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# RESEARCH ON CONFUCIUS' "SIX ARTS"

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## ABSTRACT

Confucius' "Six Arts" system is an important educational system in Chinese Confucian culture. This study aims to explore the significance of etiquette, artistic accomplishment, practical ability and cultural knowledge in the "Six Arts" system to the quality development and cultural confidence of modern people. With the achievements of China's material creation, the importance of cultural construction has become more prominent. As a country's soft power, culture has an important influence on shaping human nature, consolidating national spirit and enhancing comprehensive national strength. The study adopts a qualitative method to analyze the evolution of the "Six Arts" system and explore its guiding significance for contemporary cultural quality education. The study shows that the "Six Arts" system provides valuable experience and supports the improvement of the modern cultural quality education system. Its importance in cultural awareness, cultural inheritance and cultural confidence has an important enlightenment role in modern cultural quality education. The importance of the "Six Arts" system in cultural education is reflected in cultural awareness, cultural inheritance and cultural confidence, forming effective educational concepts and practical experience, which has an important enlightenment role in modern cultural quality education.

**Keywords:** Confucius' Six Arts, Philosophy, Quality education

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the important role played by the evolution of the "Six Arts" system from ancient times to the present in the cultivation of Chinese cultural quality education, and the depth and breadth of its impact on the development of Chinese cultural quality education. The ideological connotation, educational content and logic of the "Six Arts" system have important guiding significance for contemporary Chinese education. "Rites and music" are the foundation of life, and "archery and charioteering" and "books and numbers" reflect the educational connotation of both internal and external cultivation and both liberal arts and science. Today, when we advocate learning excellent traditional culture and implementing quality education, exploring the ideological connotation and teaching logic of the Six Arts education has important reference significance for China's cultural heritage and contemporary cultural quality education. I hope that the exchanges and discussions at this international conference can provide new ideas and inspiration for everyone. It will also promote the dissemination and promotion of the "Six Arts" system, promote the exchange of Chinese

traditional culture on the international stage, and promote the development and progress of contemporary education.

### **Research Objectives**

Deeply study and understand the philosophy of the "Six Arts", research the evolution and development of the "Six Arts" system from ancient times to the present, and provide inspiration and enlightenment for China's contemporary cultural quality education.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Cultural background of Confucius**

The Six Arts of Confucius are the six basic skills of rituals, music, archery, imperialism, calligraphy and mathematics. Calligraphy and mathematics were pioneered by Confucius in ancient China. The purpose of this educational system is to cultivate special abilities for all-round development. "Ritual" is concerned with social etiquette and ethics, emphasizing harmonious coexistence among people; "Music" is a musical art that soothes and controls people's emotions; "Archery" means shooting arrows and is a symbol of honesty and bravery. "Yu" symbolizes control and management, and "Shu" refers to the practice of writing and literary writing. The emphasis is on learning and accumulating knowledge, and "number" relates to mathematical knowledge. It develops logical thinking and problem-solving skills. Confucius advocated the study of the six arts. It not only helps people develop skills. But it is also possible to achieve balanced moral development. Intellectual and physical attainment of personal perfection and social harmony. This philosophy of education embodies Confucius' thought: "Morality is heaven. Art is success" and encourages people to be a useful gentleman to the society through moral cultivation and artistic cultivation.

### **Cultural confidence**

It refers to a country or nation's in-depth understanding, love, pride and firm belief in its own culture. This belief not only includes the recognition of the value of one's own culture, but also the confidence that the local culture can maintain its characteristics and vitality in global cultural exchanges. Cultural confidence is of great significance to a country's cultural prosperity, the cohesion of national spirit and the improvement of national soft power.

### **Preservation of the cultural heritage of Confucianism**

The Six Arts of Confucius is an important historical and cultural heritage of Confucius, a famous thinker in Chinese history, and his family. Its inclusion in the World Heritage List has also led to its destruction due to over-exploitation of tourism and inadequate management and conservation measures. Therefore, the protection of cultural relics related to Confucian culture is also the protection of the essence of Chinese culture. In the process of protecting the cultural heritage of the "Three Confucius", modern technology should be utilized to create an all-round protection. Using a modern heritage protection system we must carefully review modern digital tools to ensure that cultural relics are not damaged twice by the use of modern technology.

### **The Philosophical System of the "Six Arts"**

Philosophical systems, whether materialistic or idealistic, are centered on the existence of the object and the consciousness of the subject. Nature, society, subject and consciousness are the basic elements that constitute the philosophical system. Among them, man is the subject of behavior in the universe and is the ultimate goal of philosophical concern. As a result, the four pairs of basic contradictions of the philosophical system are formed: the contradiction between man and nature, the contradiction between man and society, the contradiction between man and the group, and the contradiction between man and the self (inner self). Confucius did not subjectively resolve these four pairs of basic contradictions of the philosophical system, but the interpretation of these four pairs of basic contradictions has been embedded in the rich philosophical thought of Confucianism. In this sense, the Six Arts have constructed a complete philosophical system.

