

## **Creative Transformation of Chinese Traditional Culture from the Perspective of Urban Cultural Symbols**

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**Abstract:** In the age of globalization, the design of urban cultural symbol systems plays a crucial role in achieving a creative transformation of Chinese traditional culture. To promote this transformation, this paper suggests three dimensions for urban cultural symbol systems: visual representation, behavioral aspects, and spiritual meaning. By examining these dimensions, this study explores various routes for creatively transforming Chinese traditional culture using urban cultural symbols. This analysis not only reveals the significance of urban cultural symbols but also provides fresh perspectives on the creative transformation of Chinese traditional culture.

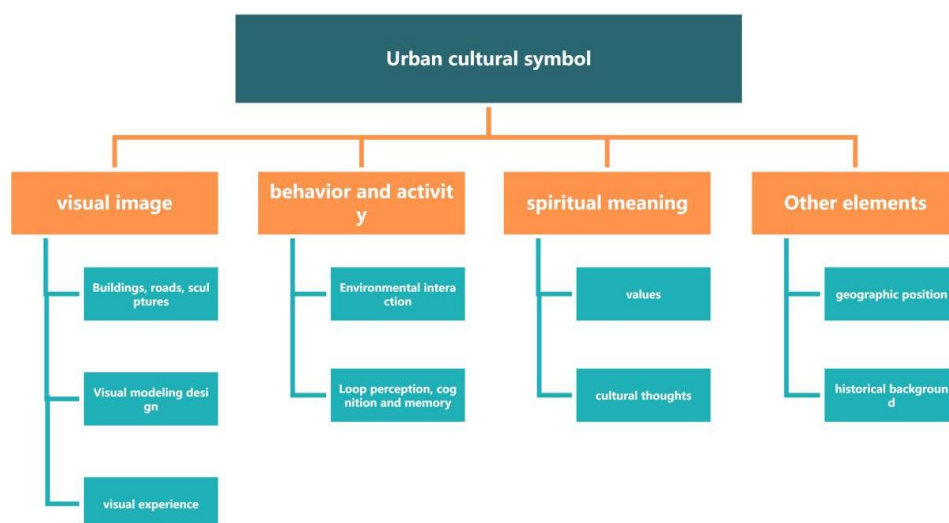
**Keywords:** Urban Cultural Symbol System, Chinese Traditional Culture, Creative Transformation.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 The Formation of Urban Cultural Symbol System**

Urban cultural symbols are symbols of information that are perceived by individuals and possess an influence on their conduct within the cultural system of cities. As per semiotic theory, cultural symbols of cities encompass visual representations that manifest within individuals' field of vision and hold the power to shape their behavior (Nas, 2011). These symbols encompass not only social and cultural phenomena but also act as vehicles for social ideologies. Essentially, the system of urban cultural symbols can be regarded as a comprehensive system of symbolic information. The urban cultural symbol system relies heavily on visual imagery, which encompasses three distinct categories. The initial category comprises visual symbols, encompassing a range of symbolic components such as buildings, streets, and artwork (de Jong & Lu, 2022; Hasan, 2021). The following category entails visual modeling, which involves designing objects with specific proportions and scales to display unique shapes and features. Lastly, visual experience involves the act of perceiving the intrinsic qualities of objects through human vision. Among these categories, visual imagery assumes paramount significance and occupies the largest portion within the urban cultural symbol system. Behavioral activity refers to the cognitive and perceptual processes involved in interpreting various types of information within the urban cultural symbol system. It plays a crucial role in human engagement with the environment, active participation in

social practices, and cultural experiences. Furthermore, it represents a universal and fundamental aspect of societal behavior. In our daily lives, individuals acquire, recognize, and remember environmental stimuli through their personal activities, and then share this information with others. Behavior serves as a means for interpersonal and human-nature interaction. The urban cultural symbol system effectively showcases these interconnected aspects within people's everyday routines, utilizing diverse formats and approaches. The spiritual significance pertains to the cultural principles, ideas, and thoughts ingrained in the urban symbol system of culture. Since birth, individuals have been striving for personal growth and attainment of a satisfying life. By exerting their own endeavors, people aim to establish a favorable synergy between themselves and the surroundings, promoting a balanced progress alongside both nature and society. As individuals perceive and construe the information surrounding them, they assess, discern, and make decisions. Subsequently, they disseminate this information through a variety of channels (Yu & Guang'an, 2022). These messages could encompass both positive and negative content. Positive information possesses the potential to elicit affirmative, wholesome sentiments in individuals, thus fostering overall societal harmony. Additionally, the values individuals uphold concerning a specific entity or notion significantly shape their understanding and assessment of external information (Boden, 1992). For example, their assessment of an entity or notion determines whether they persist in endorsing and devoting attention to it in their everyday lives. The urban cultural symbol system encompasses more than just the three basic elements of visual image, behavior, and spiritual meaning. It also includes other elements like geographical location and historical background. Together, these elements form a comprehensive system of urban cultural symbols.



