Construction of Knowledge on 'Tianfu Culture' in Public Education at Museums in the Chengdu Area

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Abstract: "Tianfu Culture", as the cultural symbol of Chengdu city, plays an important role in promoting the rapid development of Chengdu and in constructing a world-renowned cultural city. Museums in the Chengdu area is dedicated to promoting and preserving the spirit of Tianfu Culture through the interpretation of cultural relics, various thematic public education projects and activities, effectively utilizing local cultural resources, exploring cultural values, and revitalizing cultural artifacts. This article focuses on four representative museums in Chengdu: Jinsha Site Museum, Chengdu Museum, Sichuan Museum, and Yongling Museum, to explore the public education role that local museums play in protecting, exhibiting, and disseminating Tianfu Culture, and offers constructive suggestions. The article argues that public education constructs the knowledge system of Tianfu Culture through cultural relics, guiding the audience to develop regional cultural thinking qualities through interpretation, reflection, induction, and exploration, internalizing them into the general cognitive structure of the public. This process helps to inherit the spirit of Tianfu Culture and enhance the city's cultural brand.

Keywords: Tianfu Culture; Chengdu; Public Education in Museums; Knowledge Generation

1. The Conceptual Evolution of Tianfu Culture

The interpretation of the concept of Tianfu Culture can be traced back to the Western Zhou Dynasty. During this period, "Tianfu" held significant official positions and played cultural roles in various aspects such as national ancestral temples, laws, documents, alliance treaties, official judicial documents, maps, household registers, local governance, and political achievements[1]. This cultural imprint was thus associated with "Tianfu." Chengdu's history has witnessed four significant "peak periods," leaving important imprints that continue the inheritance of Chinese civilization[2]. The ancient Shu civilization was the gestation stage of Chengdu's Tianfu Culture, dating back approximately 4500 years. The Chengdu Plain nurtured the source of Shu culture - the Baodun culture, laying a solid foundation for the formation of Tianfu Culture. The Baodun culture, along with the Sanxingdui culture and Jinsha culture, represents the ancient Shu civilization, serving as fertile soil that nurtures the roots and soul of Tianfu Culture[3].The Qin and Han dynasties marked the formative period of Tianfu Culture. After the Qin Dynasty annexed Ba and Shu, the Shu commandery was established[4]. Li Bing's water management efforts led to Chengdu Plain being referred to as the "Land of Abundance" with fertile fields stretching for miles, laying the material foundation for the proliferation of Tianfu Culture. Additionally, the political, economic, and cultural exchanges during the Qin and Han dynasties provided conditions for the diversity and richness of Tianfu Culture.

During this period, Chengdu became an important political, economic, and cultural center in the southwestern region, attracting a large number of literati and ink artists. The Tang and Song dynasties represented the heyday of Tianfu Culture. During this period, literary figures emerged in the Land of Abundance, such as Du Fu and Su Dongpo, who created a plethora of literary works, adding a rich literary atmosphere to Tianfu Culture[5]. Du Fu, in particular, depicted society's hardships and the people's suffering with his authentic and profound emotions, becoming a gem in Chinese literary history. Du Fu's Thatched Cottage, as a symbol of Du Fu's culture, also became one of the important landmarks of Tianfu Culture, promoting the prosperity of Tianfu Culture. The concept and social awareness of Tianfu Culture experienced a low ebb during the Ming and Qing dynasties due to regional disadvantages but saw a revival in modern times[6]. With the acceleration of contemporary urbanization processes, people's attention and emphasis on culture have continued to increase. In 2017, the 13th National People's Congress of Chengdu City of the Communist Party of China first proposed the concept of "Tianfu
Culture" and emphasized the need to promote Tianfu Culture, striving to build a world-renowned cultural and creative city, a tourism city, and a city renowned for events[7]. The concept of Tianfu Culture has received new interpretations in contemporary times, expanding the internal and external domains of cultural functions, tracing back to the roots of Chinese civilization while also participating in urban planning and development strategies. As a combination of Chengdu's history, geography, and humanities, Tianfu Culture is an important support and unique charm for Chengdu's development. Museums, as places for the preservation and dissemination of culture, play a crucial role in shaping Tianfu Culture in the new era.

