CiteSpace-based Survey of International Advances in Chinese Traditional Culture Research in 1999-2019

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Abstract: With the globalization strategy and the initiative "One Belt and One Road" in China, Chinese traditional culture has a great impact on the world. This study, based on CiteSpace, explores the total numbers, hotspots, characteristics and tendency of international research on Chinese traditional culture, by retrieving 866 articles from SSCI and A&HCI in the Web of Science (Core Collection). The results of the study revealed that: there is a strong increases in total output from 1999 to 2019 and the research on the theme of Chinese traditional culture has become interdisciplinary; the most productive authors aren't the ones in the most cited documents and the journals on which the most cited documents publish aren't the prolific journals; most of the researchers are from Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland of China, Canada and USA. In view of the results, it is obvious that it is a good way to spread Chinese traditional culture over the world. It is strongly recommended that we should do more analysis on the international literatures with different paradigms, methods and metrics in order to get a more comprehensive and correct domain visualization map of Chinese traditional culture research.
Keywords: Chinese traditional culture, CiteSpace, international advances

I. Introduction

With the rapid development of economy and society, China plays an important role in the world. As many scholars noted[1] . Chinese people have made a great effect on the development of science in Europe. The attitude and behavior of Chinese are deeply influenced by their culture and values[2][3]. More and more scholars become interested in China and pay much attention to Chinese traditional culture.

Chinese traditional culture, as an important part in the whole culture of the world, has drawn the attention of many scholars. However, most of the previous research focus on Chinese culture itself, the effect of culture on tourism, and the relationship between medicine and culture, and so on. A considerable amount of research has been carried out but little research focused on international advances in Chinese traditional culture research in 1999-2019 based on CiteSpace[4].

The current study, therefore, attempts to fill the research gaps by answering the following four questions:
(a)What is the general state of international research in Chinese traditional culture over the decades?
(b) What are the most cited articles, scholars and journals in the field?
(c) What are the emerging topics of Chinese traditional culture abroad over the decades? What are their characteristics?
(d) How about the funding agencies in the field?

Based on CiteSpace, this research studies the foreign literatures and detects the hotspots and trends in Chinese traditional culture in the past 20 years, which will help us more clearly grasp the international research path of Chinese traditional culture.

II.Literature Review

In recent years, the study of Chinese traditional culture has garnered significant international attention, with researchers from diverse disciplines delving into its rich history, philosophical underpinnings, artistic expressions, and social practices. The advent of globalization and technological advancements has facilitated cross-cultural exchanges, prompting an increasing number of scholars worldwide to embark on investigations into the depths of this cultural heritage. This review focuses on several key areas where international research has made notable progress: philosophical thought, artistic manifestations, social customs, and contemporary relevance.

Philosophical Thought

The philosophical foundations of Chinese traditional culture have been a focal point of international scholarship. Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, the three dominant philosophical systems, have been extensively studied for their contributions to ethical principles, metaphysical beliefs, and social organization. For instance, Tu Weiming's research offers a profound analysis of Confucian ethics and its implications for individual self-cultivation and societal harmony[5]. Meanwhile, Robert G. Henricks provides a nuanced interpretation of Daoist thought, emphasizing its emphasis on naturalness and non-action[6]. Another research gives an introduction to Chinese philosophies, religion, basic beliefs and values with a special meaning for health and nursing, suggesting a better way to the Chinese health care system by combining western and Chinese values[7].

Artistic Manifestations

The artistic expressions of Chinese traditional culture, including calligraphy, painting, poetry, and drama, have also been subjects of intense international research. Scholars have explored how these art forms reflect cultural values, aesthetic ideals, and historical contexts. The research of James Cahill is a seminal work that traces the development of Chinese painting, highlighting the technical virtuosity and emotional depth of these works[8]. Similarly, Peter Lovrick and Wang-Ngai Siu offer a comprehensive overview of Chinese opera, examining its performance styles, costumes, and staging techniques[9].

