods is far from sufficient. In the rapidly changing world, the preservation of traditional culture would soon be eliminated and forgotten unless it is transmitted to the ensuing generation with innovative and new ideas. The author of this paper discusses the *I Ching* and the Chinese cursive-style calligraphy, two Chinese national cultural treasures, to provide an example of how to preserve and transmit ancient culture. The author believes that his new and innovative interpretations of the *I Ching* and the cursive calligraphy will be helpful in contributing significantly to the cultural continuity and transmission of ancient culture to the younger generation.

Keywords: *I Ching*, *Tsao Shu*, Yang Yao, Yin Yao, Book of Changes, hexagram, Chinese calligraphy

1. Introduction

I have published two innovative works of *Creative Book of I Ching* (Wang, 2011) and *Creative Collection of Tsao Shu* (Wang, Jian & Lee, 2011) successively in 2010 and 2011, which can be regarded as the originality of the world. Both, the *I Ching* or “Book of Changes” (Karcher, 1997) and *Tsao Shu*, cursive script of Chinese traditional calligraphy, are the important ancestral treasures of traditional Chinese culture. However, if they remain unchanged and no new originality is produced from them, their influence will be declining day by day, particularly for those Chinese young people who are unfamiliar with them. Although the philosophical thinking of *I Ching* and the aesthetics of cursive style of *Tsao Shu* are extremely valuable assets to humanity, a remote distance of space-time has sometimes disconnected modern people’s access to them. It is a pity that modern people missed the opportunity to benefit from them.

2. The *I Ching*

2.1. Traditional *I Ching*

The *I Ching* was originally a divination manual in ancient China. It gradually acquired the status of a book of wisdom later. It was elaborated and interpreted over 3,000 years of Chinese history. It is widely used for the purpose of divination. Traditionally, it was used by the emperors as a manual of divination, interpreting natural events, and providing warfare strategy, through readings based on divinatory symbols expressed in the trigrams and hexagrams. This classic has

been subsequently reinterpreted by Confucian scholars, becoming intrinsic to Chinese culture. It centered on the concepts of the dynamic balance of opposites, the evolution of events as a process, and a set of principles for managing human affairs.

The *I Ching* is an attempt to understand and work with change. It consists of sixty-four hexagrams (Kua) and related texts. The hexagrams, formed by combinations of two trigrams, are composed of six lines (yao). A set of oracular statements are represented by 64 sets of six lines each called hexagrams (卦 kua). The *I Ching*'s 64 hexagrams were based on the formation of groupings of Ying Yao (broken line composing one third of a trigram / - -) and Yang Yao (unbroken line composing one third of a trigram, —), that is wholly unshakeable. Each of the hexagrams consists of six of the Yao (lines on trigram), represented by horizontal lines (—) and broken lines (- -).

Traditionally, the hexagrams are thought to have been developed by King Wen of Zhou out of the eight trigrams invented by the legendary culture sage Fu Xi of remotest antiquity.

2.2. New Reinterpretation of I Ching

In the *Creative Book of I Ching*, I have reshaped I Kua symbols from the original hexagram with a figure composed of six stacked horizontal lines (See Figure 1) which are either Yang (an unbroken, or solid line), or Yin (broken, an open line with a gap in the center) into other possible formations such as Lego, six-sector round pizza (See Figure 2) or a round comprising six equidistant dashed or solid circles. I think the uniformity of the hexagrams can be represented in new ways such as by six pieces of pizza. Then, the *I Ching*'s hexagrams would be more interesting to the younger generation.