2. Interpretation and Dissemination of "Tianfu Culture" in Public Education at Museums in the Chengdu Region

The museums in the Chengdu region serve as vital spaces for the preservation and inheritance of the Shu civilization, creating a platform for the storage and dissemination of knowledge regarding the past, present, and future of Tianfu Culture. In recent years, major museums in Chengdu have launched a series of activities focused on interpreting regional cultural histories, uncovering the value of exhibits, effectively utilizing space, and bringing artifacts to life, all aimed at attracting wider public engagement. This approach underscores the museums' commitment to promoting the understanding and appreciation of Tianfu Culture, fostering a deeper connection between the public and the rich cultural heritage of the Chengdu region. Through these initiatives, museums play a crucial role in not only preserving tangible artifacts but also actively engaging visitors in the exploration and interpretation of the cultural significance embedded within Tianfu Culture.

2.1. "Exploring Chengdu Museum: Chengdu Historical and Cultural Education" Community Educational Activities

The "Exploring Chengdu Museum: Chengdu Historical and Cultural Education" community educational activities utilize iconic artifacts from the ancient section of the exhibition, such as the "Stone Rhino," "Lacquerware," and "Portrait Bricks," as educational resources to conduct a series of educational events. Within the folklore section exhibition hall, distinctive scenes of Chengdu's traditional culture are showcased, including "Soft Toffee Cakes," "Ba Ba Banquet," and "Teahouse Life," alongside various tea sets, vividly illustrating Chengdu's longstanding teahouse history. The modern history section exhibition hall highlights Chengdu's significant role in the Baolu Movement and the Liberation of the Southwest, exuding a strong red cultural ambiance with profound educational value for children and adolescents. However, educational activities related to these two exhibition halls are relatively limited and require further enhancement.

2.2. "Beauty of Han Dynasty Architecture" Community Education Curriculum

The "Beauty of Han Dynasty Architecture" curriculum is divided into three parts: historical and cultural explanations, scientific exploration, and practical activities. However, the course has some shortcomings in terms of content, teaching staff, and time allocation. Firstly, the curriculum does not fully cover the historical and cultural context behind the architecture. For example, artifacts unearthed in the Chengdu region during the Han Dynasty, such as stone que, pottery towers, and portrait bricks, were products of the prevalent "elaborate burial" practices at the time, reflecting the local people's views on life and death (treating death as life and the ascent of the soul), and showcasing the socio-economic and cultural development of Chengdu during the Han Dynasty. However, the curriculum overlooks this aspect of knowledge in its content design and presentation, focusing solely on architectural-related topics, resulting in insufficient historical and cultural depth in the course content.

Secondly, the museum education center staff are responsible only for the historical and cultural aspects of the course, while the scientific exploration and student practical activities are led by institutional teachers and external instructors. This frequent rotation of teachers may lead to students not adapting to teaching styles. Additionally, institutional teachers lack backgrounds in museums and education professions, which could potentially impact educational outcomes.

2.3. "Golden Sand Ancient Shu: Pottery Making Experience" Community Education Activity

The "Golden Sand Ancient Shu: Pottery Making Experience" community education activity was
introduced by the Golden Sand Site Museum on New Year's Day in 2018, targeting children aged 7-12. The activity typically lasts for 2 hours and combines explanatory sessions with hands-on experiences. The entire activity revolves around pottery artifacts in the museum, but during the event, there is limited time dedicated to explaining the cultural significance of the artifacts, failing to elucidate the ancient Shu cultural connotations behind the pottery displayed in the showcases for the students. Instead, there is an excessive focus on teaching pottery techniques such as kneading, pinching, carving, and pressing, leading to a lack of a strong connection between the activity content and its theme. Additionally, during the pottery-making segment, external pottery instructors provide instruction independently, without coordination with museum education staff, potentially resulting in disorder during the class.