Social Customs and Practices

International research has also delved into the social customs and practices that constitute Chinese traditional culture. Topics such as family structures, festivals, and rituals have been analyzed from multiple perspectives, including sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. Edward T. Hall's Beyond Culture includes discussions on Chinese communication styles and social behaviors, shedding light on the unique ways in which Chinese people interact and form relationships[10]. Additionally, studies like Pamela Kyle Crossley's research explores specific historical periods and their impact on social structures and cultural practices[11].

Some precious researches have studied on Chinese medicine, health and value [12][13][14]. Lam also makes a survey to some Hong Kong Chinese about their ideas on the strengths and weaknesses of traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine, concluding that medical practitioners should be aware of their patients' health attitudes from different ethnic backgrounds in order to have a better patient-doctor relationship and better compliance of treatment[15].

Some researches explore the relationship between Chinese culture and tourism, between Chinese culture and globalization. Li and Lu make a comparison of Chinese and international studies on Chinese culture in tourist research, identifying the similarities, differences and research gaps between them[16]. Wang and Ma discuss three channels of the "traveling" of Chinese culture to the outside world, suggesting that the literary history of Chinese should be written in both English and Chinese[17].

Other researches focus on the detailed aspect of Chinese traditional culture itself, such as "harmony" "cultural industry" and "Confucian ethics" and so on [18][19][20].

Contemporary Relevance

Finally, international research on Chinese traditional culture has increasingly focused on its contemporary relevance and significance. Scholars have examined how traditional values and practices inform modern society, culture, and politics. For example, a research analyzes the interplay between traditional Chinese business practices and the development of a market economy[21]. Similarly, research on the globalization of Chinese culture, such as Stephanie Donald's Media Research, explores the ways in which Chinese traditional culture is transmitted and received in a global context[22].

In conclusion, international research on Chinese traditional culture has made significant advancements across various disciplines, revealing the richness and complexity of this cultural herit age. From philosophical thought to artistic manifestations, social customs to contemporary relevance, scholars have contr ibuted valuable insights that deepen our understanding of Chinese traditional culture.

III.Methodology

3.1 Research Instrument

In this paper, the information visualization tool is CiteSpace V which is an effective software in knowledge mapping. It is jointly developed by Dr. Chen Chaomei, the professor of the college of information science and technology, University of Drexel in Philadelphia, PA, USA. There has a lot of practice in several research fields home and abroad. CiteSpace can show the whole situation of a certain research field and highlight some key documents in the development of the field[23].Hence, CiteSpace can effectively help us to have a better understanding the areas of international research on Chinese traditional culture.

3.2 Data Collection

Web of Science, covers the most influential academic research achievements in the world, with great reference value[24]. To collect data in the international database, the author, on December, 31, 2019, retrieves literatures of Chinese traditional culture research papers from Web of Science (Core Collection), including the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and the Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) databases. Only English articles are included. Specifically, the researcher sets "advanced search" in retrieval condition column, enters "Chinese traditional culture" in "theme", chooses "English" in language and "article" in literature type, and enters "1999 to 2019" in time limit, then obtains 866 pieces of effective literature after comparison with the manual research.

3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis is made using the software CiteSpace 5.3.R4. Firstly, input all the cited data (author, title, source publication, abstract, references) of the 936 pieces of literature into the software and save in the computer. Secondly, set the related parameters: time slicing from 1999 to 2019, years per slice 1; term source including title, abstract, author keywords, and keyword plus; term type including noun phrase; node type including keyword and cited reference. Lastly, get and download the data results of the analysis.

IV. Results and Discussion

After a thorough and rigorous reading and analysis of the software results, in this paper, I mainly analyze the following cardinal aspects including the whole status and characteristics of publication, documents co-citation, hotspots and funding agencies.

