

Maps, landscapes and ideas: on the value of "cultural China" in New Poetry

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Abstract

Chinese new poetry, which originated from the social transition and institutional change in modern China, has an inseparable relationship between its text and thought and the current situation, geographical logic and political authority. Ideology affects and even dominates the construction of cultural value system and poetic creation ecology. After a hundred years, the writing of new poetry has gradually returned to the local context, absorbed classical elements, and based on historical implications after going through the Westernization wave of European style and power dominated paradigm writing. It has begun to explore the theoretical resources with Neo Confucianism as the main body in addition to Marxism Leninism and Liberalism since the May 4th movement. Drawing on the concept of "cultural China" put forward by Du Weiming in 1989, and using the new "inner sage and outer king" consciousness structure contributed by the four generations of Confucianism, this paper reflects on the development path of Chinese new poetry, and re examines the origin of contemporary poetics, which may have the effect of rectifying errors and eliminating disadvantages, correcting mistakes and promoting innovation.

1. Introduction

In modern China, there have been drastic changes in many fields, presenting rich contradictions, and exploring effective paths, the collapse of the ideological field is more complicated and fragmented than the situation revealed in the material world. Literature, as the window of culture, undertakes the functions of refraction, reflection or revelation. Chinese new poetry flourished under the background of "removing the old and welcoming the new". Due to the influence of the "May 4th Movement", since its birth, it has basically established the situation of "new culture" with foreign thoughts as the main component as the theoretical resources. In China, it has formed a poetics with "doctrine" as the main body, mixed with some Soviet literary and artistic characteristics, and centered on official ideology. Poetics, which takes "liberalism" as the core, draws a lot of European and American artistic ideas, and intentionally grafts its cultural and historical views and critical ideas, coexist. The two almost monopolize most of the nutrients of the writing ecology and ideological construction of modern and contemporary poetry, causing restraint and misleading when scholars "write history" or poets "seek roots", ignoring the century-old course

of Chinese new poetry, which almost corresponds to the "new Confucianism". "New years of repeated changes. From Qian Mu and Xiong Shili to Du Weiming and Liu Shuxian, the continuous expansion and integration of Confucianism and the culture it represents have not only potentially promoted the construction of new poetry language for many years, but also provided a more inclusive and transcendent "culture" in the ideological dimension. China "value program. Taking it as a clue and coordinate, tracing back and reexamining the context of new poetry may clarify a Chinese-based poetics path other than "foreign style" and "vulgar tide".

2. The End Times of Confucianism and Legalism: China and the Limitation of Chinese New Poetry

According to Fu Sinian's theory of "the three elements of the Chinese Empire"(Tang, 2004), the Qing Dynasty, as the final form of China's more than two thousand years of feudal centralized rule, has accumulated the prosperity of previous dynasties, as well as the evils of previous dynasties. As a product that has been continuously derived and inherited since the Qin and Han dynasties, the obvious problems exposed in one generation are rooted in the hidden problems that have been accumulated since ancient times. Therefore, many of the characteristics that created the so-called prosperous times of previous dynasties became the accelerator of decline in the colonial movement after the Industrial Revolution. The huge historical heritage became a political burden that classical China could not transform or slowly turn around. The once prosperous Eastern system presented a double collapse of geography and culture under the infiltration and plunder of modern Western forces. However, according to Qian Mu's view that "the Qing Dynasty's vigilance against China has become increasingly lax, and its own shortcomings and inferiorities have become increasingly exposed"(Qian, 2025), the Manchu-Mongol (a mixture of nomadic and hunting groups outside the pass) ruling group and the traditional state form of classical China are not an absolutely integrated concept, but rather a complex of contradictions and conflicts. The meaning of Qian's so-called "Qing Dynasty" is the politics of the Eight Banners that originated outside the Great Wall, while the value of "China" is the lineage of the Han people as the main body that has been continuously passed down since ancient times. Zhang Taiyan, who had long been engaged in anti-Qing activities, once said in Tokyo in 1902, "We are all Chinese, not Qing people"(Kong & Murata, 2007). In this statement, "China" is the transliteration of the Sanskrit word "China (Zhendan)," which was generally regarded as a synonym for "China" in the classical era in Central Asia and Europe. Zhang's statement divides and opposes "Qing regime" and "China" in terms of identity and cultural value, which is basically consistent with Qian's judgment. Therefore, in addition to the strong intervention of external factors, China's decline after the 17th century should also be attributed to the long-standing structural problems between the regions outside the Great Wall and the Han Chinese territory. Viewed in this light, when the imperial system collapsed in the early 20th century and the Qing Dynasty reached its end, demanding that numerous Chinese customs and cultural traditions be sacrificed was not merely a consequence of the arbitrary handling of the situation under the tide of violent revolution. Such a sweeping condemnation without proper examination is unfair.

Regardless of the arguments, the undeniable fact is that by the 1910s, the "new culture," centered on Western learning, was already at its peak, unleashing a powerful and destructive influence during the fierce May Fourth Movement. Traditional Chinese cultural traditions and philosophical values were gradually viewed as products of the "old culture," repeatedly denigrated

and diminished amidst the revolutionary tide and youthful thought. Even many of its excellent academic contents and cultural concepts, along with some dogmatic, distorted elements highly bound to the old power structure, suffered the same fate of being torn apart. At that time, few in academia realized that simply "eliminating the old and welcoming the new" was not a long-term solution. China's modernization and reform were, in fact, a pursuit of "integrating the old with innovation" and "building on the past to pave the way for the future." Around the 1920s, statues of Confucius were smashed, and the paper offerings used in public parades changed from "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom" to "Mr. Democracy" and "Mr. Science." The teachings of Confucius and Mencius, and the philosophy of Zhu Xi, were superseded by Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin and John Dewey. In the following years, Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin rose to prominence, while earlier figures like Thomas Henry Huxley, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Herbert Spencer, whose doctrines ranged from democratic politics to social Darwinism, emerged. By 1919, China's traditional cultural system was teetering on the brink of collapse under internal and external pressures. The social and national cultural psychology, geopolitical thought, literary and artistic endeavors, and the values held by generations of intellectuals involved were undergoing dramatic changes. The cultural centripetal force and influence established by classical China began to disintegrate, and continued to collapse both internally and externally.

Japan was the first to propose the concept of "East Asia" in the modern era. Nobukuni Koyasu once directly revealed that this was an intention aimed at China, namely, to replace the "Chinese cultural sphere" (Chen, 2018) and dissolve the ideology of "China-centrism". The traditional value system of classical China with Confucianism as its core had long existed as a common concept and cultural ethics consensus in the Eastern world. Not only Japan, but also the regions that had suffered from "the import of Chinese classics and artifacts, and the transplantation of Chinese thought, culture and political system" (Zhang & Song, 2025) included the Korean Peninsula, Ryukyu, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Malay Peninsula and Borneo, and other Southeast Asian regions. However, since the 19th century, this structure has gradually disintegrated. The actions of the Japanese accelerated this process, but at the same time, it reflected another important message on the road of its development and transformation. That is, while technology was widely Westernized, and political system, economic model and living customs were continuously integrated with the Western world, it did not hinder the respect for historical heritage and the protection of traditional culture and its own values. Following the Black Ships Incident of 1853, Japan, entering the Meiji Restoration period, greatly emphasized Western learning and Dutch studies. However, it did not abandon or downplay its earlier adoption of Chinese learning and its free academic system. On the contrary, thanks to the efforts of figures like Kitaro Nishida, Tetsuzo Tanigawa (and even earlier figures like Shumei Ōkawa and Ikki Kita), there was a continuous exploration of cultural issues arising from the convergence of East and West and the coexistence of Chinese and foreign cultures. The Neo-Confucianism and the School of Mind, which had been introduced to Japan during the Song and Yuan dynasties, not only became components that solidified the intellectual beliefs and cultural confidence of modern Japanese power, but also began to influence China with their brilliant academic achievements, ultimately creating a situation of "unity in diversity." As the birthplace of Confucianism and once the axial age, China no longer possessed an absolute intellectual high ground.

Due to the decline of traditional culture, the spiritual world and political logic of several generations of intellectuals have undergone fundamental changes. Wang Hui once pointed out that "roughly taking the late Qing Dynasty as a watershed, the concern of Chinese scholars gradually shrank from 'heavenly principles' to 'axioms', and from 'the world' to 'the country'." (Wang, 2008). Therefore, the ideal of "great harmony in the world" that has lasted for thousands of years in

Chinese civilization, although running through the Republic of China, still exists as a slogan, has been dismantled and simplified into the concept of "our country, our people" at the specific implementation level. For most areas that were once within the "cultural circle", there is no time to take care of them, and it is beyond their reach. For the construction of their own social culture and the development of literary and artistic undertakings, they can only use a laissez faire atmosphere to cover up. The dilemma of being unable to sort it out. Except for the group advocating complete westernization, the "inheritance" of traditional culture still falls into a state of unbearable contradictions. On the one hand, some modern scholars are aware of the rigidity and high politicization of classical structures, and their innovation is necessary; On the other hand, there is controversy and uncertainty in the methodology of practical operations, with the scope of deduction, the level of emergence, the direction of development, and the curvature of constraints connected into countless puzzles. From the Westernization Movement after the Opium War in 1860, and the Reform Movement of 1898 in the 1890s, to the controversial stage of emperor protection (reform) and complete revolution in the 1910s, and to the third reform period of modern national studies after Li Ling's so-called "Northern Expedition" (Li & Fan, 2026) in 1927, during which academic ideas, theoretical tendencies and practical practices emerged over the past half century, dazzling and frequently killing each other. Almost all of them, such as Sun Yat sen of violent revolution, Liang Qichao of republican stance, Kang Youwei of constitutional monarchy, Zhang Xizan of feudal restoration, Weng Tonghe of corrupt bureaucracy, Yuan Shikai of authoritarian consciousness, Zhang Shizhao of party politics, Chen Xujing of complete westernization, Liang Shuming of cultural reform, Li Shizeng of anarchism, and Chen Duxiu of democratic enlightenment, have been deeply influenced by Confucianism or traditional culture with Confucianism as the core. They have found their own solutions or entered different paths in anti Confucianism or Confucianism governance issues with different logics, or gained experience to benefit future generations.