**Figure 1:** Basic Elements of Urban Cultural Symbols

The position on the map has a crucial impact on the symbol system of city culture, particularly concerning the local surroundings and inhabitants. Firstly, the geographic location is an unbiased representation of the physical environment, which exists autonomously. Secondly, there exists a direct correlation between local residents and the geographical surroundings, establishing an unavoidable association between them. Therefore, the geographic location significantly influences the dynamics between people within the symbol system of urban culture. While the objective essence of the geographic position remains unchanging, its effect on interpersonal connections can differ based on nationality, country, or region. For example, the natural environment formed by a particular geographic location can heavily influence the lifestyle, production practices, and ideas of diverse ethnic groups, thus greatly impacting human relationships. For instance, inhabiting a tropical country or region frequently leads to a simpler and more comfortable lifestyle, while residing in a temperate zone may contribute to a more intricate yet comfortable way of life (Turner, 1992). Consequently, the geographic location acts as a pivotal factor shaping the relationships among individuals in the symbol system of urban culture. The relationship between the geographical environment and local residents, as well as the interactions among different ethnic groups, countries, or regions, are influenced by the geographical location. Various factors, including geographical location, impact the formation and development of relationships within the urban cultural symbol system. For example, people evaluate and assess the urban cultural symbol system based on their specific location, taking into account differences in development levels, historical backgrounds, and national cultural contexts among countries or regions. If a city is located in a highly developed area with rich historical and ethnic cultural backgrounds, as well as a deep cultural heritage, individuals perceive the city as highly developed and culturally significant. Consequently, they choose to settle in and protect the city. On the other hand, if a city is situated in less developed areas or regions with a weaker national cultural heritage, individuals may perceive it as having a lower level of development and a weaker historical and cultural background. Geographical location serves a dual purpose in promoting communication and interaction between people, while also creating barriers and conflicts between cultures. The relationships within the urban cultural symbol system also include resident groups and historical events. The term "urban resident colony" refers to the collective of individual residents living in a city. These residents actively engage in various production and living activities, embodying the tangible outcomes of

society's development and civilization's progress. As society evolves and civilization advances, resident groups continue to divide and develop, giving rise to different groups and social organizations. Historical events, such as wars, revolutions, and political movements, encompass the events or figures that hold historical value or memorable significance in the lives of urban residents. These events are experienced, felt, and remembered on a daily basis. The urban cultural symbol system is a comprehensive entity consisting of different levels, forms, and contents. It encompasses visual images, behaviors, and spiritual meanings. Visual images play a crucial role in people's perception, cognition, and memory of various information within the urban cultural symbol system. They serve as fundamental elements of this system.

## 2. CREATIVE TRANSFORMATION OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURE

In the system of urban cultural symbols, the visual image is the fundamental element and the basic form of these symbols (Castells, 1983). It represents the style, taste, and characteristics of a city, forming the basis of people's initial impression. When designing urban cultural symbols, it is essential to thoroughly consider the role of visual images in constructing the urban cultural symbol system. The visual image in the urban cultural symbol system primarily consists of cultural information presented through words, patterns, and colors. This visual representation reflects the characteristics, taste, and style of a city. Chinese traditional culture offers a rich array of characters and patterns, such as calligraphy, couplets, and poetry. When designing urban cultural symbols, it is important to first abstract and transform these typical and unique traditional cultural elements. Subsequently, innovation can be achieved through abstract generalization and creative reorganization. Design of behavioral activities is a crucial aspect of the urban cultural symbol system, playing a significant role in its construction. In Chinese traditional culture, ceremonial activities like weddings, birthday celebrations, and sacrifices hold great importance. These activities serve as essential forms of people's behavior. To enhance people's understanding of Chinese traditional culture. The spiritual meaning of design refers to the emotions and associations that people attribute to urban cultural symbol systems. It is considered the most valuable and significant aspect in the development of urban cultural symbols. The spiritual significance encompasses various elements such as

urban history, humanities, local residents' and foreign tourists' perceptions of urban history and culture, and the cultural landscape. When creatively transforming Chinese traditional culture, it is important to not only focus on the visual image and behavior effects but also establish a clear relationship among visual image, behavior, and spiritual meaning.

