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# *Carry Forward and Promote the Ba Culture, Concentrate and Upgrade Soft Power*

Li Mingquan\*

**W**e, experts from Beijing, Chongqing, Hubei and Sichuan, were gathered in the beautiful city of Dazhou, reputed as “China’s natural gas capital and the Ba people’s hometown,” on November 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of 2016, to discuss the historical significance of the culture and contemporary values of the Ba Culture. Participating experts believed the excavations of the Luojiaba and Chengba sites have confirmed that Dazhou is the birthplace of the Ba Culture as well as one of the origins of the Ba civilization, and hence is rich in historical and cultural resources. Running from ancient times through to contemporary days, the Ba Culture is a profound, splendid regional culture created by people of all nationalities, though it stems from the Ba nationality and Ba state and is rooted in the Ba regions. This culture is an important part of the history of the Chinese civilization that integrates many diverse cultures. “The traditional Chinese culture is one of our most profound soft powers,” said Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. We should act in line with the principle of “Creative transformation and innovative development” to promote the traditional Chinese culture, consciously worship and revere the Ba civilization, and vigorously carry forward the Ba Culture. We should persist in making the past serve the present and making innovations, maintain cultural self-consciousness and self-confidence, to transform and add new glories to the Ba Culture. Toward this end, we hereby issue the following initiative to the Chinese society.

First, further the research on the Ba Culture to provide ideological resources for economic and social development.

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*Classic of Mountains and Seas* (a Chinese classic compilation of mythic geography and myths) records that, “In the southwestern part of the country, there is a Ba state. There Taihao fathered Xianniao. The latter in turn fathered Chengli, who then fathered Houzhao. The first of the Ba people was Houzhao.” The ancient Ba people are one of the sources of the Chinese nation. The Ba Culture is closely related to the Shu culture, the Chu culture, and the Wu culture, and has its influence in provinces of Sichuan, Chongqing, Shaanxi, Hubei, Guizhou and Yunnan and beyond. *Commentary of Zuo, Records of Huayang Kingdom, Commentary on the Waterways Classic, Book of the Later Han Dynasty* and other classics all recorded the activities of the Ba people. Archaeological findings such as the Luojiaba Site in Xuanhan, the Chengba Site in Quxian County, the Pengcheng Site in Langzhong, the Xiaotianxi Site in Fuling, and the Lijiaba Site in Yunyang confirmed the living scenes of the Ba people. With a long-lasting history, The Ba Culture is rich in miraculous contents, including the indecipherable Ba-Shu visual language, the magnificent Ba myths, the plain and exquisite bronze ware of the Ba state, the incomparable Ba workmanship, and the soul-stirring Ba music and dance, all of which call for immediate multidisciplinary, cross-professional in-depth research. Specifically, a database and cloud platform of the Ba Culture research should be built, and what should also be established include the cultural and ideological systems, a cognitive identity system, a cultural vein inheritance system, a heritage protection system, cultural creativity research and development systems, and an arts production system. The aim is to drive the coordinated development of economy, society and culture through innovation, and to show that the Ba Culture is contributing its share to the completion of building a well-off society and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Second, promote the Ba Culture’s spirit to

contribute value paradigms to the effort aimed at raising ideological and moral standards.

The ancient the Ba people lived in mountainous regions amidst steep valleys, yet they “built thousands of *li* of plank roads along the face of cliffs that can reach anywhere,” illustrative of the amazing tenacity, industry, bravery and wisdom of the Ba people. When King Wu of Zhou crusaded against the Yin Dynasty, the Ba divisions under his command were extraordinarily brave, conquering the Yin soldiers with their sweeping songs and dances and causing some of the hostile forces to change sides. The valiant boldness and high morale of the Ba soldiers was admirable. “The territory of Ba state must not be severed. As a subject to the state, how can I cede part of the territory to you? I would rather die than apologize for not honoring my promise,” said General Bamanzi, from the ancient Ba state, who then cut off his own head as an apology offered to the envoy from Chu state. The general’s loyalty, patriotism and dying for righteousness can move people to tears. According to the Ba Culture’s core values, “Loyalty, Courageous, Integrity and Honor,” one must be loyal to his state, fight courageously in the state’s fight, have high integrity in social affairs, and honor friendship. The core spirit gave birth to the “Red Army Spirit” of “being brave and resolute, eliminating difficulties and making innovation, being united in struggling against unfavorable conditions and to keep fighting till the battle is won.” Like a spirit gene, it has turned into a benchmark for personal character and has been nourishing that land ever since. Having become the goals of their spiritual cultivation and value pursuit, the core values are bound to be integrated into the cultivating and practicing of socialist core values and to set examples for what true goodness, beauty and bravery are.

Third, create Ba cultural works to provide rich spiritual nourishment for the masses’ cultural life.