While the field of thought and philosophy underwent a dramatic transformation, the transformation of literary and artistic creation broke out slightly later. Before the "New Culture Movement", although Huang Zunxian, Xia Zengyou, Jin Tianyu and others had mentioned the concept of "poetry revolution"(Shi, 2023), it had not yet had a huge effect on Chinese poetry. It was not until the cannon fire of "New Youth" that Chinese new poetry, which was based on vernacular language and mixed with Western learning as ideological resources, was put on paper, and the earth-shaking situation of the literary sector was truly revealed. Born in a rich foreign atmosphere, the new poetry was deeply infused with Western learning genes in its early stages of development. Whether it was the artistic thought of Europe since the Renaissance (especially the products of modernism and romanticism) or the "New Criticism" system that gradually became popular in the United States at the same time, they all became important support for the construction of new poetry theory and text writing. The "experimental school" led by Shen Yinmo and Liu Bannong attempted to establish a new language system, while the members of the "Creation Society" directly stepped into the door of revolution in the later stage of development, opening up a more intense struggle and critical situation. It seems that in the new poetry circle of the 1920s, only the "Literary Research Society" represented by Zheng Zhenduo and Shen Yanbing, although it translated a large number of foreign literary works, put forward relatively mild and orderly propositions, taking into account the Chinese tradition. While emphasizing the creation of new literature, they used the word "organization" (Zhang, 2001) to deal with old literature, which seems to be in line with the academic activities of "organizing national heritage" launched by Hu Shi after publishing "The Significance of New Thought". As a representative of "liberalism", Hu Shi's innovation objectively laid the foundation for the integration and development of academic systems outside the country

and the local area, which was highly forward-looking at that time. Unlike his peers such as Li Dazhao who were dedicated to politics, while consolidating the theoretical foundation of "new culture", his program of "studying problems, importing theories, sorting out national heritage, and recreating civilization"(Di, 2025).also profoundly inspired scholars such as Li Linsi, Gu Jiegang, and Zhang Binglin, and provided assistance for the research transformation and reform of traditional academic systems such as Confucianism.

The "New Metrical Poetry School" was founded because of dissatisfaction with the "neglect of poetic style" after the May Fourth Movement(Li, 2016). Although it possesses typical European aesthetic attributes and romantic style characteristics, it also draws on classical Chinese aesthetics. Around the 1930s, more and more poets or scholars of new poetry gradually realized that the essence of Chinese new poetry lies in "newness" and must also be rooted in "Chinese language". The value of the great tradition of Chinese poetry cannot be ignored. Whether it is Chen Shixiang's "Lyrical Tradition"(Liu & Li, 2026), or Zhu Ziqing's formal explanation of the "Lyrical Tradition" concept in "On "Using Prose as Poetry", or Wen Yiduo's "Lyrical Orthodoxy" in 1943, they are different from each other, but they do not hinder the commonality of emphasizing classical lyrical consciousness. Behind a number of schools, theories and styles, there is an uneven amount of imperceptible background of Chinese studies (Confucianism). In fact, not only is the creation of new poetry influenced by traditional scholarship, but scholars who adhere to traditional values will even personally participate in the construction of new poetry. For example, in the "Xueheng School" which once confronted the "New Youth" from the north and south, Bian Zhilin, Wu Mi and others were deeply involved in the development of new poetry. The cultural roots of China have long provided a profound and warm support for new poetry, a literary form that most modern scholars regard as a foreign product or a grafted variety. As Qian Mu said, "Chinese literature can also be called the study of mind"(Qian, 2016), which is essentially the core of poetry and literature, and is a manifestation of the changes in the inner thinking and values of a generation of Chinese intellectuals. Xie Mian once talked about the symptoms of Chinese poetry since the late Qing Dynasty in a rather general way: "it is alienated from and deviates from the times"(Xie, 2018). In fact, the concept of "times" is too broad, and the statement of "deviation" is also not rigorous. The birth of new poetry is rooted in the rise of new culture since modern times and the influence of foreign values. However, this does not mean that new poetry has created an irreversible gap and barrier between itself and the local culture and the Chinese-based academic system of the present era. For a long time, the narrative of the history of new poetry has mostly favored the revolutionary literary narrative tone with "Marxism" as the core, or the understanding mode of the new bourgeois culture of the international (Western) with "liberalism" as the main body. It rarely takes a Chinese perspective to think about whether the origin of new poetry has local elements, re-examine the development path of new poetry and even the process of changes and derivations over the past hundred years, and whether there is a theoretical chain of Chinese culture with Confucianism as the main body.

The acceptance and cooperation between the local culture with its deep inclusiveness and the "lateral thinking mode"(Hu, 2020) far outweighs the collision and conflict. Even when facing some problems of "new literature", it is more appropriate and objective as a deconstruction theory or understanding channel than other schools with foreign characteristics. For example, on the issue of the "modernist" poetry group that insists on self and life as the center of expression and abandons the pursuit of rhythm and format, the tolerance principle upheld by Confucianism is very easy to accept and interpret this school. More than two thousand years ago, Confucius talked about the proposition of "words are enough"(Meng, 2009), believing that the meaning of the content must be more important than the design of the form. Moreover, the personal writing and life exploration

concepts shown by the "modernist" are basically consistent with the concepts of "nature" and "morality"(Chai & Luo, 2025) of the four realms of life divided by Feng Youlan in "new Confucianism". However, the sharp-tongued and fierce left-wing literary circles insist on criticizing the "modernist" as formalism, and there is a strong momentum of either/or. In the literary world under the overall guidance of "new learning", it seems to confirm the phenomenon that Yu Yingshi once judged, that is, some scholars since the May Fourth Movement are prone to fall into the dilemma of "radicalism" and "complete anti-traditionalism"(Yu, 1999). In the boiling period of change, the confusion and impulse of people's hearts are very easy to be manifested in the form of poetry or art. Under this more obvious emotion, there is a deeper level of blindness, ignorance or prejudice. If you want to alleviate these ills, it is difficult to cure the root cause by relying solely on so-called youth, parading, slogans, shouting and networking. Confucianism can provide the power of deep reflection to correct them at this time. On the timeline of traditional culture, the "clever strategies"(Zhao, 2022) that originated in the pre-Qin period can still symbolize the most gentle and compliant thoughts and character of the Chinese people. The integrity of scholars, the stability of culture, the dignity of history and the breadth of values do not have a so-called shelf life between the new and the old. Faced with the enormous legacy of "national heritage", one of the outstanding contributions made by modern scholars is to consciously promote the academic Confucian system after it is decoupled from the political form, and to inherit the traditional values that have been freed from dogmatic constraints. As a result, Chinese new poetry has also benefited from this process.

One of the fundamental factors of the limitations of modern China is the limitation of Chinese culture. For more than two thousand years, the traditional academic values with Confucianism as the main body have enjoyed an extraordinary status due to their close relationship with politics. They have also been able to subtly dominate the bureaucratic system, steer the knowledge ethics of several eras, and even devour several schools of thought. They have created a highly practical and logically concealed ruling logic of "external Confucianism and internal Legalism" or "Confucianism and Legalism as one". At the same time, due to its entanglement and embedding with politics, its value orientation was partially distorted and its academic stagnation or decline was caused. It was transformed from an exploration and research on society, knowledge, humanity and nation into a veneration and service to the system, scepter, stable order and sanctity. Jin Guantao once proposed the concept of "super-stable deconstruction" of the feudal era(Chen, 2025), in which he directly pointed out that "Confucian ideology" is a "patriarchal integration" element that is highly integrated with "landlord economy" and "bureaucratic politics", causing long-term problems in the Chinese historical cycle and falling into the cycle of prosperity and crisis. Therefore, the essence of reforming Confucianism is to depoliticize it, or at least to remove its strong connection with ideology. Confucianism itself also has good conditions to accept reform. For example, in terms of school of thought, Confucianism is not a complete supporter of institutionalization or centralization. In the late Ming Dynasty, Wang Chuanshan proposed the "New People's Way", which showed the characteristic of "rejecting the use of moral cultivation to connect the political order"(Wang, 2026).. Objectively, it is in line with the construction direction of "rule of law" replacing "rule of man" in modern Chinese society and the pursuit of "public power".

