

## **Five Misunderstandings of A Historic City and A Forgotten Perspective of Cultural Reorientation**

----- A Case Study of Wuhan City

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**Abstract.** Comparing with other Chinese cities, Wuhan may be the most typical Metropolis of China's Cultural Reorientation. However, this city is used to being recognized with five misunderstandings, such as the confusing definition of the type of Historic-City, under-evaluation to its former five-foreign-concessions as well as early industrial heritage, but over-evaluation to the influence of its first republic revolution, and the location of its intangible heritage. These issues lead to one problem: a forgotten clue of cultural transformation, which had been working as a pusher of this city since 1861. According to the research of the author, the paper tried to open out the facts that how the new city's spirit born from this change, and how the political influence cleared out the atmosphere of traditional identity. Moreover, the paper went deep to discuss the possibility of the World Heritage Application with Wuhan's heritage around intercultural conflict.

### **1 Issue under Discussion**

By recognising and respecting cultural diversity, *Cultural Reorientation* offers new perspectives for preserving cultural heritage with the way of cultural integration and contributes to the enhancement of intercultural dialogue and sustainable development. However, the conflict between "Cultures" is emerging with the birth of this term: the influence of intercultural communications is not limited within any type, but follows the development of *acculturation*. Yet, could the *route* of acculturation be seen as a new dimension of Cultural Heritage Conservation?

With the title of National Historic City, Wuhan's heritage has been ironically fading from the public view since 1980s. Therefore, how to showcase the character of Wuhan City as well as its *commemorative integrity*? Could we

manage the heritage of Wuhan into the *route of acculturation* and the *type of cultural reorientation*? These issues are under discussion in the paper.

## **2 From Cultural Routes to Cultural Reorientation**

The antecedents of Cultural Routes, through which an existing reality has become a subject of study and research, are found in the listing of the Route of Santiago as a World Heritage asset in 1993—a complex cultural concept without precedent at that time. And from the conceptual point of view, another antecedent was the meeting on “Cultural Routes as a Part of our Cultural Heritage” which, as a result of the interest created by that listing, was held in Madrid in November of 1994, with representatives from UNESCO and ICOMOS. Within this advance in the field of concepts, The Term of Cultural Routes introduces and represents a qualitatively new approach to the notion of conservation of the cultural heritage. It does not conflict or overlap with other categories or types of heritage—monuments, cities, cultural landscapes, industrial heritage, etc.—that may exist within the orbit of a given Cultural Route. Rather, it recognizes and enhances their significance within an integrated, interdisciplinary and shared framework, by means of an innovative scientific perspective that allows understanding, communication and increased cooperation among the peoples of the world through the work of preserving the cultural heritage.

In fact, the theory of Cultural Routes is basing on the theory of intercultural communications, and naturally, it concludes two ways to communicate, one is geographic transformation, the other is acculturation. For both ways support the intercultural communication theory, we could enlarge the concept of Cultural Routes with its intangible aspects as well as Acculturation, and define the type of the Cultural Reorientation in the field of conservation as follows:

Cultural Reorientation refers to the cultural imago, implying the perspective and character of type which is basing on the intercultural communications theory as well as the theory of Acculturation, and links the heritage in special age and space together.

Cultural Reorientation is dynamic, and it should meet the following four requirements:

First, it replies on the development of cultural acculturation and represents this changing process;

Second, it represents the cultural integration. It is defined within some period that concludes an integration process of some cultures;

Third, it should be represented by Cultural Layers as well as tangible and intangible heritage.

Forth, it is a research methodology, rather than a new type of cultural heritage. The most important words in Cultural Reorientation are Cultural Significance and Commemorative Integrity.

### 3 Wuhan: Metropolis of China's Modern Cultural Reorientation

#### 3.1 The Basis and the Definition of Wuhan Cultural Reorientation

The history of Wuhan *area* dated back to thousands years ago, but the rising of the Wuhan *city* was after Hankou port was forced to be open to the foreigners in 1861. From 1861 to 1927, Chinese culture suffered from the reorientation that had never happened in Chinese history. However, meanwhile, not only did the form of this city but also the local identity of Wuhan was shaping and rising with this historic period. Therefore, when the new government discussed the political organization of this area at the end of 1926, Sun Ke suggested to organize a new city, for "it would be easy to work in this area."

The birth of Wuhan City was a symbol, which meant from the *stimulation* of western culture (since 1861, the founding of the area of five-countries' concessions) to the *reaction* of Chinese culture (after 1890, westernise-movement in Wuhan area), then to the revolution in 1911, western influence finally went to its high level: it shaped China both its physical aspects and its spiritual aspects, such as Chinese political system as well as its political map.