4.1 The Whole Status and Characteristics of Publication
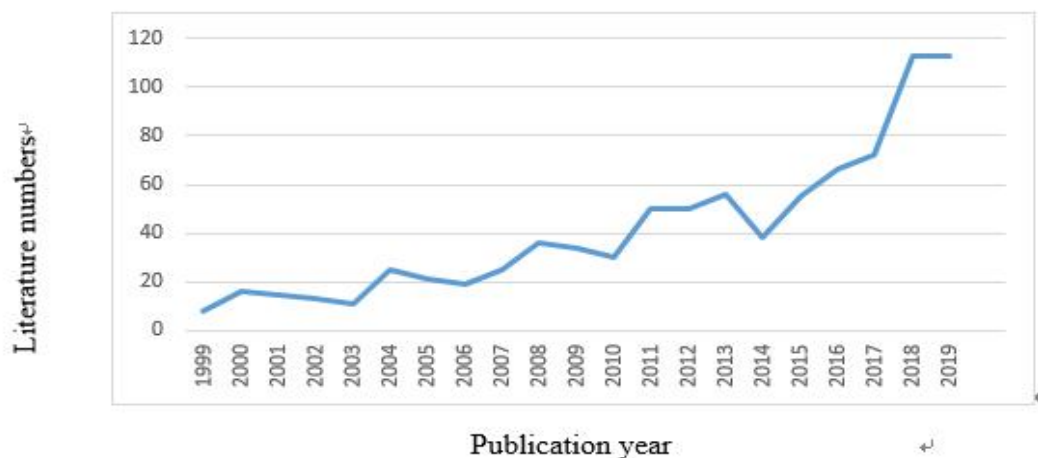
4.1.1Annual Publication Tendency

Figure 1 The number of documents from 1999 to 2019

The progression of papers published related to Chinese traditional culture during the 21 year period 1999-2019 is showed in Figure 1. On the whole, the number of documents grows year by year from 1999 to 2019. Specifically speaking, there is a very slight rise before 2013, and the number of those that published in the past 15 years（1999 to 2013）is just 409, while there was a considerable increase from 2016, and the number of those that published in recent 6 years(2014 to 2019) is 457. The clear upward trend indicates the increased attention to Chinese tradition culture by researchers. In 2013, Xi Jinping, the general secretary of the People's Republic of China, put forward a strategic plan named "one belt and one road" which motivates the global communication of Chinese traditional culture all over the world.

From above, we can see that research on "Chinese traditional culture" has entered a steady-growth stage, and more and more attention also has been paid to it.

4.1.2 Author Publication Status

There are altogether 1903 authors contributing to Chinese traditional culture research and the top 10 authors are presented in Table 1. Wang, evidently, is the most frequent contributing author to the field of Chinese traditional culture. He works in Nantong University School of Nursing, meanwhile he has been studying in School of Nursing, Duke University in USA since 2014. As far as the department/faculty is concerned (Table 1), most of the authors in the top 10 list are affiliated with the department/faculty related to the health care and psychology.

Table1 Top 10 authors based on frequency

Author	Freq.	Institution
Wang, J.	7	School of Nursing, Nantong University, China Duke University, USA
Wang, X.	6	University College, University of Oxford, UK
Wang, Y.	6	School of Psychology, University of Western, Australia
Zhang, J.	6	Department of Educational Administration and Policy, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, China
Zhang, X.Y.	6	Department of Psychology, Southern Medical University, China
Choi,Y.	5	School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago, USA
Li, J.	5	Beijing Key Laboratory of Applied Experimental Psychology, Beijing Normal University, China
Peng, K.P.	5	Department of Psychology, Tsinghua University, China
Song, Y.	5	School of Nursing, Nantong University, China University of Leicester, UK
Yang, X.L.	5	Department of Psychology, Southern Medical University, China

4.1.3 Journal Publication Status

The retrieved articles were published in 546 different referred journals. Ten out of the 546 journals published more than 10 percent of the articles. The number of articles in each journal ranged from 1 to 14. Among the journals, *Sustainability* published the largest number of articles about Chinese traditional culture (14), followed by *Hermathena* (11) and *Chinese Management Studies* (10). In a word, the three journals that published the most articles were *Sustainability, Hermathena and Chinese Management Studies.*