In fact, after 1920, the concept of "Neo-Confucianism" was increasingly valued by the academic community. Zhang Junmai, Xiong Shili, Ma Yifu and other philosophers focused on the "Chinese" value at the cultural level and basically established the path of modernizing Confucianism with an inclusive and open attitude. They hoped to cultivate a Chinese sentiment, not abandon the "sinic perspective"(Li, 2015)., and at the same time actively accept the academic values of foreign countries, fully communicate with various Western schools of thought, and make

them externalized for their own use, so as to empower China. The overall framework is similar to the logic pointed out by Chen Yinke when deconstructing the reasons for the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty: "Taking the blood of the barbarians and the strong and fierce from beyond the Great Wall, injecting it into the decadent body of the Central Plains culture, the old stains are removed, the new opportunities are restarted, and the expansion and development can be expanded, thus creating an unprecedented world situation"(Chen, 2015). At the critical juncture of the Confucian reform in the early 20th century, the so-called "blood of the barbarians and the strong and fierce from beyond the Great Wall" may refer to the various continental democratic ideas after the Enlightenment, and may even include some products of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, while the "decadent body of the Central Plains culture" is the traditional cultural values that have become stale due to high politicization and stagnation. Using Chen's "bloodline integration theory" as an analogy for the reform of Neo-Confucianism is more appropriate in that it can reflect its non-violent characteristics. The transition between the old and the new in Neo-Confucianism is a situation of moving from one to two, getting to the root of the problem, and open coexistence. This is far different from a single ideological fortress with an absolute gap, or a secret society party organization with a rigid program. As a result, when the traditional values with Confucianism as the main body were gradually reformed and innovated, the "China" with disordered consciousness was also constantly breaking through its limitations. In the 1930s, a path of thought that was different from the "Confucian China" which was bound by feudal politics and also different from the "revolutionary China" which emphasized worldly struggles began to unfold. It took Confucian reform as its core idea and included a hybrid scheme of various elements from home and abroad. It always adhered to the strategy of Chinese localism and also had a global consciousness to carry out mutually beneficial cooperation with others. Several years later, Tu Weiming named it "Cultural China" at the Harvard-Yenching Institute. (Tu, 1991).

3. Political Years: The Intellectual Journey in the Scarred Map

Overall, the 1940s, which included the "War of Resistance Against Japan" and the "Civil War," was an effective stage for the development of poetic creation and philosophical thought. Although there were wars and foreign invaders entering the country during this period, compared to the fragile state of the late Qing Dynasty, weak political power, social division, scattered elites, weak traditions, and numbness of the people, the Republic of China held an unstable situation and could support the progress of some cultural undertakings. Even due to the establishment of the united front banner of "unity with the outside world," the Neo Confucianism in the ideological circle had a simple national emotional value that uplifted the hearts of the people and encouraged the spirit of resistance, and further gained opportunities for development. It slightly changed the "anti criticism" and "re evaluation" faced before and after the 1920s. The abstract situation of criticism. During this period, the path of reform and opening up in Confucianism welcomed the participation of the second generation of scholars. He Lin, who studied the combination of "Lu Wang Xin Xue" and "Neo Hegelianism," returned shortly after graduating from Germany and proposed new views such as Confucianism's "not based on rejecting Western culture, but on thoroughly grasping Western culture."(Han, 2022). This indirectly inspired Liu Shuxian's theory of "transcending the inside. And in the development process of Neo Confucianism, poetry was regarded as an important form of "embodying the Tao", or precisely because of the transformation and growth of traditional culture, the Chinese traditional poetic values it maintained did not fall into a state of extinction and silence like the "Sanskrit drama" after the ancient Indian Vedas. During this period, the combination of new poetry and classical drama art developed a category of "poetry drama" with strong classical colors

and historical story attributes, as well as modern cutting-edge criticism and satire value, represented by Guo Moruo's "Qu Yuan" and "Peacock Gallbladder" and Mu Dan's "The Charm of the Forest - Sacrificing White Bones on the Hu Kang River"(Duan & Ren, 1999). Guo, who strongly opposed "old culture" in his early years, became increasingly aware of the value of local cultural context. He, along with historians under the banner of Marxism such as Fan Wenlan and Jian Bozan, began to dig deep into tradition and refine it from the remains of "national heritage" for academic or political purposes.

Looking back from a macro cultural perspective, perhaps around the 1950s, the word "new" in Chinese new poetry could be seen as a pseudo classic concept, and its so-called "modern" attribute was difficult to withstand and survive in the long history of Chinese culture. Just as the Tang Dynasty regarded their own poetry as "modern" while the Song Dynasty only regarded it as "ancient" or "previous" poetry, within the thousands of years of Chinese poetic system, the "innovation" and its "modern" value of a certain decade or a hundred years always have relativity, only producing a "non-existent" difference relative to the past of the previous dynasty, and cannot always be regarded as "new" in the overall cultural context. After the Republic of China, a large number of poets and scholars always used the nodes before and after the May Fourth Movement as the so-called groundbreaking boundary for poetry credits, viewing the context of Chinese poetics as two sections: old poetry before May Fourth and new poetry after May Fourth. The essence of their views is quite erroneous and rudimentary. Under the broad framework of Chinese poetics, the so-called new poetry is neither an imported product from outside the country nor an unprecedented creation. It is a part of the overall poetic system that does not have a special status, a derivative state of a specific period, and its significance is not significantly different from that of Southern Dynasty poetics, Tang Dynasty poetics, Song Dynasty poetics, etc. The evolution of its language or the development of its textual meaning does not have any outstanding significance in terms of leap level or intrinsic value compared to the changes in poetry and prose from the Han Dynasty to the Wei and Jin Dynasties, the self harming Tang and Five Dynasties to the Song Dynasty, and the changes in lyrics and music between the Song and Yuan Dynasties. Therefore, examining Chinese new poetry within the overall framework of Chinese poetics that combines traditional culture provided by Confucianism is not only beneficial for objectively verifying its historical status and value, but also helps to provide a vast intellectual resource to stimulate its creative derivation, continuing classical and integrating cultural context. But with the change of the situation after 1949, such a path was disturbed by political movements and other miscellaneous factors, and even disappeared in a certain period of time. The literary and academic circles of Chinese Mainland, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese have entered different rugged situations.

For the traditional academic development represented by Confucianism, the mainland region itself has an absolute advantage. The first generation of new Confucian sects mostly chose to stay in their hometowns, holding great expectations and trust in the new regime, and attempting to participate in the construction of philosophical theories and cultural ecology in future China. Entering the mid to late 1960s, during the Cultural Revolution, the development of Neo Confucianism came to a complete halt, and many products of traditional culture were regarded as ghosts and monsters, and were collectively denounced. Many Western schools of thought, which had previously engaged in games and debates with Confucianism, were now like brothers in need, bearing the tide of the era of "political supremacy" and being restrained by the class struggle of Bai Ling. In the end, Xiong Shili, Ma Yifu, and others fell ill and passed away due to family raids and criticism. Liang Shuming was also humiliated. Under the pressure of the situation, his fellow Confucian scholar Feng Youlan personally led a public criticism of his academic theory and stance. In contrast, those who died of illness in Shanghai in the early 1950sLiu YizhengHe seemed like a

lucky person who avoided more embarrassing experiences due to his early death. In the folk society, the transformation of Confucianism and the development of traditional culture have also been forced to be interrupted. A large number of simple grassroots cultural traditions, cultural relics, and even architectural remnants, due to the generalization of "breaking the four old" and the ignorance of some executors, have led to the destruction of historical sites, moral turning, and ethical collapse. When liberating the material problems of the poor and needy, the irreversible cost has almost affected the spiritual polarization, standardization, and discontinuity of several generations. The widespread decline of the "Chinese" consciousness in culture and the breaking of the self-sufficient folk order that conforms to the "Dao" (Luo, 2025). have led to the weakening, fragmentation, and even abandonment of cultural and historical perspectives in most regions and among the masses. The poet and poetic critic Jing Wendong, born in the 1960s, once recalled, "Since elementary school, our generation has been told by textbooks, schools, and teachers that China's traditional culture is very bad, and all it talks about is how to eat people and how to eat people. What about Chinese? It is primitive, backward, confused, and imprecise, and cannot explain any decent things. It is the root cause of China's backwardness and beating, and must be abolished quickly. We have been passive and accepted such preaching, and have long regarded it as the standard." (Jing, 2026). Under such circumstances, we cannot even expect the survival and new development of Confucianism, and even the basic Chinese tradition and historical spirit are in jeopardy.