## 2.1 Visual Image

Visual images are a crucial and powerful component of the urban cultural symbol system as they directly represent the city's history, human information, and cultural identity. These images provide an intuitive reflection of the city's history, culture, and human landscape. When constructing the urban cultural symbol system, it is essential to identify and incorporate representative and unique traditional cultural elements from visual images into the design process. For instance, in architectural designs like 'China's first street' or 'China's first floor,' one can extract distinctive elements from Chinese traditional culture. When constructing an urban cultural symbol system, it is crucial to extract and polish traditional patterns and characters. For instance, the term 'fu' can be distilled into a simplified form. These novel design techniques not only enrich the traditional cultural meaning but also boost the visual attractiveness. The symbols 'Yiheng' and 'Yili' respectively embody the concept of sky and earth, while the symbol 'Fu' signifies the unity and harmony between humanity and nature. Ultimately, the amalgamation of these symbols produces a fresh association - 'China's inaugural level'. This methodology of extracting and refining traditional patterns and characters not only elevates the visual appeal and recognition but also effectively presents the auspicious implication of Chinese traditional culture. Moreover, the incorporation of contemporary elements in the creative design of traditional patterns and characters can enhance the design impact. For example, materials such as stainless steel and glass can be employed in the design of to augment its modernity. Additionally, technologies like 3D printing can be utilized to amplify the expressiveness of the visual representation. The cultural taste and style of a city can be reflected through the visual images present in its urban cultural symbol system. When undertaking the creative transformation of Chinese traditional culture, it is vital to prioritize the design and innovation of visual images, while also ensuring their integration into the construction of the urban cultural symbol system. Apart from extracting and applying traditional cultural elements, one must also consider how to creatively transform them. Visual images serve as the most direct and comprehensive

representation of a city's cultural symbol system. Thus, paying attention to the design and innovation of visual images is imperative during the creative transformation of Chinese traditional culture. Additionally, it is important to redesign and innovate the behavioral activities associated with Chinese traditional culture, and to integrate typical and unique visual images into the construction of the urban cultural symbol system in the new era.

## 2.2 Behavioral Activity

Behavior activity encompasses various aspects of people's behavior, such as transportation, sightseeing, shopping, and catering (Huang et al., 2023). It holds significant importance in the development of urban cultural symbols. Different behaviors contribute to the harmonious integration of visual image, spiritual meaning, and behavior (Hui & Bowen, 2023). Transportation plays a vital role in the cultural symbol system of urban areas as it signifies the level of modernization and leaves a lasting impact on individuals. The field of transportation is deeply intertwined with traditional cultural elements including city planning, architectural style, and road networks. Thus, it is crucial to consider and integrate these traditional cultural elements through innovative design and extraction when establishing the urban cultural symbol system. Sightseeing is not just a popular form of leisure and amusement but also an essential component of cultural activities. The degree of tourism development in a city is intricately connected to its capacity for hosting visitors and having appropriate infrastructure. Similarly, shopping holds immense importance in people's lives and is deeply rooted in traditional culture. By integrating diverse traditional cultural elements into the shopping industry, It is important to highlight that each type of behavioral activity holds distinct value and significance, which can be extensively analyzed and explored. Food and drink have a vital impact on people's everyday lives and their recreational and enjoyment endeavors. The significance of food culture in traditional customs should not be overlooked, as it incorporates various components of traditional culture. It is crucial to consider the traditional cultural aspects integrated into the food service industry when developing the urban cultural emblem structure. By scrutinizing behavioral actions, we can discern the distinctive value and importance of various types of activities. These four undertakings not only provide recreation and amusement for individuals but also make substantial contributions to imaginative alteration, thereby rendering them indispensable to the formulation of the urban cultural emblem structure.