Table 2 Top 10 Journals based on frequency

No.	Journal	No. of articles retrieved

1	Sustainability	14
2	Hermathena	11
3	Chinese Management Studies	10
4	Frontiers in Psychology	9
5	Journal of Clinical Nursing	9
6	Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology	9
7	International Journal of Human Resource Management	8
8	Asian Journal of Social Psychology	6
9	Chinese Studies in History	6
10	Internal Journal of Psychology	6

4.2 Document Co-citation Analysis

The most cited articles are usually regarded as landmarks due to their grounded-breaking contributions[25]. Table 3 shows the top 10 most cited papers with co-citation frequency of over 48 times. Chen's paper entitled "*Chinese value, health and nursing*", is the most cited article in the data-set with 149 citations[7]. This paper made an introduction to Chinese philosophies, religion, basic beliefs and values and explored how these ideas influenced the development of health and nursing. The findings suggested a better way to Chinese health care system by considering both western science and Chinese philosophical and aesthetic tradition. The second article with 119 citations was published by Super and Harkness, indicating that culture affected the course of environment development[26]. Lam's paper is at the third position with 93 citations, revealing that medical practitioners should attach importance to the health-attitudes of their patients from different ethnic backgrounds in order to get a better patient-doctor relationship and better compliance of treatment[15]. Qin and Mortensen's paper entitled "*Specific characteristics of suicide in China*", is at the fourth position with 87 citations, interpreting the specific characteristics of suicide in China in terms of traditional culture, social force, political environment and economic status[27], which were compared with that in Denmark. With 70 citations, the article at fifth position was published by Wong, Wong, Hui, and Law (2001), and the results indicated that comparing with the results of study in the west, organizational commitment among Chinese employees has a much stronger effect on job satisfaction and turnover intention[28]. That is because traditional Chinese culture values loyalty, guanxi and pao. The other articles published by Lee, Xu, Fu, Cameron, and Chen (2001), Tan and Snell (2002), Hiu, Siu, Wang and Chang (2001), Kennedy (2002) at the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth position, respectively, focus on morality and mentality quality[29][30][31][32]. While the article by Okazaki and Rivas (2002), at the sixth position, has 64 citations and explores cultural values[33].

Table 3 Top 10 frequent co-cited documents about Chinese traditional culture

Title	Author	Year	Freq.	Source
Chinese Value, Health and Nursing	Chen, Y.C.	2001	149	Journal of Advanced Nursing
Culture Structures the Environment for Development	Super,C.M., Harkness, S.	2002	119	Human Development
Strengths and Weaknesses of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Western Medicine in the eyes of Some Hong Kong Chinese	Lam,T.P.	2001	93	J Epidemiol Community Health
Specific Characteristics of Suicide in China	Qin, P. & Mortensen, P.B.	2001	87	Acta Psychiatr Scand
The Significant Role of Chinese Employees' Organizational Commitment: Implications for Managing Employees in Chinese Societies	Wong, C.S.; Wong, Y.T.; Hui, C.; Law, K.S.	2001	70	Journal of World Business
A Content Analysis of Multinationals' Web Communication Strategies: Cross-cultural Research Framework and Pre-testing	Okazaki, S. & Rivas, J.A	2002	64	International Research
Taiwan and Mainland Chinese and Canadian Children's Categorization and Evaluation of Lie- and Truth-telling: A Modesty Effect	Lee, K., Xu, F, Fu, G., Cameron, C.A., Chen, S.	2001	55	British Journal of Developmental Psychology
The Third Eye: Exploring Guanxi and Relational Morality in the Workplace	Tan, D., Snell, R.S.	2002	50	Journal of Business Ethics
An Investigation of Decision-Making Styles of Consumers in China	Hiu,A., Siu,N.Y.M.,Wang, C.C.L., Chang, L.M.K.	2001	50	Journal of Consumer Affairs