The second and third generations of Neo Confucianism were basically born in Taiwan and overseas. By analyzing the social and political ecology, it can be found that this situation is a completely reasonable result. Since Chen Cheng transferred from Northeast China to Taiwan in 1948, he has been committed to rectifying the cultural and educational industry on the island, systematically expanding cultural resources, and laying the foundation for the Nationalist government's eastward migration. Although the number of cultural elites gathered in Taipei in the 1950s could not match that of Beijing, after several years of consolidation and introduction, including Lin Yutang, Qian Mu, Zhang Daqian, and others who lived in Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, and even the United States, they were all summoned and gathered, along with Mei Yiqi, Jiang Menglin, Dong Zuobin, Li Ji, Liu Shoumin, and others who had moved with the government in the "Save Scholars" plan earlier, forming a relatively complete academic network. In contrast, the west coast of the strait heavily criticizes traditional culture, indiscriminately destroys cultural relics and historic sites, and takes measures such as looting, burning books, looting materials, and imprisoning scholars; On the east coast of the Taiwan Strait, the values of ethics and morality were widely promoted and integrated with the concept of democracy and freedom. Although Taipei was under a high-pressure period of "martial law" and "party prohibition" (Chen & Huang, 1992) for a long time, violent measures against party politics and anti communist consciousness had limited impact on the promotion and transformation of traditional culture. Moreover, at that time, from basic to higher education, from publishing and publicity to academic foundations, all sectors of the island were based on the inheritance and confidence of Chinese culture, objectively creating a relatively good atmosphere. Scholars such as Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan, and Xu Fuguan, as well as Fang Dongmei, who has achieved great success in the field of aesthetics across Buddhism and Confucianism, have all directly or indirectly benefited from Chiang Kai shek's cultural construction policy of "adhering to the classics and understanding the common, innovating and adapting, and reviewing the old to learn the new" (Qin, 1984). From the commemorative speech on the centenary of Mr. Sun Yat sen's birth in 1966, to the issuance of the "Ten Point Directive" by the Ministry of Education in 1967, to the speech at the Fourth Plenary Session of the Selection Committee in 1971, and to Chiang Ching kuo's Youth Day commemorative article in the Legislative Yuan in 1976, Taipei has almost become the center of global Chinese intellectual and academic thought over the

past decade.

For the Chinese academic community and overseas Chinese in the 20th century, it generally exhibited the characteristic of "they would oppose China's Cultural Revolution, but China would not oppose it"(Tu, 2016), and highly recognized the cultural value of "China". Taipei has made excellent use of this concept, forming a matrix of support for the development of Neo Confucianism from scholars in various universities and colleges in Europe and America, to overseas leaders, wealthy businessmen, and representatives of the literary world. As a result, Confucianism's international influence continued to increase in the mid-20th century. Within the fourth generation of Confucianism, most members had backgrounds of studying abroad or even teaching abroad for a long time, objectively expanding the internal and external connectivity of Confucianism and expanding its value status. At the same time, after the Beijing authorities successively ordered the abolition of the multi nationality system in 1955, the loose identity clauses allowed by Taipei enabled more overseas scholars to obtain citizenship in their places of residence to facilitate life and work, and to retain the registered residence status of "China". There was a more stable contact relationship with their hometown in addition to cultural ideas. Chinese Mainland did not realize the above problems until after the "reform and opening up". Although it still strictly abided by the original nationality rules, it began to contact overseas academic organizations and overseas Chinese leaders in a very short time, and carried out contact work under the plaque of the "United Front". The "Confucius phenomenon" can be regarded as a classic event of cultural posture transformation, symbolizing the Beijing authorities, who have regained respect for Confucianism and restored basic respect for traditional cultural context after possessing the two words "characteristics". From the logic of "criticizing Confucius" that lasted for more than a decade, to the reconstruction and restoration of several ancient buildings and relics that had been destroyed in 1978 due to foreign scholars' requests to visit the hometown of Qufu, the government unprecedentedly required the publication of "Historical Research" to organize the writing of articles that positively affirmed Confucius and Confucianism. Eventually, Pang Pu, who completed "Re evaluation of Confucius Thought", trembled with intuition when he received the "upper level task" and felt the emotion of "if we can't make a good fuss, we'll lose our heads". Under the guidance of the upper echelons in Beijing, in the late 1970s, school textbooks gradually began to reverse the extreme portrayal of traditional culture. The educational reading materials received by the new generation of children changed from "the reactionary thoughts of Confucius" to "the thoughts of Confucius". In 1983, the "Confucius Foundation"(Chen, 2022) was established unprecedentedly, and by 1989, Confucius was even celebrated for his 2540th birthday. The central leadership of Beijing attended the speech, and the authorities set a new tone from then on, allowing Confucianism to finally regain vitality in mainland China and heralding the arrival of a new stage of prosperity in the literary and artistic industry.

The development of Chinese new poetry is closely related to the traditional cultural environment. During the period of indirect or long-term political movements in mainland China from the 1950s to the 1970s, the production of poetry with traditional genes and historical significance was quite rare. Poets who dared to create "Chinese" consciousness based on their own cultural context also almost disappeared. Looking back today, since the 1950s, when Chen Mengjia, who was passionate about classical studies and upheld traditional values, was labeled as a "rightist" (and eventually hanged himself in the 1960s due to unbearable torture), many scholars, poets, and writers have been bullied and humiliated. Even in the official cultural system, such as the Presidium and Secretariat of the Chinese Writers Association, literati such as Yan Wenjing, Zhang Guangnian, Lao She, and Liu Baiyu have suffered successively. Times have changed, and when Wu Yiqin, Li Jingze, and others, who were then secretaries of the Secretariat of the Chinese Writers Association

in the 2020s, talked about the necessity of "deep exploration and creative transformation of cultural roots" (Wu et al., 2026)., they were shocked to realize that the flourishing of culture and education at this moment is vastly different from the painful memories of that time. Half a century of history is a handwritten note full of both satire and beauty. Therefore, before the revival of the value of "cultural China" in mainland China, the prosperous development of Chinese new poetry was mainly born in Taiwan and overseas regions. Compared with the limited situation of political writing and so-called "underground literary creation" during the Great Leap Forward, the "49th generation" of literati in Taiwan during the 1950s and 1960s can be regarded as the golden age of Chinese new poetry. Zheng Chouyu, Zhou Mengdie, Yu Guangzhong, Zhang Mo, Luo Fu, Fang Si, Zhong Dingwen and others formed a gathering of elites at that time. Most of them gradually realized the value of traditional Chinese context in their writing exploration and theoretical construction, and began to promote criticism and reflection on the derivatives of European and American poetic trends. From the "Blue Star Poetry Society" to the "Genesis Poetry Society", they drew on surrealism, stream of consciousness colors and other means as resources for Chinese poetry, and achieved a modern poetic form that combines Chinese spirit with foreign techniques; And the opposition to "complete Westernization" and "horizontal transplantation" (Huang & Huang, 2017), firmly believing in the significance of "historical inheritance", striving to combine modernist texts with classical cultural values, and using traditional Chinese humanistic care and ideal connotations to govern the development of new poetry. The most noteworthy aspect is the cultural sense of responsibility that this group of poets strive for. At that time, due to ideological or various factors, their peers in mainland China abandoned or concealed the value of traditional Chinese literati's responsibility to inherit historical context. At that time, several poets in Taipei reflected the most simple Confucian sentiment of "cultivating virtue and expressing words"(Xu, 2020), which was interpreted in accordance with the theory of "benevolence is morality, music is art" proposed by the new Confucian school at that time.

Unlike the absolute struggle consciousness that Marxism-Leninism once showed on the mainland, which emphasized class, origin, and loyalty as the untouchable red line on the heads of poets and scholars, and the characteristics of liberalism in Taipei such as high neutrality, seeking nationalization and downplaying tradition, the Neo-Confucianism's advocacy of the unity of family and country, cultural roots and principled (with a stance) open attitude is undoubtedly more conducive to promoting the development of Chinese-based new poetry, and even to reconciling the contradictions in social and cultural psychology on a larger level. Overseas Chinese scholars in different social systems and ideologies are mostly inspired by it. In the poems and theories of Cheng Baoyi, Ye Weilian and others, the highly condensed Chinese philosophical genes of "life, benevolence, and love"(Zhu & Mao, 2025) can be clearly seen. The "cultural China" value contained in it means that even if the language changes and the location changes, the content between a kind of temperament, aesthetics and morality is still enough to maintain its appeal to the broader modern world. Until the late 1970s, the mainland began to reclaim this tradition. Lou Yulie, who personally experienced important historical periods such as 1957, 1966, 1976, 1978, and 1989, proofread his life's academic wisdom and life experience in his later years. He once published a sentiment in the People's Daily that "true modernization is not about conformity, but about maintaining the uniqueness of one's own culture"(Lou, 2025). Facts have also proven that when the mainland, with its population, economy, and comprehensive potential far exceeding that of the Taiwan Strait, began to return to the right track and was willing to continue the traditional and innovative ideas, its influence, academic ability, and the speed of development of literary and artistic undertakings would form a new force to change the pattern. Under the flourishing of the "new enlightenment" in the intellectual world, overseas Confucian scholars returned one after

another to participate in the development. When the literary wave created by the "new poetry tide" swept through a generation of young people, the core value of Chinese new poetry began to return to this ancient land.