### 2.3 Spiritual Significance

The symbol system of urban culture encompasses the gathering of historical and human aspects of the city, playing a vital role in eliciting emotions, cognition, and connections among individuals. When creatively reimagining Chinese traditional culture, it is imperative to take into account not only the urban history and humanities, but also the perspectives of local inhabitants and tourists in order to exhibit the city's abundant history and culture. By merging traditional cultural symbols with contemporary artistic design, the unique attributes and charm of Hangzhou can be effectively portrayed. Additionally, it is crucial to consider the ambitions of both local residents and visitors when envisioning the future development of the city. The assessment of a city's urban history, culture, and human landscapes contributes to its spiritual significance. This spiritual meaning directly mirrors people's emotions and connections with the city. It not only represents the emotions and associations evoked by the city's cultural symbol system, but also acts as a fundamental basis for individuals to develop emotions, cognition, and associations. Therefore, in the process of creatively transforming Chinese traditional culture, it is essential to fully consider the factor of spiritual significance. The urban cultural symbol system is a complex and extensive system, where the elements are not only intertwined but also interdependent. By strategically and scientifically planning and designing the elements during the creative transformation of Chinese traditional culture, we can enhance the inheritance, development, and innovation of Chinese traditional culture in the modern era, thus fostering its progress and growth in the new era.

## 3. DESIGN PRACTICE OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURE BASED ON URBAN CULTURE SYMBOL SYSTEM

The construction of an urban symbol system focused on culture involves three key elements: visual image, behavior, and spiritual meaning. The visual image dimension and behavior dimension play crucial roles in the urban symbol system by creating an effective platform for the dissemination of cultural symbols. To explore this concept further, this study employs the Chongqing cultural symbol system as a case study for design implementation. Chongqing, renowned as both a national historical and cultural city and a popular tourist destination, boasts numerous historical sites and traditional buildings that serve as distinct urban symbols. In order to infuse Chinese traditional culture with creativity, this

research examines the historical relics of Chongqing and carefully selects representative visual image elements. Behavioral activities form the second dimension within the urban symbol system, facilitating the communication of cultural symbols. These activities involve interactions among individuals, between individuals and objects, and among objects. Various interactive behaviors are intentionally designed to promote the dissemination of the city's traditional culture. Finally, the spiritual meaning dimension encompasses two aspects: spiritual connotation and spiritual idea. The former encompasses the historical figures and humanistic characteristics of the city, while the latter includes the city's influence on people's lifestyle, ideology, and social trends. These elements contribute to the overall spiritual meaning of the urban symbol system. In conclusion, the urban cultural symbol system necessitates a balanced incorporation of visual image, behavior, and spiritual meaning. By effectively utilizing these dimensions, cities can successfully promote and preserve their cultural heritage while capturing the attention and acceptance of a wider audience.

### 3.1 Visual Image Design of Chongqing Historical Relics

Chongqing's urban cultural symbol system is greatly influenced by the historical sites that hold immense importance. In order to gain a deeper comprehension of these sites, it becomes crucial to scrutinize their connotation and identify historical relics that serve as prominent visual image components. Subsequently, the aforementioned relics are subject to analysis, taking into account their historical, artistic, and scientific worth. The process involved in this analysis can be observed and comprehended. While selecting visual image components, it is essential to acknowledge not just their artistic and scientific importance but also their cultural and societal relevance. By conducting a thorough examination and analysis of Chongqing's historical sites, several key characteristics can be ascertained. Chongqing, a city rich in historical and cultural assets, harbors a multitude of historical sites within its main urban area. For example, the Yuzhong District of Chongqing contains numerous historical buildings and representative locations. Hence, when choosing visual elements for imagery, it becomes vital to acknowledge the extensive presence of historical sites throughout the region and their widespread distribution (Guo, 2021). The historical artifacts found in Chongqing possess immense cultural and societal importance. Firstly, being an economic and political hub at the upper regions of the Yangtze River, Chongqing possesses abundant cultural resources. Additionally, the city's distinctive landscape, characterized by majestic mountains, flowing rivers, and enveloping mist,



adds to its cultural wealth. Lastly, Chongqing holds significant historical and cultural value as the birthplace and integral part of Ba and Yu culture. Various forms can be utilized to depict visual elements in Chongqing, including architecture, humanistic aspects, landscapes, and symbols. Architecture encompasses elements such as architectural style, shape, and structure. Humanism encompasses the urban customs and traditional attire found in the region.