2.4. "Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety in Paper Cutting" Community Education Course

The "Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety in Paper Cutting" course uses paper cutting as a medium to help students understand the historical and cultural significance of the Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety, to some extent fulfilling the educational role of the museum. However, through investigation and detailed analysis, we have identified some issues in the educational content and teaching objectives of this community education case. Firstly, the course tends to focus on explaining knowledge related to paper-cutting art, with the primary aim of guiding students to appreciate the art of paper-cutting, while neglecting the regional historical and cultural significance carried by the Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety. Secondly, the hands-on activities in the classroom take up a significant amount of time, with students engaging in simple cutting, folding, and decorating patterns on the pre-prepared models of the Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety. As a result, the completed works exhibit a lack of diversity, showing similarities among them.

3. Public Education Models Promote the Spread of Tianfu Cultural Spirit

3.1. Strengthening the Cultural Connotations of Educational Activities

An investigation into the public education activities, courses, and lectures conducted by the four museums in Chengdu revealed that they have not fully tapped into the cultural resources within the museums and the cultural connotations have not been adequately interpreted. For example, the "Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety in Paper Cutting" course offered by the Yongling Museum focuses on paper cutting techniques and music knowledge, with little content related to the regional cultural and historical knowledge behind the Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety, failing to fully showcase its profound cultural connotations. The "Exploring Chengdu Museum: Chengdu History and Culture" community education activity developed by the Chengdu Museum only implements educational activities around the well-known cultural relics in the ancient section of the "Chengdu History and Culture Exhibition" gallery, with minimal educational content developed for the modern and folk sections, not fully utilizing the museum's cultural resources. The "Historical and Cultural Themed Courses" at the Jinsha Site Museum and educational activities such as "Han Dynasty Chariot Travel" and "Beauty of Ancient Architecture" at the Sichuan Museum all share a common phenomenon: teachers do not provide comprehensive and detailed explanations of the historical and cultural knowledge contained within the artifacts during the implementation process. This can lead to learners only superficially receiving the content of the community education activities without fully understanding the historical and cultural connotations embedded within them.

3.2. Enhancing the Professionalism of Educational Talent

An investigation into the educational teams at museums in the Chengdu area revealed the presence of an unreasonable structure and insufficient professional education personnel. Firstly, the unreasonable structure of the educational teams is characterized by a predominance of young education staff in museums, lacking experienced educators, and failing to establish an age hierarchy. Secondly, the overall number of community education staff in the four museums is relatively low, leading to a shortage of guides during peak visitor times on holidays. Thirdly, the educational teams in museums mainly consist of full-time guides, volunteers, and part-time guides, with a relative shortage of professional education personnel with backgrounds in museum studies, cultural relics, and related fields. Furthermore, adult volunteers are often non-professionals interested in cultural relics, primarily involved in exhibition explanations and rarely participating in exhibition design and content creation. This lack of involvement may result in an incomplete understanding of the historical and cultural knowledge behind the artifacts,
potentially affecting the effectiveness of visitor experiences and the educational functions of the museums to a certain extent.

3.3. Expanding Audience Cognitive Experiences through Interaction

As the technological content of museum exhibitions continues to increase, museums are exploring diverse exhibition forms and striving to understand the cognitive processes and needs of their audiences. They are making efforts to create spaces for audience experiences, interactions, and sharing, thereby expanding beyond the traditional functions of collection, research, and display[8]. This study surveyed the Jinsha Site Museum, Chengdu Museum, Sichuan Museum, and Yongling Museum, and found that they primarily conduct public education activities or implement courses through a combination of guided tours and hands-on experiences. However, during the guided tours, educators often employ a "preaching" style of knowledge transmission, focusing excessively on the output of educational content and displaying a subjective inclination towards knowledge impartation. They carefully design the transmission of knowledge from simple to complex in a unidirectional manner to the audience, viewing them as mere recipients of knowledge and information, while neglecting the impact of individual differences in knowledge system construction. This "preaching" educational approach appears monotonous and authoritative to audiences with strong subjectivity and a high desire for knowledge, overlooking the crucial role of interaction in knowledge generation.