Faced with the complex and unique Chinese politics, Ge Zhaoguang once stated that many current international historical theories applied here may not be as reasonable as in other countries. Therefore, in the face of China's profound and highly autonomous ideological and cultural heritage, many imported value products can also be digested and integrated. If one attempts to guide China's development with its fundamental norms, it is almost like a pipe dream. In the field of philosophy and literature at the end of the 20th century, on the side of the constantly emerging trends of "Marxism Sinicization" and "Liberalism Sinicization", (Ge, 2011) the posture of Neo Confucianism undoubtedly has its unique advantages. It does not require the so-called "Sinicization" process to integrate with the nation and society. On the contrary, the "Cultural China" system continuously improved by several generations of Confucianism is more like a theory of "Sinicization", which communicates and combines with foreign ideas with a relatively "soft" power of inclusiveness, enlightenment, and conformity. In the field of poetry and literature, the concept of "national form", which originated from the Soviet literary program during the Stalin era, has been continuously "Sinicized"(He, 2020).. From 1930 to 1940, it was successively moved and modified by left-wing literary groups and Mao Zedong into terms such as "the content of the resistance war, the form of the nation" and "the content of new democracy, the form of the nation". After the reform and opening up, it finally formed the so-called "Chinese style" phenomenon, which can be regarded as a classic case of digestion and reincarnation. In sharp contrast to the revival of traditional Chinese culture, the emergence of Confucianism, the continuation of tradition, and the flourishing of literature and art in mainland China, Taiwan's ideological and poetry circles have irreversibly entered a continuous decline since the 1990s due to the rise of "independent strength" and the ideological changes instigated after the "democratic political reform". From the "de Sinicization" phenomenon constantly presented in textbooks to scholars such as Du Zhengsheng willingly falling and tampering with China's traditional cultural path and historical philosophical values in order to seek political purposes and satisfy their desire for power, throwing out erroneous concepts such as the "concentric circle view of history" as a pretext for "Taiwan independence", which runs counter to "cultural China"(Lin, 2022)., in this context, the decline of Taiwan's ideological and literary circles and the cause has almost become inevitable. Yu Yingshi, Xu Zhuoyun, and others lived in the United States for a long time, while Huo Shaohui and Yao Xinzhong established schools or taught in Hong Kong and traveled to the mainland. Du Weiming returned to Beijing and successively presided over the Yanyuan Humanities Higher Research Institute. The mainland gradually replaced Taiwan and overseas as the center of new Confucianism and traditional academia. With the rise of locally cultivated scholars such as Zhang Xianglong, Chen Lai, and Gan Chunsong, the new poetry industry in mainland China also entered a brilliant era.

During the period of 1979-1984, poets such as Bei Dao, Ouyang Jianghe, Song Lin, and Hai Zi (mainly poetry and drama) emerged around the "Today School"(Ren, 2026). category. In addition to fully revealing political metaphors, fate exploration, value pursuit, and a sense of confusion or decisiveness in their texts, their reflections on history, traditional thinking, and classical revival gradually began to emerge. Their poetic ideas are almost based on opposition and even subversion against the older group of mainland poets such as Ai Qing, Lei Shuyan, Li Xue'ao, Liu Zheng, etc. Their poetic consciousness shares some similarities with the "49th generation" in Taiwan, but more importantly, they are independent new explorations, seeking development between self doubt, negation, circulation, and breakthrough. In the end, most outstanding literati have found their own paths to inherit history and deconstruct tradition in their own ways. Due to the excessive prosperity,

new people pushed old people, and the pace of change in the poetry world was extremely fast at that time. After 1986, the Chinese poetry world faced the rise of schools of values such as "oral language, folk culture, and anti tradition", which led Shu Ting to express her feelings of "unexpected riots and empty hands" when faced with the new trend of several young poets waving their teeth and claws in these "third generation" movements. At a time when the literary trend, deeply influenced by the logic of the Western "Beat Faction" and dominated by liberal ideas, continues to spread, and the "(Li, 2024)impetuous, superficial, and gamified" ideas it brings seem to be about to occupy the high ground of Chinese new poetry, a group of poets who cherish history and the tradition of communication have taken the stage one after another to become firm and innovative resistance forces. He maintained vitality in the complex issues of "oral writing" and continuously engaged in adaptation, confrontation, and communication with some "intellectual poets" who worshipped or submitted to Western values at the turn of the century. At that time, ideological resources were not easy to find, and only a few critics and scholars such as Chen Chao and Geng Zhanchun in the field of poetry theory could provide relatively strong defense and support for him. In the difficult development, these poets unanimously turned their horizons to a broader level of humanistic thought, opening up a comprehensive and multi spectral response and absorption.

Chen Xianfa, who proposed that "only when poets have a clear historical consciousness can they construct a spiritual structure that reaches the depths of time"(Chen, 2026), is a prominent representative of the group of poets who defend China's own culture. In his early years, he called himself a "Confucian knight-errant" and had a fairly mature concept of ecological construction and self-worth consciousness. He carried out new poetry exploration in the Yangtze River Delta after the 1980s. He did not join the "they"ism that arose in Nanjing, and was keen on operating the so-called "anti-lyricism" or "PASS" circle activities. He also distanced himself from the "Shanghai Poetry Group" that emerged in Shanghai. The inner exploration of spatial alienation and loneliness is not the poetic essence that Chen Xianfa focuses on. His logic is highly consistent with Wang Yuanhua's theory of literature and art, which proposes "using Western learning as a reference system, but not as a coordinate system"(Wang, 2000).. When some poets became night watchmen and observers on Hölderlin-style towers, or passionate performers in the crowd like Harlequin, Chen Xianfa basically inherited the artistic temperament of the classical aesthetics rendered by Confucianism, which "does not focus on strong stimulation or cognition, but on the infection and edification of life mood"(Li, 2009). With his deep, steady, thoughtful and tranquil consciousness, he promoted the re-cognition or reuse of Chinese new poetry on China's history, geography, humanities and the craftsmanship of "old poetry". Similarly, there are poets such as Ye Zhou, who is in the Northwest, and Yang Jian, who relies on Zen Buddhism. Their writing shows an extremely sophisticated duality, facing tradition while also looking at the future. This is similar to a metaphor that Zang Qing made many years later when describing the relationship between Chinese literature and world literature, namely, "a kind of dual movement like planets rotating on their own axis"(Zang, 2026).. Indeed, in their new poetry writing, the relationship between traditional Chinese culture and the values and information popular abroad has never been a one-way exchange or absorption, nor is it a blind imitation or worship of European or American or a particular poetic system by Chinese poets. Rather, it is a comprehensive, balanced, and critical examination of concepts facing the world and a global perspective. Therefore, since the late 20th century, the vitality, the continuity of tradition, and the new forces displayed in the mainland's intellectual and poetic circles have far surpassed those of Taiwan. Based on the long-term experience of both sides, we can perhaps conclude that abandoning the emphasis on traditional values easily leads to the loss of the nourishment for "cultural China," potentially relinquishing the central position within the

"Greater China" framework at the political and moral level, and evaporating the genes carrying historical imprints from literary and artistic endeavors, particularly poetics. The turbulent history of Neo-Confucianism is perhaps more adept than any other intellectual lineage at deconstructing and critiquing the development of modern Chinese poetry.

4. The Cultural Era: Preaching in Nature or a Community of Ideas

Now, when the official concept of "culture is related to the foundation of the country and the destiny of the country, and there will be no great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation without the prosperity and flourishing of Chinese culture"(Xu & Yang, 2026). has taken root in people's hearts, and the value of "cultural power" it refers to has been elevated to the height of national strategy by the highest decision-making level, the development of Neo-Confucianism and the traditional cultural lineage it represents in mainland China seems to have reached an unprecedented opportunity in the past century. The special value shown by its academic thought has also received more and more attention, increased its weight in the construction of social ethics in contemporary China, and, along with the "cultural going abroad" measures of the Beijing authorities, has carried out linkage and resource integration with overseas countries, forming a larger and more systematic value structure, moving from China to the "Greater China" category, and from East Asia to the world. This path is precisely the value pursuit accumulated in the development blueprint of Confucianism in the "third period" which is full of "spiritual humanism"(Zhang & Tu, 2019). Since the "first period" in which the mainstream ideology was established in the Qin and Han dynasties, and the "second period" in which the heavy values of the School of Mind and the School of Principle were derived in the Song and Ming dynasties, the Confucian school has faced, interacted with, confronted and integrated with Western culture, and jointly promoted the construction of the philosophical consciousness of the world in the era of globalization. In this process, the Confucian school has perfected its own innovation and expansion, which is the mission of the Confucian school in the "third period". When Tu Weiming once again delivered a speech entitled "Cultural China Re-examined: The Question of Identity" in 2013, proposing to re-examine and develop the established proposition, more than 20 years had passed since the formal proposal of the concept of "cultural China". This period was a time of rapid economic growth, a surge in people's well-being, and a continuous expansion of China's military capabilities and regional political presence. Amidst these rapid changes, social thought became diverse and ever-evolving. Neo-Confucianism responded to and engaged with new ethical elements emerging with the rise of trends and the new cultural landscape evolving due to the political environment. It sought to realize its ideals in reality while simultaneously contributing to many humanistic endeavors, including modern Chinese poetry.