**Figure 2:** Danzishi Old Street, Changjiahui, Chongqing

### 3.2 Behavioral Design of Urban Humanistic Characteristics

The humanities characteristics of a city play a crucial role in expressing its cultural identity and act as a significant means of disseminating its culture (Li & Kluensuwan, 2024). By devising interactions between individuals and objects, we can establish an efficient platform for promoting urban cultural symbols. To illustrate this concept, let us contemplate the case of Chongqing Jiefangbei Square. The design procedure initiates with field investigation and information gathering in order to comprehend the historical importance of the square. From this investigation, representative components are identified and incorporated into the design. Traditional cultural aspects, encompassing both natural and cultural dimensions, are employed. For instance, the square can be fashioned to integrate natural aspects like topography, geographical features, and vegetation. By merging these elements, Jiefangbei Square in Chongqing can metamorphose into an iconic structure that embodies both history and culture. Chongqing Jiefangbei Square, owing to its distinctive geographical location and historical context, stands as the solitary urban symbol in inland China that is acknowledged as one of the three state-level 5A scenic spots (the other two being the Great Wall and the Forbidden

City). The Chinese cultural and spiritual significance it signifies has emerged as an enduring remembrance and sentimental connection for the people of Chongqing and the entire nation. By incorporating urban humanistic features into urban design, we can partially transform the history and culture of the city, thereby promoting and preserving the urban culture of Chongqing. Additionally, designing behavior activities can help popularize traditional Chinese cultural symbols among the public, thus facilitating the dissemination of the city's traditional culture. Based on the architectural characteristics of Chongqing Jiefang Bei Square, it is imperative to develop it into a tourist attraction that combines various functions such as tourism, recreation, and shopping. The design of Chongqing Jiefang Bei Square should take into account both natural and cultural aspects. Concerning natural elements, the terrain and plants could be utilized to create a representation of the city's hilly landscape. As for cultural elements, the square can be transformed into a landmark that showcases traditional cultural attributes through architectural designing, stone carving, and sculptures. By transforming Chongqing Jiefang Bei Square into a museum that epitomizes the unique qualities of Chongqing, it not only promotes the city's traditional culture but also educates tourists about its cultural richness. During the design process, it is crucial to consider the diverse needs of different demographic groups when planning Jiefang Bei Square in Chongqing. For instance, the design should incorporate elements that awaken curiosity and provide entertainment for children, the elderly, and other vulnerable social groups. In catering to the younger generation, the design can incorporate the distinctiveness of Chongqing's cuisine and specialty products. Moreover, special groups can be accommodated with designs that foster their emotional connection with the city. When developing behavioral activities, it is crucial to take into account that the integration of traditional cultural elements should correspond to the lifestyle and aesthetic ideals of contemporary individuals. The landscape arrangement of Chongqing Jiefangbei Square encompasses the concept of "one river, two rivers, three mountains, and four streets". Specifically, "one river" pertains to the majestic Yangtze River, "two rivers" represent the charming streams between the Jialing River and the Yangtze River, "three mountains" encompass Longmenhao, Shancheng Lane, and Diaojiao Tower, while "four streets" encompass Dadukou, Nanbin Road, Ciqikou, and Changchang Pass. By effectively employing these nature-infused and human-inspired landscape design practices, Chongqing Jiefangbei Square has the ability to highlight more deeply-rooted traditional

cultural attributes. The design of behavioral activities ought to align itself with the fundamental principles governing people's daily routines and their preferences for aesthetics. Through the implementation of design strategies in Chongqing Jiefangbei Square, we can successfully promote and accentuate the traditional cultural essence of the city furthermore enabling its widespread embracement by the populace.