Leadership in Malaysia: Traditional Values, International Outlook	Kennedy, J.C.	2002	48	The Academy of Management Executive

4.3 Key Words Analysis

The key words have a close relation with the cores of the documents, thus the high-frequency keywords appearing in the subject area are often regarded as hot research topics [34]. CiteSpace has the basic function to judge the relationship between the themes by analyzing the phenomena that the terminologies in the same article[35]. Therefore, the analysis of keywords can help to identify the current research focus and hotspots. Results regarding the range of hot topics in correspondence to the frequency and year of occurrence are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4 Top 20 keywords with their time and frequencies

No.	Keyword	Freq.	Year	No.	Keyword	Freq.	Year
1	Social Emotion	193	2017	11	New Zealand	41	2009
2	Yin Yang	136	2015	12	Harmony	40	2013
3	Pregnant Women	110	2012	13	United States	39	2002
4	Culture Difference	75	2000	14	Hong Kong Chinese	36	2014
5	Traditional Chinese Culture	68	2011	15	Immigrants	29	2009
6	Confucian Values	59	2012	16	Gender Differences	27	2013
7	Filial Piety	50	2008	17	Complementary Medicine	25	2012
8	Ritual Practices	48	2002	18	Chinese Language	22	2017
9	Chinese Patients	47	2013	19	Breast Cancer	18	2011
10	Health Care	44	2001	20	Political Culture	13	1999

As we can see from the co-occurrence frequency in Table 4, the most frequently used keywords are the following: social emotion (193 times), Yin Yang (136 times), pregnant women (110 times), culture difference (75 times), traditional Chinese culture(68 times), Confucian values (59 times), filial piety(50 times), ritual practices (48 times), Chinese patients(47 times), health care(44 times), New Zealand(41times), harmony(40 times), United States (39 times), Hong Kong Chinese(36 times), immigrants(29 times), gender differences(27 times), complementary medicine(25 times), Chinese language(22 times), breast cancer(18 times) and political culture(13 times).

Based on the classification of these keywords and analysis of the related papers, we find five characteristics in the international research on Chinese traditional culture.

Firstly, the hotspots range from Chinese social problems, traditional values, health, Chinese medicine to Chinese language, intercultural communication. These research topics change according to the policy, project and planning of China each year. For example, the 18th National Congress of Chinese Communist Party was hold from November, 8th to 14th, 2012 in Beijing. "Harmony" is one of the socialist core values which are firstly put forward in that meeting. Thus, after that meeting, there are many articles about "harmony" published in international journals.

Secondly, most of the articles (536 articles) employ qualitative method to carry out the research, some articles (200 articles) use quantitative method while other articles (130 articles) use mixed research methods. For example, Wong et al. (2001) conducted a research by collecting data from two samples from People's Republic of China and Hong Kong to compare their different attitudes to organizational commitment with the help of interviews and questionnaires[28].

Thirdly, 58 percentage of the research participants are from Hong Kong, immigrants in New Zealand and USA. For example, in his study, Lam (2001) explored the attitudes of twenty nine participants (Hong Kong Chinese) toward traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine through interviews, with the help of grounded theory approach[15].

Lastly, most of the authors comes from Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland of China, Canada and USA.

4.4 Funding Agency

There are altogether 312 funding agencies supporting research on the theme of Chinese tradition culture. The top 10 funding agencies are presented in Figure 2. National Natural Science Foundation of China is the largest contributor, supporting 41 papers, followed by National Institutes of Health NIH USA (22) and United States Department of Health Human Services (22). The number of NIH National Institute of Mental Health NIMH is 12 and the agency ranks fourth. Among the top 10 funding agencies, the number of articles in agency ranges from 4 to 41, which occupies more than 10% portion of contributions of the total outputs.

The number of other agencies is as follows: China Scholarship Council (7), Canadian Institutes of Health Research CIHR (5), Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities (4), Hong Kong Research Grants Council (4), Ministry of Education China (4), and National Science Council of Taiwan (4).