Within the developmental framework of "Three Periods of Confucianism," efforts are made to resolve at least three historical issues. Firstly, it is necessary to correct and even reverse the "scientism" path since the May Fourth Movement, which has mainly focused on strong utilitarianism and realistic construction. It is crucial to clarify the difference between "science" and "ism." The former is scholarship without the exclusive influence of philosophy or the shadow of political will, while the latter undoubtedly carries a strong sense of origin, background, and attached values. Throughout the 20th century, China's "scientism" created numerous values, such as science and technology and economic benefits, but at the same time, it destroyed thousands of years of spiritual civilization. The tragic state of affairs is unbearable to witness. The most common manifestation of this is that, whether it is some elite intellectuals in the Republic of China era or some intellectual elites in the new China, they always feel ashamed when facing the West,

especially Western Europe and the United States (and at one point the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe), and there is a latent cultural psychological inferiority or belittling. In the field of poetics, this imprint is perhaps more pronounced than in other humanities disciplines. Over the past forty years since the "New Poetry Movement," and with intellectual poets as the main force, the development logic of worshipping foreign things is reflected in many aspects of poetry, including its language system, ideological orientation, and even theoretical aesthetics. Its stance of deviating from Chinese identity, its rhetoric of lowering traditional consciousness, and its fervent praise of Western masters are alarming. Its unintentional or intentional neglect of the "cultural China" connotation provided by Neo-Confucianism is one of the main reasons for the clamor on the "wrong path." Secondly, it created a long-term approach to integrate the thoughts of various schools of thought at home and abroad, and to distinguish, organize, absorb and select. The idea that "to achieve oneself, one must achieve things rather than to dominate things" (Tu, 2013) held by Confucianism in the classical era has continued to influence the growth of modern Confucian values. The inheritors of Confucianism and traditional culture usually do not carry out decisive and irreversible reform measures against the spiritual space of the world, society or themselves, but rather proceed in a relatively gradual manner, and develop relationships through exploration, contact, understanding and cyclical interaction. Therefore, there is no shortage of activities to connect the modern philosophical thoughts, discourses, political views and even value systems that are contradictory and conflicting with those of various schools of thought. As early as the classical era, the Daoist school's concept of "harmony through the Dao" (Yang, 2025), as revealed in Zhuangzi's "Tianxia", was transformed into the description of "harmony in the state before joy, anger, sorrow and pleasure are expressed, and when they are expressed, they are all in moderation" (Bai, 2026) in the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucian system after Zhou Dunyi's "moderation and harmony" in the Song Dynasty. In modern and contemporary times, Fang Dongmei and Chen Guying inherited the lineage of the convergence of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism in the classical era, continuously promoting the construction of "Neo-Taoism" thought, which is closely related to Neo-Confucianism, and effectively supplementing Neo-Confucianism with aesthetic concepts originating from Zen Buddhism; Tang Yijie and Fang Keli advocated dialogue between Confucianism and Marxism, striving for a deeper and richer positive interaction with the political program and social system of modern China at the academic level; Li Zehou, who once established his reputation as a "mentor of youth" by interpreting "freedom enlightenment", also initiated the intellectual project of promoting the integration of theories such as Subjective Practice Philosophy with Confucianism from outside the region to the inside of tradition. His understanding of the value chain of "morality" and "harmony" has a high degree of Confucianism-centric characteristics. Therefore, thanks to the efforts of many Chinese scholars, the composite map of "cultural China" has not only basically surpassed the research paradigm constructed by Max Weber, but also expanded or reconstructed the concept of "humanistic religion" (Wang, 2025). Furthermore, with its special background and powerful interpretive power, it has formed a line of thought that summarizes the literary lineage. For example, when analyzing writers such as Lu Xun and Li Dazhao who once fiercely opposed the old Confucianism, one can deeply explore their formal logic and the style of saving the nation and awakening the people's wisdom in their spiritual values, and perhaps anchor a conclusion that it contains the ultimate Confucian gentleman's sense of responsibility.

Thirdly, Confucianism inherently possesses the ability and characteristics to participate in the construction and even change the existing social ecology. After integrating the creative connotations of various modern and contemporary doctrines, the energy it presents is mainly concentrated at the academic level, but it has gradually influenced politics in a subtle way. When it

coincides with or even closely integrates with the "grand strategy" of the national cultural and educational undertakings, its ideological map of "cultural China" will become an important part of the social psychology, political power and national ideology of China at the real level. Even at a more macro level, when faced with the unequal and non-cooperative critical ecology dominated by the Western world, as well as the blind interpretation of erroneous values, it will take a series of irreplaceable measures. Just as Samuel Huntington's theory that "for most of human life, interaction between civilizations has been intermittent or nonexistent" (Huntington, 1998). was presented, the pan-Chinese cultural studies community, which is rich in Neo-Confucianism, undoubtedly took on the important responsibility of correcting deviations and eliminating abuses. It explored and promoted the extraordinary value of mutual learning among civilizations. This not only helped Beijing build the "community of shared future for mankind" framework in the present world and strengthened cross-cultural, ethnic, linguistic and civilizational connections and cooperation among multiple regions, but also proved the necessity of the "cultural China" theory in academic discussions. It is a measure to strengthen China's discourse with the East, and its essence is also an important pillar for enhancing the stability and harmony of human civilization. In fact, in today's world cultural situation, the conservative and closed role has been transformed. China, which was once regarded as lagging behind, closed and independent of the globalization system, has become an important force in protecting cultural exchange and mutual trust. Along with the open economic and trade market is an enlightened cultural field. However, some major Western countries that rose bloodily from the colonial movement have gradually become the manufacturers of regional conflicts, the vanguard of cultural invasion, the main players of moral deficiency, and the patients of spiritual disorder in recent decades due to the pain of internal problems or shortsightedness of global values. The theory of values, human rights, political superiority, social structure and ethnic contradictions, etc., originating from the Western perspective, have been thrown out, and China has become the main bearer of their spearhead. Among them, in the field of literature, the topic of "World Poetry" (Yao, 2020) has emerged. Stephen Owen examined the legitimacy of Chinese poets' writing under the so-called "centrism" discourse system of the West, thus arriving at the conclusion of pursuing "catering". (Su, 2022). Within its behavioral logic lies the abuse of power of literary criticism discourse centered on Europe and America, revealing an imbalance between regions, ethnic groups, and political regimes within the global cultural ecosystem.

The emerging concept of "Cultural China" in the East is an important measure to alleviate and even eradicate this problem. Since the late Qing Dynasty, the Chinese people around the world, along with their cultural and political groups, have been fragmented, divided, alienated, and even at odds. They have long been in a fragile state of self-preservation, imagining the ancient totem of "China" in different ways or through different channels. In the afterglow of civilization, they try to become inheritors of history and yearn for the favor of tradition, but in reality, they often appear lonely and hopeless. When Neo-Confucianism elucidated "Cultural China," which includes three layers of "symbolic universes," the values of unity, common prosperity, and shared origin among Chinese scholars began to return. The first concept is Chinese communities or communities dominated by Chinese, such as mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Singapore; the second concept is overseas Chinese who are scattered in non-Chinese communities, such as Europe, Latin America, North America and Africa, and have the attribute of "diaspora"; the third concept is foreign scholars who do not have Chinese ancestry or patriarchal attributes but have cultural understanding and consensus. In these three layers of the concept of the Chinese cultural community, which is both independent and in fact inseparable, it transcends the single geographical reference, encompasses a richer cultural connotation, and becomes a common denominator of values that brings together more people. Whether they are members in the central region of

mainland China, or overseas Chinese in the relatively "marginal areas" or even non-bloodline groups outside the region, they can all be called "cultural Chinese"(Wang, 2017) because of their common traditional recognition and cultural background, and share the rich Chinese-centric values. This is a rather broad and slow cultural landscape restoration and expansion. Tu Weiming once bluntly stated that the revival of Confucianism needs to "go around to New York, Paris, and Tokyo before returning home" (Chen, n.d.). It is important to communicate, integrate, and make choices with the world, and ultimately carry out the orderly and solid transformation and rectification of the world. This is the significance of "Cultural China" in gathering strong soft power.

At the overall cultural level, by being open and interconnected, we transcend self-preservation and transform the "mandate of heaven" nature of the classical program into a "world" nature of cultural ideals. We abandon the dogmatic consciousness of following the map and assist the operation of the modern world from a more humanistic perspective. At the literary level, Neo-Confucianism exhibits characteristics similar to the "wandering Chineseness"(Wang, 2012). proposed by Leo Ou-fan Lee in the 1990s. It continuously unfolds the interpretation and expansion of "Chinese values" through channels of experimentation, integration, and dialogue, as well as various writing, theoretical and discourse ecology, and fully embodies the basic principle of people-orientedness. No longer is the rigid pattern of prioritizing the plaques of saints, placing the imperial family and nobles first, and placing the patriarchal deities in the middle. It has even abandoned the avoidance, ambiguity, and detour of the real and immediate authority. As Fei Xiaotong said in sociological research, "frankly admit the inescapability of 'value judgment'"(Liang, 2026).. In the social sciences, humanities, and literary creation and criticism fields of modern times, there are too many subjective judgment avoidance phenomena wrapped in the guise of "objectivity". The so-called practice of "strictly adhering to value neutrality" is essentially no different from appeasement, compromise, or even tacit acceptance and flattery of the theories of predecessors or superiors. The current poetry scene has seen a problem where "criticism is no longer primarily a public practice of confronting works, questioning the times, and serving the masses, but is more often regarded as a private way for individuals to acquire academic capital, establish a discursive position, and realize identity"(Niu, 2026).. Some contemporary poets have rich experience in "muddling through" and in their writing, for the sake of so-called balance, moderation, and stability, they abandon the exploration of language, the manifestation of consciousness, or the digging into deep thoughts, not to mention the almost non-existent reflection on the times and the expression of life views. Accompanying, cooperating with, and echoing this are a number of literary critics and scholars who are good at blurring positions, shifting positions, blindly following trends, and flattering those in power. They speak of the legacy of the American New Criticism school. Whether it is the concept of "peruse" or "close reading"(Sun, 2011), it has been introduced into the field of Chinese new poetry without any changes, and used in a nested and copied manner, thus influencing the aesthetic and critical discourse of new poetry development for a period of time. The "cultural China" concept proposed by Neo-Confucianism is a kind of traditional Chinese medicine for correcting the problem in the field of poetics. It aims to break the erroneous ecological foundation of new poetry and the biased and private monopolistic nature of the group that controls the material dividends of the industry and the right to interpret the classics. At the same time, it provides inspiration from theoretical resources or creates a series of reliable theoretical systems to serve poets and critics who are capable of inheriting Chinese values and have a sense of historical spirit and traditional cultural mission. In the territory of Neo-Confucianism, it supports the development ecology of Chinese new poetry.