### 3.3 The Spiritual Connotation and Idea of Urban Cultural Symbol

The spiritual connotation of urban cultural symbols refers to the humanistic characteristics and historical background of a city, while the spiritual concept of urban cultural symbols refers to the city's influence on people's lifestyle, ideology, and social customs. Chongqing, as a renowned historical and cultural city in our country, boasts numerous historical relics, including Chaotianmen, one of the open ports of Chongqing. Chongqing Open Port was among the first five open ports in modern China and the first foreign shipping company established in China. Chaotianmen Square, one of the most significant buildings in Chongqing's open ports, showcases a combination of Chinese and Western architectural styles. The square is divided into three sections: the Chongqing port gate, the main square, and Chaotianmen Square. The middle part of the main plaza features a traditional Chinese architectural style with Xie Shan and Hang Shan roofs. The integration of traditional Chinese and Western architecture in Chaotianmen Square reflects the open, inclusive, and innovative spirit of Chongqing as a port city. Chongqing, positioned on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, holds significant importance as a port city showcasing a diverse history and culture. With a plethora of cultural landmarks, such as the renowned Dazu Stone Carving and the Twelve Views of Ba and Yu, it boasts a wealth of historical and cultural significance. The Dazu Stone Carving, regarded as one of China's three esteemed stone carving art treasures, represents the largest remaining Buddhist cave art site globally. The intricate sculptures featuring Buddha and Bodhisattva found within the Dazu stone carvings not only exhibit extraordinary craftsmanship but also provide a profusion of historical and cultural insights. On the contrary, the Twelve Views of Ba and Yu epitomize traditional Chinese landscape poems, capturing the distinctive natural and human environment of the Three Gorges Area. Serving as a well-established tourist destination in China, Chongqing surpasses expectations with its extensive historical and cultural heritage. Among the twelve picturesque spots of Ba and Yu, six have been either originated or vividly depicted by poets and painters native

to Chongqing.

#### 4. CONSTRUCTION STRATEGY OF URBAN CULTURAL SYMBOL SYSTEM — — TAKING XI'AN AS AN EXAMPLE

The strategies for establishing the urban symbol system of cities like Xi'an can be summarized as follows: the use of visual representation, the execution of behavioral practices, and the interpretation of spiritual significance. Visual representation pertains to the establishment of structures, pathways, and other infrastructure elements that communicate the cultural implications of the city (Tian et al., 2024). This encompasses urban planning and design, architectural characteristics, and street amenities. Behavioral practices involve the exhibition of the city's humanistic background and ethos through communal service facilities and events. Spiritual significance aims to articulate individuals' longing and pursuit of urban progress through transcendent activities. This encompasses the natural ecological surroundings, the human historical context, the economic advancement, and the governmental impression. While the visual representation is perceptible, the behavioral aspect remains intangible, yet it still assumes a pivotal role (Liu, 2022). Therefore, in order to accomplish the innovative transformation of traditional Chinese culture, it becomes imperative to contemplate the three facets of visual representation, behavior, and spiritual significance.

##### 4.1 Visual Image: Presenting City Image by Contemporary Design of Traditional Symbols

The visual image of a city is molded by its architecture, sculptures, and public facilities. The aim of modern design is to replicate traditional visual symbols utilizing contemporary design language to express the customary culture, thereby providing a more concrete comprehension of the city. For instance, sculptures can be utilized to illustrate the history and culture of Xi'an. In modern design, we can draw inspiration from Chinese conventional sculpture figures and animal images, incorporating them as urban cultural symbols through up-to-date design techniques. One illustration of this is the 'Treasure of Town Museum' in the Xi'an Forest of Steles Museum, where an assemblage named 'China's First History Museum' is established. This collection is a reinterpretation of traditional sculpture, merging traditional and modern design elements to resonate with individuals and nurture cultural confidence. Similarly, the depiction of the

Xi'an Terracotta Warriors and Horses can be exhibited as a public artwork. By meticulously analyzing and researching the forms of these warriors and horses, we can classify them into three categories: human, horse, and terracotta warriors. This portrayal augments people's sense of belonging and connection with the city. Another instance is the 'Treasure of Town Museum' collection in the Xi'an Forest of Steles, which reproduces traditional Chinese sculpture within a contemporary framework. Through this recreation, people can not only appreciate the cultural heritage of Xi'an as an ancient capital but also gain a profound understanding of Chinese traditional sculpture culture. The urban symbol of Xi'an lies in its buildings, roads, and other facilities, which showcase the city's history and culture. Xi'an sets itself apart from other cities with unique architectural styles, including green bricks and tiles, palatial architecture, and traditional courtyards. These distinct styles not only provide insights into the city's history and culture but also enhance its historical significance. In the vicinity of the Xi'an Bell Tower, numerous public facilities serve as visual symbols, depicting the city's history and culture and deepening people's understanding of Xi'an. Sculptures, in particular, are prevalent and significant elements in these public facilities. Notable examples are the "Treasure of Town Museum" in the Forest of Steles, the bas-relief group at the "First Chinese History Museum," and the bas-relief group outside the south gate of the city wall in Xi'an. Furthermore, the cultural essence of Xi'an can be conveyed through design and exhibitions. For example, replicas of famous historical buildings or landscapes can be designed to share the stories behind them. Various exhibitions and activities can also be organized to showcase the city's cultural significance and historical details. This approach not only raises people's awareness and sense of belonging to the city but also strengthens its identity and pride. Datang Sleepless City, included in the list of the first national demonstration pedestrian streets, is a prominent feature of Xi'an's cultural tourism. Situated at the foot of the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, the Pedestrian Street comprises two distinct sections: Datang City and Tang City Wall Ruins Park. Datang City, designed as a Tang culture theme block, offers an immersive experience through advanced technology. It seamlessly blends traditional elements of Tang culture, such as architecture, streets, clothing, and food, with modern commerce and tourism. This integration showcases the unique 'Tang style and Song rhyme' both with Chinese characteristics and international appeal. To further promote Datang culture, the pedestrian street also hosts exhibitions that provide visitors with an opportunity to explore and appreciate the rich heritage of Xi'an. For