八	七	六	五	四	三	二	一	
坤 ☷ 地	艮 ☶ 山	坎 ☵ 水	巽 ☴ 風	震 ☳ 雷	離 ☲ 火	兌 ☱ 澤	乾 ☰ 天	上卦 下卦
地天泰 ☱☷	山天大畜 ☶☰	水天俯 ☵☰	風天小畜 ☴☰	雷天大壯 ☳☰	火天大有 ☲☰	澤天大畜 ☱☰	乾為天 ☰☰	天 ☰
地澤臨 ☱☵	山澤損 ☶☱	水澤節 ☵☱	風澤中孚 ☴☱	雷澤歸妹 ☳☱	火澤睽 ☲☱	兌為澤 ☱☱	天澤履 ☰☱	澤 ☱
地火明夷 ☱☲	山火賁 ☶☲	水火既濟 ☵☲	風火家人 ☴☲	雷火戰 ☳☲	離為火 ☲☲	澤火革 ☱☲	天火同人 ☰☲	火 ☲
地雷復 ☱☷	山雷頤 ☶☳	水雷屯 ☵☳	風雷益 ☴☳	雷為雷 ☳☳	火雷噬嗑 ☲☳	澤雷隨 ☱☳	天雷无妄 ☰☳	雷 ☳
地風升 ☱☴	山風蠱 ☶☴	水風井 ☵☴	巽為風 ☴☴	雷風恆 ☳☴	火風鼎 ☲☴	澤風大過 ☱☴	天過姤 ☰☴	風 ☴
地水師 ☱☵	山水蒙 ☶☵	坎為水 ☵☵	風水渙 ☴☵	雷水解 ☳☵	火水未濟 ☲☵	澤水困 ☱☵	天水訟 ☰☵	水 ☵
地山謙 ☱☶	艮為山 ☶☶	水山蹇 ☵☶	風山漸 ☴☶	雷山小過 ☳☶	火山旅 ☲☶	澤山咸 ☱☶	天山遯 ☰☶	山 ☶
坤為地 ☷☷	山地剝 ☶☱	水地比 ☵☱	風地觀 ☴☱	雷地豫 ☳☱	火地晉 ☲☱	澤地萃 ☱☱	天地否 ☷☱	地 ☷

Figure 1. The Traditional Way to Show 64 Kuas

上卦 下卦	乾 A	兌 B	離 C	震 D	巽 E	坎 F	艮 G	坤 H
乾 a								
兌 b								
離 c								
震 d								
巽 e								
坎 f								
艮 g								
坤 h								

Figure 2. A New Way to Show 64 Kuas

The ancient Kua Hsiang may have its unique advantage, yet its historical imprint in the use of divination text brought us a feeling of solemnity and tradition, which is just as those outdated or used clothes, having no freshness and attraction as well as unsuitable for the present people. In fact, adopting different symbols to represent the same signification is feasible. The only thing we are concerned with is their results. You can image that two poems composed by different means of conveyance to communicate the same meaning may have very different fortune; one is very popular and another one is unappreciated. The reason for using Lego in lieu of original I Kua symbols is its colors. Choosing red and green to represent Yang Yao (solid line) and Yin Yao (dashed line) respectively is derived from a Chinese idiom “Red boy, green girl”, which explains that men are usually considered as the representation of Yang and women are considered as that of Yin. By applying this principle in 64 hexagrams, Kun Kua can be formed with a rectangle combining six stacked green Legos; Chien Kua, a rectangle combining six stacked red Legos; Pi Kua, a rectangle combining stacked three red Legos in the upper part and three green Legos in the lower part; and Tai Kua, a rectangle combining stacked three green Legos in the upper part and three red Legos in the lower part. The red and green Legos used to replace the traditional hexagram symbols are for the purpose of drawing children’s attention and the adult’s convenience in operation.

The method of six-sector round pizza replacing original I Kua symbols is: To divide the round pizza into six sectors; each sector with visible stuff on the front of the pizza represents Yang and each sector without visible stuff on the front of pizza represents Yin. According to this principle, Chu Yao can be generated at the sector between 12 o’clock and 2 o’clock; Erh Yao, the sector between 2 o’clock and 4 o’clock; San Yao, the sector between 4 o’clock and 6 o’clock; Szu Yao, the sector between 6 o’clock and 8 o’clock; Wu Yao, the sector between

8 o'clock and 10 o'clock; Shang Yao, the sector between 10 o'clock and 12 o'clock. Each sector is either positive (Yang) or negative (Yin), and there will be 64 possible combinations of the six-sector round pizza. Another substitutive method is to replace the one-dimensional representation of original I Kua symbols (six dashed or solid lines) with two-dimensional representation of a round comprising six dashed or solid equidistant circles established on the principle of solid circle representing Yang and dashed circle representing Yin. With six such circles stacked from the inner to the outer there are 64 possible combinations, and thus 64 six-circle round diagrams represented.

Cultural continuity and transmission is not always subject to its meaning. The form of communication is also very important. The actual instances are that when I submitted the idea of comparison of pizza to I Kua, a TV station became interested to report it; when I submitted another idea of Lego substituting for Kua, I was also interviewed by the newspaper. Judging from this, the form of transmission has absolutely increased the strength of disseminating *I Ching*.