In the decades following the "New Poetry Movement," literary circles gradually saw the formation of literary factions or clusters based on geographical proximity. For example, the

"Shaanxi Literary Army" and "Lixiahe Literature" in the novel and essay categories, as well as the school concepts formed by Fujian, Sichuan, and Henan regions, are relatively well-known and enduring representatives. Since the new century, local writing groups such as "New South," "New Northeast," "New Beijing," and "New Zhejiang School" have emerged one after another, and the proportion of poetry in them has also shown an increasing trend. In fact, this is the relatively stable, harmonious and orderly creative stage that has come after a series of changes, revolutions, progress, new trends and reflections. Zhang Qinghua once pointed out that at present, the contradictions of poetry and literature have changed from "intergenerational opposition" to "regional division"(Zhang, 2010).. This symbolizes the unbinding of a highly politicized, power-centralized and will-grouped cultural element from the writing of new poetry. Poetry has begun to return to a state of introspection and purity, and reacts to humanistic thought, public experience and personal emotions on both academic and life levels. It is no longer a recitation of the "outline", a tribute to "greatness" and a loudspeaker for "political situation". The image of "China" in the traditional cultural context and historical space has begun to gradually revive and even refresh. The thought of Neo-Confucianism nourishes poets across regions and styles in a state that is not easily perceived. Chinese new poetry takes the treatment of "landscape problem" as a breakthrough and major achievement, and opens up a re-examination and connection of classical culture, creating new texts with local values and ideological soul. Just as Qian Zhongshu pointed out in his "Talks on Art" that "Words are not isolated, but arise from context; the Way is not empty and clear, but is expressed through action"(Ji, 2010), this statement first came from Wang Fuzhi, a Confucian scholar during the Ming-Qing transition, and still has profound value in Neo-Confucianism. In the contemporary context, its "words" and "Way" can be understood as the textual language and writing style of new poetry, while its "context" and "Way" are the cultural values and ideological roots upon which new poetry relies. Such an interpretation basically fits the idea that some of the "landscapes" in contemporary new poetry are not simply writing about natural scenery, but rather have reached a certain quality that has been deeply rooted in poetics since the classical era, the so-called concept that "the nature understood by the Chinese is basically human landscapes"(Xi, 2021). In fact, in the new chapters of Chinese modern poetry over the past few decades (especially in the last two decades), the path of "humanistic landscape" with Confucian characteristics, historical genes, and diverse colors has been continuously practiced. This approach, which includes tracing back, rediscovering, innovating, and looking forward, is almost completely consistent with the way that Neo-Confucianism has long implemented in the field of thought.

In recent years, I have focused on the relationship between "new poetry and classical aesthetics"(Gao, 2026). and the influence of "new Confucianism and new poetry"[66], and have conducted comparative and integrated studies on humanistic thought and poetic value. In addition, I have published case-by-case ideological analysis and textual dissection on representative and influential poets such as Liang Ping(Gao, 2025), Zhao Ye(Gao, 2025), Zhu Qinyun(Gao, 2025), and Zhao Xiaomeng(Gao, 2025). Among them, the issue of "humanistic landscape" in Chinese new poetry is extremely important and can be regarded as a concentrated embodiment of the concept of "cultural China". Regardless of the poets listed above, or poets such as Hu Xian, Gu Ma, Xi Chuan, Pan Wei, Li Haizhou, Zhu Zhu, Zhang Kuang, and Sha Ke who have similar classical language and Chinese traditional cultural spirit, they have effectively reversed the political programmatic poetics presented in the mainland poetry scene in the mid-20th century, as well as the text "obscurity" orientation, language "vernacularization" and even "vulgarization of colloquial language" problems, poetic "Westernization" and the problem of high "import" dependence on aesthetic consciousness that have emerged in the late century. In their respective poetic spaces, they have basically followed the traditional principles of governing the world and governing things since the

Song Dynasty. For example, the creation and interpretation of landscape images emphasize the characteristics of "understanding the principles of things and measuring human affairs" (Qu, 2022). They either use their hometown, place of residence or a place of spiritual sustenance as anchor points to break through the timeline vertically and connect the past and present with a broad vision of writing, or use the sentiment of a certain thought as a clue to communicate with history and connect with life. It is both a renovation and expansion of the old paintings and calligraphy, and a fusion, verification and refinement of contemporary and even "avant-garde" artistic inspiration with the vast cultural experience, so as to forge the ability to look ahead to "future poetics". In the complex era of undercurrents, they can maintain the ecological view and value system of Chinese literati. In the field of poetics, the value of the "interpretive" field of "cultural China" in dealing with the irrationality of the West as the axis mentioned above can be clearly reflected in the "landscape problem" of new poetry. For example, when Fernand Braudel used the European concept of mountains and rivers as the basis of his argument and literary works as the form of expression, he once said that "mountains and rivers are usually a world far from civilization, and civilization is a product of cities and lowlands"(Zhao, 2019). This is very different from the connotation of mountains and rivers in the Chinese cultural concept. In the East, whether on the Korean PeninsulaZheng ZhirongHigh notes, Zheng Xuanzong, or Japanese poets such as Takahashi Muraro, Miki Lufeng, and Muroto Hisashi have all profoundly proven in poetic theory or poetry creation that mountains and waters are not only distant wastelands of the civilized world, but also closely related to cities and neighborhoods. At a higher level, they even have cultural hotspots and political significance. Both the Korean Peninsula and Japan have been regions that have been influenced by Confucianism, spread Han culture, and instilled Chinese ideology for thousands of years. Even though they have entered an independent development path and begun to attempt to construct their own historical roots that are different from Chinese civilization in modern times, the inevitable fact is that they are unable to escape the influence of Chinese culture and Confucian traditions. To this day, South Korea revolves around Li Tuixi and Ding Ruoyong, while Japan revolves aroundYamazaki AnsaiThe research of Confucian schools such as Shining Shiraishi is still ongoing, and from a global perspective, Japan and South Korea have almost become major centers of "modern Confucianism" outside of China. In fact, there are also works in the contemporary Chinese poetry ecology that carry their own mountain and water traditions and cultural philosophical ideas. Taking recent years as an example, texts such as "Dunhuang Chronicles," "Conglang," "Shanghai," "Longquanyi," "Shi Kui Shu," "Yue Lang Xing Xi Jiu Zhang," "Yongfu Temple," and "The Book of the Forgotten," almost all reflect Sun Chuo's concept of "viewing all things in the dark, and being out of touch with nature." Since the so-called "all things" can be infused with humanistic emotions and historical significance, let alone "mountains and waters," this corner of all things.

In the perspective of Neo-Confucianism, the concept of mountains and rivers is a composite concept of unity, diversity, and multifacetedness. Its unity lies in its complete symbolic meaning and cultural status, while its diversity and multifacetedness mainly revolve around the implicit humanistic attributes, the explicit natural elements, and the relatively special political atmosphere hidden within them. In classical China, whether they were bureaucratic literati from Confucian scholar-official backgrounds or idle scholars who had not yet achieved official rank, they frequently used their imaginations. They used landscapes as the basis for presenting their career paths, views on life, and values, placing their thoughts on life, officialdom, and seclusion among streams, valleys, and villas. Whether it was the monks and scions of noble families who wandered and hid in the mountains and rivers of the Wei, Jin, and Southern Dynasties, such as Xie An and Tao Hongjing, or the countless poets who took the name of hermits and laymen such as Wang Wei, Song

Zhiwen, and Cen Shen on Zhongnan Mountain since the Han and Tang Dynasties, or the countless great poets and writers of the Song and Yuan Dynasties, the concepts of "the distance of the rivers and lakes" and "the worries of the court"(Wu, 2024) that Fan Zhongyan spoke of were born from this. Among them, the landscapes in the poems and prose of past dynasties have a highly integrated yet leaping inheritance relationship. As Xu Zhuoyun pointed out, in the traditional Chinese concept, "the realm after death is a continuation of life before death"(Xu, 2024).. After the physical life of a generation of literati passes away, the landscape world carried and created in their poems and prose will continue to be passed on to future generations, eventually forming a broad and rich community of landscape ideas full of the Confucian concept of "heaven and man".