instance, exhibitions like 'The most beautiful China, I see Xi'an' and 'Chang'an Memory, intangible cultural heritage exhibition' offer a deeper understanding of Xi'an's history and culture. By engaging with these exhibitions, visitors not only gain knowledge about the city but also develop a stronger sense of belonging.



**Figure 3:** The City that Never Sleeps

#### 4.2 Behavioral Activities: Promoting Urban Development with Contemporary Expressions of Traditional Behavior

Traditional cultural behavior plays a significant role in the urban cultural symbol system. It encompasses all activities that people engage in during city life, including both material and spiritual aspects of traditional culture (Hui & Bowen, 2023). These activities form an integral part of the urban cultural symbol system. Traditional behavior activities, to some extent, represent social history, humanistic style, urban spirit and so on, which are closely related to urban material space environment and human behavior. Various methods can be employed to achieve the contemporary expression of traditional behaviors in Xi'an. Firstly, in order to meet the needs of modern society, traditional behaviors can be recreated within a contemporary context. Secondly, the use of contemporary artistic techniques allows for the expression of the essence of traditional culture, including calligraphy, painting, traditional opera, and martial arts. Thirdly, the modernization of the spiritual core of traditional culture, which encompasses red culture, traditional festivals, and folk customs, is possible. Lastly, the integration of traditional culture into contemporary life can be achieved through activities such as parent-child activities and sports. These approaches facilitate the expression of the spirit of Xi'an city through a wide range of events. For instance, Shaanxi, renowned as one of the



birthplaces of Chinese calligraphy, boasts a rich history and a distinctive regional culture. Traditional behaviors like the 'three don't eat' and the 'three big strange' have been redesigned to align with contemporary social development while preserving the values and humanistic spirit inherent in traditional culture (Wei-Ming, 1985). Traditional behavior covers the diverse activities that individuals partake in every day, involving a broad range of formats and abundant content. For example, since 2018, the Xi'an Forest of Steles Museum has presented the exhibition 'Forest of Steles in Xi'an · Elegant Collection of Chang'an'. This exhibition presents the ancient literati's poetry, songs, calligraphy, and paintings, offering a glimpse into the life and spiritual perspective of historical Chinese intellectuals. In the domain of performance art, traditional behavior can manifest as stationary, kinetic, or a fusion of both forms. By amalgamating paper-cut art with contemporary science and technology, it becomes feasible to fabricate three-dimensional paper-cut figures via laser projection technology. These figures can subsequently be showcased using interactive projection technology, or modern science and technology can be employed to animate paper-cut art. Furthermore, contemporary elements can be integrated into traditional culture, such as merging Chinese traditional culture with contemporary fashion design to fashion garments and hairstyles with a modern twist.

#### 4.3 Spiritual Significance: To Reflect the Emotion of the City with Cultural Accumulation

The concept of 'spiritual significance' pertains to the expression of individuals' longing and pursuit for urban advancement through human conduct (Rowntree & Conkey, 1980). It encompasses the manifestation of the fundamental essence of the city through the accumulation of human encounters. Cultural accumulation holds a critical role within the city's symbolic framework as it mirrors people's emotions towards urban development. It represents the most influential and observable facet of the city's cultural symbol system. Cultural accumulation finds its manifestation in diverse forms such as urban chronicles, architectural design, traditional practices, and societal conduct. Among these, the significance of history and culture is paramount. They serve as pivotal points of reference for a city's growth. The complete preservation and inheritance of a city's historical and cultural heritage is essential to augment its allure. Xi'an, renowned for its extensive history that traces back to the establishment of county systems during the Qin Dynasty in 111 BC, has acquired the prestigious titles of 'Six nations converging' and 'thirteen ancient capitals.'