Therefore, museum education operates outside the traditional school teaching model, aiming to assist the public in acquiring new knowledge. Faced with audiences from diverse knowledge backgrounds in society, the traditional mindset of "education through exhibition" evidently fails to meet the interactive needs of visitors. Educators should create space within the internal and external knowledge systems of museum artifacts, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the process of knowledge construction. By engaging visitors in activities that stimulate critical thinking, educators can involve them in the cognitive process of exploring the historical logic behind physical objects. Through the guidance of educators, a mutually beneficial cycle of interactive learning can be established. For example, the "Jade Vision Design: Special Exhibition on Ancient Chinese Jade Patterns" at the Shanghai Museum in 2017 aimed to create a dialogue between the past and present, enabling visitors to understand the design thinking and modes of thought in ancient Chinese society. This approach revitalized these ancient artifacts in the contemporary context, offering visitors a completely new exhibition experience.

3.4. Expanding the Social Reach of Educational Initiatives

The four museums studied in this research primarily focus their educational programs, courses, and activities on children and adolescents when shaping regional culture. However, there is a significant lack of educational projects targeting middle-aged, elderly, and community populations. Educational activities for middle-aged and elderly groups are often limited to brief training experiences and lecture-style events, lacking segmented research on different audience groups during the implementation of educational projects. For example, the Chengdu Museum organizes theme-based educational activities such as "Exploring Chengdu Museum," "Special Exhibition Encounters," and "Traditional Festivals," while the Jinsha Site Museum conducts the "Exploring Jinsha" series of activities. The Yongling Museum offers courses like "The Twenty-Four Skills in Paper Cutting," and the Sichuan Museum hosts events like "The Light of Ancient Shu Civilization," all targeting children and adolescents as the primary educational audience.

Although children and adolescents belong to different groups with distinct characteristics and developmental patterns, these four museums often mix these two groups in their educational programs, frequently having both adolescents and young children in the same class or activity without tailoring the education to suit individual needs.

4. Exploring and promoting local culture through public education in museums in the Chengdu area

4.1. Enhancing the Cultural Bearing Capacity of Public Education Content on Tianfu Culture

Chengdu museums should base their educational content on the physical artifacts within the museum, deeply excavating and elucidating the cultural connotations embodied in these relics. This includes organizing relevant exhibitions and educational activities and collaborating with schools to develop
educational courses on Tianfu culture, to enhance the cultural bearing capacity of educational content. By doing so, museums can fulfill their public education function, and increase the public's enthusiasm and experiential satisfaction in participating in educational activities and exhibitions. For example, when the Chengdu Museum plans educational projects based on the "Chengdu Historical and Cultural Exhibition," it should fully explore artifacts from different periods, rather than solely focusing on ancient relics. Similarly, when the Yongling Museum conducts the "Twenty-four Arts and Crafts in Paper Cutting" program, it can adjust the educational content and objectives appropriately, emphasizing the dissemination of historical culture with paper cutting as a supplementary aspect. During the teaching process, detailed explanations of the regional historical culture embedded in the Twenty-four Arts and Crafts should be provided to the audience, and their understanding of the knowledge should be reinforced through paper-cutting activities.

4.2. Strengthening the Construction of Public Education Teams

Currently, Chengdu museums face a shortage of outstanding talents and education professionals with professional backgrounds in their public education teams. Firstly, museums need to be stringent in talent selection, ensuring that guides and educational staff not only possess backgrounds in history, archaeology, museum studies, and education, but also consider their cultural knowledge, language proficiency, external image, communication skills, emotional control, and other basic skills to enhance the public service capabilities of museums. Secondly, Chengdu Museums should provide comprehensive pre-job training for new staff and volunteers, enabling them to have a deep understanding of the museum's exhibitions, unique artifacts, and daily work arrangements. For individuals with some educational experience, the focus should be on the museum's exhibition themes and regional cultural characteristics, providing training that enhances their understanding of the regional cultural history behind the artifacts. Furthermore, museums can attract high-level talents from relevant fields, emphasizing talent reserves to improve the quality of the education team, optimize team structure, and establish a well-structured composite education team.