In general, the number of available research funding is associated with the attitude of the country towards to the theme of Chinese traditional culture. It can be seen that besides China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan), USA and Canada are also the most supporters to the research on Chinese traditional culture.
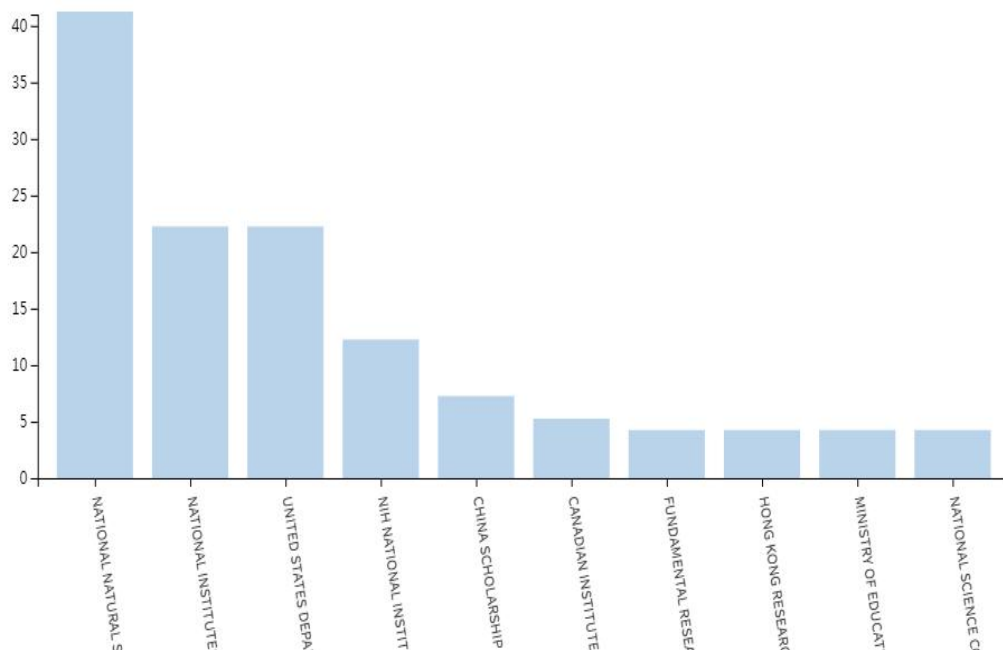
Figure 2 Top 10 funding agencies based on frequency

V. Conclusion

This study, based on CiteSpace, provides a unique snapshot of the international advances in the theme of Chinese traditional culture. A number of conclusions can be drawn from above results.

First, publication data shows strong increases in researcher output from 1999 to 2019, especially during the last four years. Chinese traditional culture research has become interdisciplinary according to the subject category distribution, ranging from education, sociology, psychology to nursing and psychiatry, etc.

Second, the most productive authors aren't consistent with the authors in the most cited documents, and there is a very low level of conformant relationship between the journals on which the most cited documents publish and the prolific journals. It is interesting that many environmental, nursing journals are more influential than many cross-culture journals, which shows the multidisciplinary nature of Chinese traditional culture.

Finally, these researches on Chinese traditional culture are dominated by Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland of China, Canada and USA, all of which have the most productive authors and funding support.

The analysis of the 866 articles indicates that there are a lot of international studies on Chinese culture, which is good for the spreading of Chinese traditional culture. However, to expand on the breadth and scope of the research, further research could be undertaken in the following aspects.

Firstly, it is urgent for Chinese scholars to analyze more articles published in international journals in different languages related to Chinese traditional culture. And the results could be compared with those of this research.

Secondly, books and other data sources could be concluded in the future research get more robust conclusions.

Lastly, different analysis tools, such as CiteSpace and UCINET, could be combined to provide a comprehensive domain visualization map of Chinese traditional culture research.

In conclusion, different paradigms, methods and metrics should be employed to explore what and how Chinese traditional culture presents in international journals.

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