In modern times, Chinese new poetry has been more heavily influenced by the style of realism. In addition, several cultural movements have always emphasized the return to daily life and the importance of human values. The "Western learning wave" has had a subtle influence on China. As a result, the "privilege" of poets to "transform real space into artistic space"(Jiang, 2026). has been gradually flattened and applied to local dry landscapes and small rivers. In terms of the initial level of writing and the relationship of artistic inheritance, it is slightly decoupled from the profound heritage of the classical era. When the value of "cultural China" rises, what it mainly eliminates in the field of poetics is precisely this kind of detriment. Qian Mu's consciousness of "unity of classics and history"(Huang, 1987) in his study of literature and history, and the means of integration to solve the problem of "the school of classics emphasizing ideals and the school of history emphasizing reality", seems to be a key to inspire contemporary poets. New poetry takes the problem of "mountains and rivers" as its main body and brings an integrated connection with the historical context, thereby breaking the so-called absolute separation between the old and the new since the May Fourth Movement, and making the seemingly discontinuous and unprecedented problem of poetry a symbol of the continuous continuation of Chinese culture. The literati who create poetry with this kind of thinking have also basically played the role of protecting the dignity of literature. In an era in which most pens are driven by capital, obtained by politics, and controlled by vulgarity, Chinese new poetry needs the support of "cultural destiny" provided by the new Confucianism.

As early as the pre-Qin period, the spiritual formula regarded as "the secret agreement between God and the king"(Yang, 2024) was quite perfect. Within the feudal ruling class and cultural elite group, the core meaning of this theory was to maintain the world order of "revering heaven and protecting the people" and maintain a relatively harmonious and stable cultural lineage and social order. It was called the state of "inner sage and outer king". Under this sway, countless classical poems and prose works emerged, some racing along the path of "serving the emperor like Yao and Shun," others stirring with the ambition of "unifying the world." Wang Anshi, Su Shi, Ouyang Xiu, Zhang Dun, and Fan Chunren are prime examples. However, this logic has become increasingly ineffective in modern times. The system centered on Confucianism, which encapsulates the essential ideas of Taoism, Zen, Yin-Yang, Mohism, Legalism, the School of Names, the School of Diplomacy, and other schools, has become insufficient to cope with the rapidly changing world environment, including external impacts, due to its slow or even stagnant development. Thus, after a century, Neo-Confucianism, in forging the values of "Cultural China," has given birth to a broader and more diverse core theory: "Inner Sage Emerges from Outer Kingship." When the classical "Tianxia" became the modern "world", Neo-Confucianism still retained the core of the traditional Eastern philosophical thought. The "inner sage" built on the highly Chinese-centric ethics, morality, life and values is the Confucian orthodoxy that has a great inheritance relationship with the historical context. Its importance is such that even Francis Yoshihiro Fukuyama, who concocted the "end of history" thesis to promote the superiority of the

American system, had to admit that the social system constructed by Confucian culture once gave "China the world's first modern, impersonal state apparatus"(Fukuyama, 2016), forming a relatively complete governance system and literati order. The so-called "New External Kingship" differs from the old concept, which revolves around the art of rulership and the simplistic goal of governing the country and bringing peace to the world. It is a series of ideological projects that establish ethical norms and political systems. Its "newness" lies primarily in the shift in its primary pursuit. It has moved from the desire to digest and integrate indigenous Chinese thought to construct a new, established system, to embracing the world, promoting the overall development of a global perspective, and uniting with foreign academic theories to compensate for, innovate, and even reshape itself. This "New External Kingship" highly integrates scientific and democratic thought, liberal ethics, and various political models, whether enlightened or conservative, and even incorporates some religious connotations from the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe. Mou Zongsan once noted that the expansion of "external kingship" is not only an extension, compensation, or correction of "internal generation" from the perspective of modern institutions and democratic thought, but also has the value of echoing and positively responding to the core essence of "inner sagehood". It takes the Confucian and Mencian philosophy of mind and nature and the cultural wisdom of traditional China as inner cultivation, and uses the Democracy concept with Western characteristics as an aid to the external path, forming a theoretical model that both takes care of people's hearts and solves the problem of humanistic concern, and is based on reality and promotes institutional innovation.

In Wang Gungwu and Harding (Harry Harding) and other scholars have successively discussed the "Greater China" (Harding, 1993), and Singapore and Taiwan have successively practiced some of the applicability of "endogenous new foreign king". In the past twenty years, under the grand goal of "national rejuvenation", the Chinese mainland has explored the expanded version of "cultural China" more deeply. It is not limited to the integration of the West and China, the coexistence of Confucianism with science and democracy, but also to highly integrate and adapt political thought, including Marxism, with the current situation of Chinese society, to generate valuable development experience and lessons, and then promote the localization of traditional Marxist-Leninist scholarship, internationalized or liberalized enlightenment doctrines returned from overseas, and the relatively self-renewing and reforming new Confucianism, to react between multiple systems. It has not only made some achievements in the direction of "using humanistic spirit to remedy the evils of materialism" (Xiao, 2025). that Qian Mu once hoped for, but also produced a more benign structure, which has enabled people such as Yuzo Mizoguchi (Yuzo Foreign historians, including Mizoguchi, have made bold pronouncements that at a time when the capitalist approach that emphasizes competition is reaching its dead end, the Chinese path, which includes the traditional-based consciousness of "harmony and coexistence"(Liu, 2005). and modern forward-looking wisdom, will be the hope for leading humanity out of the current predicament. The development of Neo-Confucianism in modern times has transformed the rigid and classical concept of "common subject" or "axis body" representing the class division problem of "inner sage and outer king" into a "community" scheme with equal personality, respect and commonality, and interconnected consciousness at the parallel level. It not only provides an effective example for the "Third World exceptionalism"(Chatterjee, 1998) after breaking the colonial system and overturning the so-called "universal values" that strongly dominate many regions of the world, but also, like the concept of "representing a global institutional structural change"(Keller, 2010) presented by China's rise in political power, military economy, and economy, the philosophical thought of "cultural China" is constantly shaking and influencing the changes in the world's cultural value system, the right to criticism, and the aesthetic structure.

Chinese poetry is undoubtedly a beneficiary. The World Philosophy Conference, initiated by new Confucians such as Du Weiming, was held in Beijing. More and more Chinese scholars, such as Chen Lai and Yang Guorong, began to enter the IIP International Philosophy School. In line with the development trend of Chinese tradition being increasingly valued globally, the recognition and influence of Chinese new poetry texts outside the country continue to expand, and the value of poets increases due to their Chinese characteristics. In recent years, there have been numerous poetry festivals in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, many of which revolve around the meaning of "cultural China" and even directly point to the essence of Confucianism. For example, the Chengdu International Poetry Week's "Ultimate Care: Human Life and Ecology", the Qinghai Lake International Poetry Festival and Roundtable Conference's "Human and Nature, Harmonious World", and the Qionghai Silk Road Poetry Week's "Regional, Ethnic, and Global Poetry" can almost all reveal the modern meaning of "Great Harmony" that originated from "Guoyu Zhengyu" and "Shangshu". Under the ideological concern of "reaching the pinnacle of harmony" (Gan, 2022), the path of Chinese new poetry towards the world hall, or the spiral ladder of reshaping world values with Chinese culture, has a profound correlation. Poetry creation and theoretical construction based on the coordinate system of "cultural China" are essentially promoting the modern expansion of Chinese centric culture. Qian Liqun defined the concept of "modernity" in Chinese literature and culture using the term "continuous time"(Qian, 2024).. What he pointed out is that the construction of cultural discourse in China has not yet ended, and the responsibility of Chinese modern scholars is still great.

The most brilliant achievement of Neo-Confucianism over the past century is mainly in its innovation and reaffirmation of traditional philosophical thought and fundamental humanistic values, which has created a reliable historical foundation for the cultural revival of ancient China. In the torrent of modern transformation, it has not been completely destroyed, lost its own characteristics and genes, and completely become a product of "globalization", submitting to the framework of an unequal, imperfect and mutually trusting global system. The issue of "Chineseness (From a Chinese Perspective)"(Zhang, 2015)., which once rose in response to external cultural challenges, has now become a theoretical symbol of China's reverse export of cultural values to the outside world and even its control of some of the world's intellectual interpretation power. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the efforts of three generations and four groups of Confucian scholars and the hard work of countless Chinese intellectuals have not been in vain. All these achievements have provided long-term cultural ecological protection, theoretical resources, and indexes for the development of modern Chinese poetry. As a window and platform for the presentation of the nation, ethnicity, geography, and overall civilization system, poetry and literature almost naturally shoulder the mission of speaking for China, reflecting on history, and pursuing a more just, reasonable, and abundant international cultural environment. As Zhang Xudong, who has been studying in the United States for a long time, emphasized, the contemporary Chinese intellectuals and writers must consider "how to maintain cultural autonomy in the context of globalization"(Li, 2018)., and avoid being swept up or forcibly incorporated into the so-called "world mainstream discourse" system in a passive manner. The short-term effect of the writing and theoretical criticism of modern Chinese poetry is to expand the writing of Chinese customs, the rebirth of classic stories, and the linkage of life portrayals. The long-term goal is undoubtedly to seek the ability and qualification to judge, define, and deal with future poetic culture, and to promote the re-examination and correction of historical narratives by alienating oneself and influencing the world. Just as in the past, Confucianism was criticized as dross and regarded as chaff due to its complex political symptoms, there have been countless misjudgments and misinterpretations between traditional Chinese poetics and modern poetry, resulting in a

situation of division and decline. Today's poets, just like today's scholars and countless Chinese intellectuals, have left the words "Our generation of scholars' task is to rebuild a temple of Chinese culture and values"(Jiang, 2026) in their latest works. This seems like a vow, or a testament left by the predecessors of the previous era. Admittedly, there are still many difficulties to be solved in the construction of the "temple" of modern poetry, but perhaps we can start by returning to "China".

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