4.3. Constructing a Multi-dimensional "Museum+" Education Model to Promote the Dissemination of Tianfu Culture

The "Museum+" model refers to museums serving as the main platform, fully integrating various social resources, departing from the relatively closed operational management mechanism of the past, and engaging in cross-disciplinary collaborations to optimize the core functions of museums and enhance their social benefits to the maximum extent. When discussing the approach to realizing the "Museum+" service for Tianfu culture, the article categorizes the "Museum+" education model into the following points:

4.3.1. "Museum+ School"

Exhibitions are a crucial means for museums to carry out public education. In the pre-planning stage of exhibitions, museums need to intensify their promotion efforts and actively provide free guided tours for school groups, turning the museum into a second classroom for school education, and facilitating the organic connection between museum education and school education. Museums should strengthen cooperation with schools, establish a museum-school collaboration mechanism to compensate for the shortcomings of school education methods, and better achieve educational objectives. Additionally, museums and schools need to engage in in-depth communication, considering students' cognitive development characteristics and individual differences, utilizing locally representative historical artifacts in the museum's collection to jointly develop educational courses or projects with Tianfu cultural characteristics, thereby enhancing students' sense of identity with local culture.

4.3.2. "Museum+ Community"

Museums should actively engage with communities by "going out" and integrating the rich local cultural heritage and educational resources of museums into the community. Hosting educational projects related to regional historical culture not only allows for the telling of compelling local stories but also expands the educational influence of museums through the community, better meeting the diverse cultural needs of the public. In the Chengdu area, bringing exhibitions into the community is the most direct and impactful way of the "Museum+ Community" model. Audiences can have close encounters with artifacts, while museum education staff can understand the public's exhibition experiences and other cultural needs on-site, thereby further updating the museum's service philosophy and enriching educational service content. By taking exhibitions from museums to communities, more people can learn
about and understand the local historical culture through exhibitions, thereby expanding the display scope of Tianfu culture to a certain extent. Additionally, museums can organize lectures, cultural knowledge consultations, and other related activities in communities to attract more people to visit museums and strengthen the educational function of museums.

4.3.3. "Museum+ Technology"

In recent years, the rapid development of modern science and technology has provided strong technical support for museums and created perfect technical conditions for the construction of smart museums[9]. In China, the application of the "Museum+ Technology" model is exemplified by the Palace Museum. Leveraging virtual reality technology, the Palace Museum has established a digital cultural relics database, launched virtual exhibitions and the "I Want to Visit the Palace Museum" micro-classroom, and introduced the panoramic Palace program, forming a combined online and offline development model to better protect, research, and display the cultural heritage of the Palace Museum. This model allows the public to view the ancient buildings of the Palace Museum online in a panoramic view, participate in educational activities, and achieve iterative updates in exhibition forms and cultural heritage preservation, providing audiences with a unique experience.

In the construction of Tianfu culture, leveraging the "Museum+ Technology" model involves applying virtual reality technology (VR), augmented reality technology (AR), and other technologies to museum exhibition displays. By creating a virtual world, audiences can explore the cultural connotations behind the collections in this virtual space, gaining a distinctive immersive experience to enhance the exhibition effect and achieve educational objectives.

