

THE THEORETICAL, CONSTRUCT AND ACADEMIC PRACTICE OF “CULTURAL RUNNING-IN”: A RESEARCH OVERVIEW

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Professor Jikai Li's theory of “Cultural Running-in” is a core concept based on the research results of domestic and foreign scholars, with a comprehensive examination of modern China's complex literary and cultural phenomena from the perspective of cultural studies. It focuses on the pluralistic interaction and communication among different cultural subjects. It emphasizes the theoretical vision and cultural concept of “Cultural Running-in” to examine various cultural phenomena and guide social practices to build a pluralistic cultural ecology. According to Jikai Li, since the late Qing and early Republic, Chinese and foreign cultures have begun a tortuous process of continuous “Running-in,” and a universal, persistent, and complex “Cultural Running-in” has been formed over the next hundred years, which has had a profound impact on China's modernization process. The construction of modern Chinese culture has been the result of the continuous “merging” of various cultural backgrounds and trends in the Chinese cultural field since the May Fourth Movement, and the process of “Cultural Running-in” has created cultural achievements worthy of the times, while this “cultural running-in trend” has become a kind of “cultural consciousness,” promoting and guiding the construction and development of “Great Modern” Chinese literature and culture.

The “cultural running-in theory” has a distinct theoretical lineage and cultural philosophy. Both Fei Zhengqing and Levinson's “Western-centrism” and Paul Curwen's “Chinese-centric view” have tried to “decode” China's modernization process to a certain extent by examining the Chinese and Western cultural contexts. However, they inevitably move toward a certain paranoia or bias under ideological or realistic contexts or present a so-called “one-sided profundity.” China's modernization has its inherent historical opportunities, and the “theory of cultural running-in” can be said to be based on the theoretical achievements of Fei Xiaotong's “theory of cultural self-awareness” and Wang Furen's “new nationalism” based on the dual interaction of “cultural running-in trend” and “literary creation” in the modern Chinese cultural field, and the construction of the “Great Modern” Chinese literature, which has continued to develop from the late Qing Dynasty to the present. It emphasizes the complex and close interaction between culture and literature and regards “cultural running-in” as a new “cultural consciousness,” thus opening up richer cultural resources and broad literary prospects for the development of “Great Modern” Chinese literature. Its most distinctive feature is the mechanism of “past and present, at home and abroad into the modern” and the cultural form of the “Great Modern,” which is formed at both the epochal and the co-temporal levels.

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The “cultural running-in” theory has a historical perspective and a more realistic concern. In recent years, conservative thinking has been on the rise worldwide, regional situations are volatile, globalization and counter-globalization are running in the opposite direction, and COVID-19 has intensified this confrontational thinking. At the same time, the conflict and game of international political and economic interests may be misinterpreted and biased at the deeper level of culture and even civilization. The “theory of cultural running-in” recognizes the equality, differences, and diversity among cultures and advocates that there should be more dialogue, no confrontation, and no mutual destruction among various cultures. Eventually, dynamic integration can create an ideal situation of coexistence and co-prosperity, complementarity and mutual assistance, and harmony and difference. Only through “great running-in” can we achieve “great modernity.” It is what the saying means: “All living creatures grow together without harming each other. Ways run parallel without interfering with one another”. Therefore, the theory of “cultural running-in” not only has theoretical value and cultural concept guidance but also has its practical concern and methodological significance, especially in the face of the current situation where the “dichotomy” mode of thinking is highly prevalent, advocating “cultural running-in” is particularly important.

Thus, after the publication of Jikai Li’s article “Cultural Running-in,” it has been echoed and paid attention to by academic colleagues at home and abroad, with particular emphasis on the academic value and practical revelation of this topic and the cultural philosophy behind it. The article “‘Cultural Running-in Trend’ and ‘Wild-Ranging Modern’ Chinese literature” was not only reprinted and reviewed by authoritative journals such as *Chinese Social Science Digest* and *Journal of East-West Thought* but also reprinted in full and published as an op-ed in the 100th issue of *Culture China*. Jikai Li led his academic team to discuss and expand more deeply around this topic, “cultural running-in theory” is essential in the philosophy of culture and art. Through continuous academic practice, it has been implemented into a proven cultural theory and research method, which can not only analyze the cultural fusion of ancient and modern Chinese and foreign cultures and the development of “post-ancient” culture. As a research paradigm of literary culture, it is an important theoretical perspective for examining the modern transformation and disciplinary construction of Chinese literature and art over the past hundred years, and it is also a “cultural consciousness” for promoting the more realistic, rich and global Chinese literature in the new century. At the same time, as far as specific writers’ works are concerned, the “running-in state” and “generation state” are the inner patterns of a “big era” of multiculturalism in the life of individual literary writers, which can be used to analyze how classic works are generated or created in the fusion of diverse cultural elements, and to understand further the meaning and characterization of the works and the style of literature, to avoid one-sided interpretation and interpretation of the texts. Therefore, to examine the literary paths and cultural psychology of individual writers as modern cultural beings from the perspective of “cultural frictions” is a research path with a broad cultural background. Because of the current research results and academic practice, the “cultural running-in theory” has gradually formed a research paradigm, which has been fully applied and innovated in the research of classical writers’ works,

literary trends and literary criticism, Silk Road literature, regional literature and culture, and genre studies.

In the near future, Jikai Li plans to publish a book titled “The Theory of Cultural Running-in: An Examination of “Wild-Ranging Modern” Chinese Literature” (To be published by the People’s Publishing House in August 2023), a systematic compilation of his previous thoughts and research results, with the hope that this topic will attract more attention and discussion in the academic community and be beneficial to the development of modern Chinese literature and culture. The book is divided into two main parts. The upper part focuses on theories and concepts and presents the theoretical thinking and cultural values of the “cultural running-in theory” from the macro level of theoretical creation, literary view, “Wild-Ranging Modern” Chinese literature view, and literary geography picture, etc., and presents the opinions and comments of the academic community on this cultural theory in a separate chapter. The next part focuses on the theoretical guidance and practical application of the “cultural running-in” theory in studying Chinese literature and culture in the “Wild-Ranging Modern.” Five famous writers, including Lu Xun, Lin Yutang, Ding Ling, Wu Xinghua, and Jia Pingwa, and the essential proposition of “Yan’an literature and art” are selected as the objects of investigation. The process of the generation of the “modern cultural man” and the results of cultural creation are used to grasp the reflection and achievements of the “cultural running-in trend” at the micro level. We look forward to the publication of Jikai Li’s “The Theory of Cultural Running-in,” which will promote continued research on this topic.