3. Chinese Cursive-style Calligraphy

3.1. Traditional Chinese Cursive-style Calligraphy

Tsao Shu appeared in the early Han Dynasty for the purpose of Li Shu (clerical style of Chinese calligraphy) fast handwriting, generally worked out in the expressive and unrestrained manner. For the reason of Emperor Chang of Han being very fond of Tsao Shu, it was also called "Chang Tsao"; later, it was evolved into "Chin Tsao", a script of Kai Shu's transformation, and "Kuang Tsao" in succession. Both Chang Hsu and Huai Su are Chinese famous calligraphers famed for Kuang Tsao calligraphic works. Their calligraphic techniques can be said to have reached the peak of perfection. It is a pity that so far they are unknown to most people. Besides, Emperor Hui of Sung is another expert calligrapher mastering Tsao Shu.

As another national treasure, Chinese cursive style calligraphy simply cannot be read by the young people in Taiwan. The value of cursive style handwriting as a form of communication is vanishing. However, the esthetic value of the cursive style calligraphy is still being recognized. When the cursive calligraphy employs colors or is placed horizontally as a painting, the beauty is apparent. In this regard, I have conducted some painstaking research on the past. Many surprises are discovered when we look at the ancient Chinese cursive calligraphy as a kind of modern abstract art.

3.2. New Reinterpretation of Chinese Tsao Shu

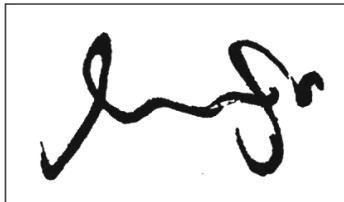
Publishing the book *Creative Collection of Tsao Shu* was expected to attain the same purpose of being more interesting to the younger generation. The cursive characters of Chinese Tsao Shu are scratchy and illegible, so if you are not skilled in calligraphy, it is hard to recognize them. When the works of Chinese calligraphy are displayed on the wall, most viewers respond to them by guessing what words they are. In terms of the function of conveying meaning, Kai Shu (regular script) is enough and Tsao Shu seems to be unnecessary. However, the marvelous

place of Tsao Shu is its beauty of form, beauty of structure and beauty of untrammelled style.

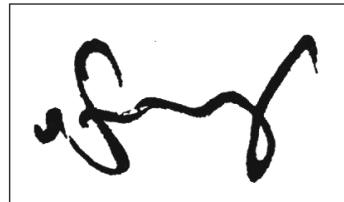
At present, some people in Taiwan are trying to market Chinese Tsao Shu by innovative techniques: Tung, Yang-Tzu and Hsu, Yung-Chin, for example. I agreed with them on marketing Tsao Shu by employing creative techniques, but I have used a distinctly different method from theirs to reshape Tsao Shu, that is, deconstructing Tsao Shu's traditional shape. In order to deconstruct Tsao Shu's traditional shape into new visual aesthetics, I reshaped the traditional Tsao Shu (see Figure 3) into a brand-new Tsao Shu drawing (see Figure 4a, 4b) by rotating and coloring it through the use of computer drawing software. When finished, the innovative works of Tsao Shu contribute to a completely new visual aesthetic effect. Creating the traditional Chinese Tsao Shu with modern style serves not only to attract young Chinese people but also to draw foreigners' attention. What I expected was to pull the new generation back to placing value on traditional Chinese culture and furthermore, to promote the preservation of Chinese culture. Once the book *Creative Collection of Tsao Shu* was published, it attracted an artistic magazine to report on it.



Figure 3. The Traditional Tsao Shu (by Huai Su) to Show the Chinese Word “處”



(a) rotated 90 degrees



(b) rotated 270 degrees

Figure 4. A New Way to See the Chinese Word “處” (Tsao Shu style) as an Artistic Rendition

4. Conclusion

The cultural continuity and transmission forcibly carried out by government officials by means of traditional technique is both improper and inefficient. Culture creation is basically produced by using new creative techniques and infusing new ideas into old culture. The author believes that his new and innovative interpretations of the *I Ching* and the Chinese cursive-style calligraphy Tsao Shu will be helpful in contributing significantly to the cultural continuity and transmission of ancient culture to the younger generation. This way, the cultural continuity and transmission will no longer be an arduous thankless job.

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