Since ancient times, in the land of bravery where a soft, beautiful flower blossoms, the top of the land's great mountains must be surrounded by dancing iridescent clouds. "In King Wu's campaign against the Yin Dynasty, the divisions are preceded with the Ba people singing songs followed by dancing Ba dances," The dance style being unyielding while the music sonorous. Ba myths are magnificent and imaginative: Snake from Ba regions are huge enough to swallow elephants and can fly like birds in the sky. The lands of Ba-Shu, Ba-Yu, Ba-Chu give full, beautiful expression to the artistic essences of solidness/softness, substance/emptiness, abundance, moving/motionless and relaxation, a catalyst for infinite artistic creativity. With the spirituality and tenacity conferred on us by the Ba people and the extraordinary vastness and variety of the Ba land, we have the similar thoughts as "The evening rain in Ba mountains is teeming the autumn ponds," display the feelings like "I haven't felt Ba mountains are any different from hometown," and give free rein to the days when "The evening hearing of ape howling is incomparable," depict the beauty shown by "The clear wind and calm day after rain enters Ba mountains," and express the magnificence embodied by "Half of the spring river comes from Ba mountains' snow." We should use the spirit of artistic innovation to explore and reflect the profound historical and cultural traditions, the mysterious geographical and cultural interests, the elegant cultural and imaginative talent, the outstanding humanistic spirit, the introverted narrative expression, and the honest manner of goodness and benevolence, all characterizing the spirit of the Ba Culture and aesthetics. Based on the above, we can create well-crafted, fine, profound literary and artistic works, tell good stories of the Ba Culture, display the culture's charm, build literary peaks comparable with that of the Big Ba Mountain, and provide a steady stream of spiritual

nourishments to enrich people's lives.

Fourth, develop the Ba Culture industry to give play to its competitive advantage in enhancing overall strength.

The Ba Culture has profound cultural deposits, rich intension, and unique cultural means of production, which means a vast prospect for developing cultural industry. From past to present, the spirit of the Ba Culture and the gene of red culture are of the same vein, Ba land's folk customs are uniquely charming, and its natural scenery full of poetic charm. History must not only record the contemporary society, but also serve social development. Cultural industry can expand the space to allocate resources, ignite the power for creative production, and contribute to the scene reproduction, historical experience, spiritual insights, and the deepening of knowledge of the Ba Culture and red culture. The industry can also build the environment to serve the development of tourism and leisure, entertainment and theatergoing, audio-visual entertainment, reading and studying, virtual imaging, athletic gaming, and food consumption. A creative cultural industry system encompassing modern cultural tourism, film and television performing arts, music and audio-visual arts, cartoon games, painting collection, folk arts, and non-heritage that have the contents and forms of the Ba Culture and red culture should be formed. An R&D and innovation platform, property rights trading platform, financial support platform, resource sharing platform, science and technology support platform, trade logistics platform and brand marketing platform should be established, all of which should be rooted in Ba land with a global focus, integrating development across different sectors and coordinating their development. The purpose is to push the Ba Culture industry and red cultural tourism industry, ecological health and other industries to rise from good to bigger and

better, thereby constantly increasing the regional comprehensive competitiveness of the Ba Culture.

Fifth, refine the Ba cultural symbols to give a local flavor to the new type of urbanization.

The bronze sacrificial vessels, weapons, household implements and musical instruments of the Ba state are uniquely shaped and exquisitely crafted. The pottery and lacquer ware of the Ba people feature great workmanship, which can be called boutiques. These tangible symbols convey the wisdom and emotion of the ancient Ba people, while the myths or tales, like that of *White Tiger, Goddess of Wushan, Goddess of Yanshui* and *Tale of Ba King*, profoundly reflect the ancient the Ba people's spiritual world and outstanding history. Together, they form the visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile, and cognitive symbol system of the Ba Culture, with its own distinctive features. During the urbanization process of regions in the Ba land, the ideological values and humanistic spirit of the Ba Culture should be taken as the theme of cities and towns, and the cultural symbols and modeling styles of the Ba Culture as their own town characteristics. A path of differentiating urban cultures should be pursued to carry forward the historical context, protect the urban heritage, construct cultural landmarks, and highlight the way of life. The features of "water" and "mountains" should be given prominence, to display different skylines and form the urbanization style and urban air surrounded by mountains and waters and a magnet for humanistic spirit in the circles of the Ba Culture.

Sixth, expand Ba cultural exchanges to make the all-round opening-up and cooperation uniquely charming.

The Micang Ancient Road and the Lizhi Ancient Road, plank roads and navigation channels winding in the mountains, connected the mountainous Ba land with the outside world and linked the northern and southern parts of the Silk Road, demonstrating

the strong and broad mind of the Ba people in their desire for communication with, and integration into the world. The reason why the Ba Culture is long-standing yet full of vitality is that the Ba people have been committed to breaking through the obstacles posed by mountains and rivers, opening the door to the outside world and being open to all streams of ideas. The Ba people have an open, inclusive disposition. The Belt and Road initiative and the "Yangtze River Economic Belt" strategy have set up a huge development platform for the comprehensive opening-up of cooperation in the Ba regions. Located in the Yangtze River basin, the vast Ba land is endowed with rich resources and a unique culture, which is, however, badly in need of cross-regional and cross-sectoral cooperation. Regions in the Ba land should jointly build an inland river economic belt and international gold tourism belt that are of global influence. Efforts must also be made to deepen the land's cooperation with countries and cities having friendly relationships with it along the Belt and the Road, promote the "going strategy" of the Ba Culture, fully display and show the unique charm of the Ba Culture and form a pattern of all-round opening-up.

"Quick pommel horses speed on the nine major roads, and eight people wear the colorful clothes in the same style," Tang poet Yuan Zhen expressed his vision of people making concerted efforts while competing with each other for a better future. Surely at a new historical starting point, people living in the vast land of Ba should maintain self-confidence in the road, theories, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics, always bear in mind the original ideal and keep forging ahead, carry forward the fine traditional Chinese culture, give full play to the historical values and realistic functions of the Ba Culture, and write a new epic chapter in the brilliant history of the Ba Culture.

(English editor: Jia Fengrong)