The ancient city wall, city gate sites, and architectural remnants in Xi'an are invaluable legacies bestowed by history and culture. Starting from traditional culture, it is crucial to promote and preserve the exceptional traditional Chinese culture, safeguard its inheritance, and effectively utilize historical and cultural resources. This will establish a significant platform for exhibiting the city's identity and embodying its essence. Cultural accumulation denotes the spiritual riches that arise and endure during a city's developmental process. It encompasses the presence of renowned historical figures, scenic locations, and revolutionary culture. By converting these cultural deposits into a symbolized framework of city culture infused with Xi'an's distinct characteristics, the charm and image of Xi'an can be more effectively presented. One strategy to accomplish this is to explore historical and celebrity cultural resources, placing emphasis on highlighting Xi'an's unique allure. Xi'an, a prestigious historical and cultural city in China, possesses an abundance of historical and cultural deposits. Eminent poets like Wang Changling, Wang Zhihuan, and Li Bai have all made indelible contributions to Xi'an, thereby becoming an inseparable part of the city's historical and cultural symbolic system. These historical figures have not only propelled Xi'an's development but also enriched its cultural heritage. For instance, poets such as Li Bai and Wang Wei have crafted works in Xi'an, leaving behind a cultural legacy that intertwines with the city's various epochs. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to reinforce the protection and preservation of these historical and celebrity cultural resources. By exploring their spiritual depth and conceptual value, transforming them with modern perspectives and expressive techniques, and incorporating them into the urban cultural symbolic system, Xi'an's distinct charm can be effectively exhibited. Please take note of the architectural style and give prominence to the traditional cultural features of Xi'an. Architecture has a pivotal role in the urban symbol system of culture and forms an integral component of the city's physical environment. Therefore, it is crucial to prioritize the conservation and continuation of historical and cultural landmarks in Xi'an, with particular emphasis on the distinctive traits of Shaanxi's traditional architectural style. This can be accomplished by establishing museums, antiques districts, and ancient structures within the confines of the city walls, offering tourists an immersive encounter with the history, culture, and customs of the city. Safeguard and explore the exceptional folk culture of Xi'an. Folklore, encompassing customary practices, ways of life, and spiritual convictions, holds immense significance in urban life. Shaanxi possesses its own unique folk traditions such as observing various illnesses on the 16th day of the



first month, sewing on the 18th day of April, and celebrating the birthday of the deity of flowers on April 24th. These customs represent substantial expressions of traditional festivals. In the urban symbol system of culture, it is imperative to protect and transmit these folk traditions, ensuring their integration into the city's cultural identity. Foster the revolutionary spirit and emphasize Xi'an's revolutionary legacy. The color red symbolizes the spirit of revolution and bears great significance within the city's cultural symbol system. It is vital to promote the culture of red, as it manifests a concentrated and exemplary embodiment of the revolutionary spirit. Integrating the spirit of red into the urban ethos and cultural symbol system is essential for preserving Xi'an's historical heritage and engendering a sense of pride and identity among its residents.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The growing phenomenon of globalization has led to a heightened significance of urban cultural symbols on a global scale (Zhu & Yuan, 2023). These symbols hold immense value as they not only depict a city's identity but also serve as a mechanism for safeguarding its rich history and traditions in the face of globalization. This investigation delves into the innovative ways in which Chinese traditional culture can be adapted within the framework of urban culture symbols. To achieve this, the study explores three essential dimensions: the visual representation, behavioral patterns, and spiritual connotations. Through a comprehensive analysis of these dimensions, this paper aims to provide novel insights into the creative transformation of Chinese traditional culture within the context of urban cultural symbols. Urban culture plays a vital role in urban construction, requiring preservation and continuation throughout the process of development (Chunlei & XinRu, 2022). Every city possesses its own unique symbols, which serve to deepen the impression of the city and provide insight into its values (Feng, 2023). This paper takes urban culture as its focal point, examining the relationship between art and value within urban culture. It explores the symbolic representation of urban culture and its potential future development, with the ultimate goal of showcasing the cultural allure of the city and enhancing its image (Guo, 2021).

## 6. FUNDING

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