4.3.4. "Museum+ Tourism"

In the practice of the global museum field, a trend of close integration between museums and tourism emerged in the 1970s. Undoubtedly, "Museum+ Tourism" plays a pivotal role in the inheritance and development of regional culture. For example, the Sanxingdui Museum has adopted a cross-border cooperation mechanism, leveraging its distinctive bronze relics to develop a series of cultural and creative products related to the ancient Shu civilization. Through industrial development driving cultural dissemination, the museum has achieved significant benefits. By organically integrating museums with the tourism industry, implementing educational projects centered around museum culture, or creating cultural creative products, audiences transition from a simple "visit" to a high-quality cultural experience, shifting from "cultural display" to "cultural consumption." This transformation helps museums achieve their goal of being "centers of culture," promoting the effective utilization of museum education functions and the prosperous development of the museum industry.

4.3.5. "Museum+ Film"

"Museum+ Film" refers to the cross-border cooperation between museums and the film industry, utilizing audiovisual means as a way to promote cultural dissemination. Unlike other modes of communication, this model is not limited by time and space, allowing audiences to watch through networks in their own spaces, thereby expanding the audience base invisibly. For example, the documentary "I Work at the Palace Museum" produced by the Palace Museum breaks through traditional museum educational methods by narrating the work of artifact restoration experts, interweaving cultural and historical knowledge throughout the process. This approach enables people to experience the valuable and rich content of artifacts in a relaxed and enjoyable manner, facilitating cultural inheritance and promotion.

4.3.6. "Museum+ Subway"

In China, there have been several cases of the "Museum+ Subway" model, such as the National Museum hosting a cultural relics photo exhibition on Beijing Subway Line 1. This practice allows museum artifacts to step out of storage rooms and exhibition halls, reaching the public and enabling commuters to experience the historical value and unique charm of artifacts up close during their daily commute. The artifact photos inside subway carriages are visible and accompanied by brief textual explanations. Passengers can also use AR to scan QR codes, bringing the artifacts to life and telling their stories. Additionally, the Guangdong Provincial Museum moved its artifacts onto the subway in 2015. In 2017, the Chengdu Metro Line 7 displayed a photo exhibition themed around the "Colorful Jinsha Kingdom," showcasing artifacts from the Jinsha Site Museum and representative regional cultural elements inside the carriages. This initiative deepened urban residents' understanding of museums and enhanced their knowledge of local historical culture.
4.4. Implementing Diversified Tianfu Cultural Public Education Projects

Museums in the Chengdu region can effectively integrate their resources to plan public education projects targeting different groups. This includes introducing Tianfu culture-related educational courses for adults and establishing platforms for communication by organizing sharing sessions, exchange meetings, salons, and other activities for adults[10]. When targeting adult audiences, it is essential to segment the audience and plan museum public education projects based on the specific characteristics of different professions. Furthermore, museums can cater to special groups such as those with visual or hearing impairments, and the elderly, by incorporating tactile exhibits or videos to meet their specific needs and enhance museum educational services. For individuals who are unable to visit the museum in person, such as individuals with disabilities or the elderly, offering free guided tours over the phone or online courses can enable them to access museum public education services from home. This approach, to some extent, helps broaden the reach of museum education initiatives.

5. Conclusion

Against the backdrop of the national emphasis on cultural development and the Chengdu Municipal Committee's initiative to promote local culture and accelerate the establishment of Chengdu as a world-renowned cultural city, museums in the Chengdu region have fully utilized their functions in collection, research, exhibition, and education. They are rooted in unique regional cultural resources and cultural relics, actively engaging in social education efforts, and have achieved some success. This paper focuses on the Sichuan Museum, Chengdu Museum, Jinsha Site Museum, and Yongling Museum as the main research objects. Through on-site investigations and online research, it delves into the challenges these museums face in promoting Tianfu culture. By proposing improvements in educational content, educational staff, target audience, and educational formats, it is believed that public education, through the construction of a knowledge system on Tianfu culture using cultural relics, can guide audiences to develop regional cultural thinking qualities through interpretation, reflection, summarization, and exploration. These qualities can be internalized into the general public's cognitive structure, thereby inheriting the spirit of Tianfu culture and enhancing the city's cultural brand.

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