Based on the discussion above, with the Cultural Reorientation's point of view, it is clear that the most important reason among all the elements relating to the city's birth was the conflict between Chinese and European. Wuhan was shaped by this conflict, with this conflict, and even we can say, for the conflict. The process of Wuhan's rise is along the development of Chinese cultural reorientation. Step by step, from the opening of the port in Hankou to the Westernization Movement in Hanyang, then the revolution in Wuchang, finally the Wuhan became the capital of China in 1927---- all of these historic events left heritage, which representing the different cultural levels of the reorientation, can be linked together to be the Wuhan Intangible Cultural Routes, and we could define it as the Chinese Modern Cultural Reorientation. The Wuhan heritage settlement is the integration of the heritage of Concessions, Early Industry and Wuchang Revolution. It enjoys the Cultural Significance for the Commemorative Integrity.

#### 3.2 The Characteristics of Wuhan heritage settlement of Cultural Reorientation

First, the Wuhan heritage settlement of Cultural Reorientation has not based on the physical route, but scattered around the three towns of Wuhan city. These heritage groups developed with an acculturation line and classically represented the change of Chinese culture in the early modern period.

Second, the Wuhan heritage settlement of Cultural Reorientation represents the integration of Chinese modern culture. Culture is a dynamic term that keeps moving, but the heritage settlement of Cultural Reorientation should enclose the heritage within a relatively short period for the Commemorative Integrity. This period should be from an unstable level to a relatively stable level, for example, in Wuhan case, the stimulation of western power (concession heritage) to the reaction of Chinese culture (Westernize-Movement, Revolution).

Third, it should include different cultural levels in its period, and the every level should be represented by its heritage or some other ways of documentation. In Wuhan heritage settlement of Cultural Reorientation, the heritage in concessions, early industrial as well as revolution becomes some different Heritage Settlements, and each settlement could represent some stage in history (cultural layer).

#### **4 Wuhan's Five Misunderstandings**

Comparing with the concept Cultural Routes, the concept of Cultural Reorientation is mainly a methodology rather than a type of heritage. Therefore, we could take Wuhan into account once again with the help of the its theory, and lead to the following perspectives:

First, the definition of the Historic City.

It is not easy to define the nature of National Historical City Wuhan since Wuhan has been accepted by the National Historical City List in 1986. In fact, it was defined as the type of General Traditional City, which means that the nature of this historical city was not defined as a Modern-Heritage significance, but a general traditional heritage significance. In fact, only less than 10 construction heritage before 1861 were left. Moreover, because of the determination of the nature of Wuhan Historical City, many modern heritage of Wuhan were ignored, even destroyed during the recent 30 years, and the Wuhan classical travel route also referred to the *Old* Natural and Cultural Heritage, which were built not more than 30 years.

Second, recognition of the value of Hankou Concessions and Hanyang Early Industrial Heritage.

Hankou Concessions and Hanyang Early Industrial Heritage used to be belittled by some scholars. Some typical discussion on Hankou Concessions is "The Concession is Concession and the Wuhan is Wuhan", which means the concession made little contribution to Wuhan. However, if Hankou had not built the concessions in 1861, it is impossible that the revolution brake up in this area and the government could hardly organize the three towns to become a city of Wuhan in 1927. In fact, Hankou concessions' style influenced the whole city's not only building and urban planning style but also life-style. The similar situation happened in the Hanyany Industrial Heritage. Unfortunately, all the formal industrial site has been re-written totally. The birthplace of Chinese Industry left little to later generations except a small museum.

Third, the definition of the Capital of Revolution.

Wuhan was called the Capital of Revolution, referring to its important role in the revolution of 1911. Although it is a pride to this city, yet in my point of view, this title also narrows the nature of this Historical City. After more than 95 years, it is full of research on the reasons that Wuhan could be the very first place to fire in 1911, but the basic reason in the common view is that the Cultural Change pushed the final revolution. Therefore, we should define the city of Wuhan in the level of Cultural Change, not the political issue.

Forth, the recognition of the intangible heritage in Wuhan.

The current situation on Wuhan's intangible heritage conservation is not

satisfactory. According to the investigation, many local people do not know the heritage around them, many traditional practice, performs, knowledge and skills which could be defined as intangible heritage were ignored by normal citizens. Therefore, at least 100 historical buildings were destroyed after 1980, including many historical building in the conservation lists.

Besides, the value of the local industrial heritage.

Wuhan used to be the birthplace of the China's Modern industry. Without the record of the industrial heritage, the line of the China's reorientation is hardly of integration. However, most of the industrial heritage has been destroyed during the last 50 years.

## **5 Conclusion: Wuhan—A Metropolis of China's Modern Cultural Reorientation**

The concept of Cultural Reorientation in the practical work of conservation could develop some aspects of the Cultural Heritage and pays much more attention to its methodology rather than the aspect of heritage type. Its aim is to protect the Commemorative Integrity of the heritage which is not linked by the physical route, but collected by the Cultural Significance.

With the perspective of Cultural Reorientation, the city Wuhan has been emerged *with* the China's modern cultural reorientation, shaped *by* the reorientation, and developed *for* the reorientation. Therefore, its heritage of concessions, early industrial and revolution could be seemed as an integrated heritage settlement . Moreover, the city of Wuhan could be defined as a Metropolis of China's Modern Cultural Reorientation.

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