1. The basic point of support for human existence is the universe and nature. When any nation moves from ignorance to rationality, facing the chaotic universe and mysterious nature, it is bound to be confused and perplexed by all kinds of survival choices. Different peoples pursue different ideals of survival, choose different ways of survival, constitute different man and nature dependence, and thus also accumulated different cultural spirit. Philosophically speaking, the relationship between man and nature often contains two aspects: "unity" and "opposition". When man and nature are "united", there is a harmonious relationship between them. Confucius once described this relationship in a poetic way. In the book "Advanced", Zeng Ci once said, "In the spring, when the spring clothes are ready, five or six people with crowns and six or seven children bathe in yi, and enjoy the summer sacrifice for rain, and return home with singing. Upon hearing this, Confucius sighed and said, "I am with you." In fact, what Zeng Ci was pursuing was an ideal realm of life that exuded the vitality of free human nature and was characterized by the feelings of a hermit. In this realm, man and nature are in high harmony, and the free human nature is in harmony with the natural music of the heavens. Confucius's sigh of regret obviously implies a deep yearning for such a realm of life.

2. In order to cope with threats from nature, the choice of living in tribal groups was the basic mode of survival of early mankind. This special way of survival in turn constituted the prototype of early society. On the one hand, society gives people a certain kind of dependence for survival, and on the other hand, it gives people a certain kind of shackle for survival, which leads to the relationship of dependence and contradiction between human beings and society. In a civilized society, the conflict between man and society mainly focuses on three points: how to adapt to the development of the society; how to establish a way of living in the society; and how to face politics and power. Confucius lived in an era of "the collapse of rites and music", when the old system of slavery declined and the new system of feudalism gradually flourished. Confronted with the drastic changes in the social landscape, Confucius was shocked and pondered from time to time the conflicts between man and society, which were mainly manifested in how he dealt with the three aspects of change, presence, and governance.

3. Human beings are the basic factor in the constitution of society, and the ordering of society is based on the relationship between human beings, i.e., human relations. Confucianism, in turn, takes social order as the logical starting point of its philosophical construction, and therefore pays special attention to the examination of the contradiction between human beings and groups. The contradiction between human beings and groups mainly refers to the

contradiction between subjectivity and sociality as social "human beings". With regard to the subjectivity of human beings, Confucius emphasized two points: first, the inner cultivation of the subject; second, the outer norms of the subject. The former lies in "benevolence" and the latter in "propriety". In Confucius' view, "ren" is the highest moral standard, the essential form of the subject, and only those who have attained ren can be called "renren". "Ritual" is the external manifestation, the external etiquette of the subject's behavior. By regulating people's thoughts and behaviors through etiquette, it constantly adjusts the relationship between people so as to achieve harmony. "Benevolence and propriety are two sides of the same coin."

4. As a social "man", because of the contradiction between his subjectivity and sociality, there is a difficulty in choosing values. And this difficulty in value choice reacts on the subjective consciousness, which makes human beings present a kind of complexity in a series of social activities. To put it simply, when a human being is placed in a complex social system, on the one hand, as a human being in the sense of life, there are all kinds of instinctive desires; on the other hand, as a human being in the sense of society, he or she has to conform to all kinds of social norms.

In a nutshell, Confucianism emphasizes the social nature of human beings in the choice between life instincts and social morality, and takes social morality as the basic criterion for integrating human relations, so as to bring about social harmony. This is the basic tenet of Confucianism, and there is no exception to this in terms of the intrinsic value orientation of human beings. To sum up, the main structure of the Six Arts contains the four pairs of basic contradictions of the philosophical ontology, and from the perspective of the philosophical ontology, they are interconnected, complementary, and mutually inclusive, so that the Six Arts constitute a relatively complete philosophical system.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

1. This study uses qualitative research methods to systematically explore the historical evolution of the "Six Arts" system and its application in modern education. Step 1: First, through a literature review, historical documents related to the "Six Arts" system (ritual, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy, and mathematics) are collected. These documents include ancient records, classic works, and archaeological materials, aiming to study how the ancients used the "Six Arts" to cultivate talents and inherit culture. By analyzing the descriptions of the philosophical thoughts, educational content, and logical structure of the "Six Arts" in these documents, the researcher can understand the definition, function, and role of the "Six Arts" system in different periods. Step 2: The researcher uses content analysis, thematic analysis, and other methods to deeply interpret and analyze the collected relevant materials, focusing on selecting representative historical periods or events, and deeply studying the practice and application of the "Six Arts" in these periods, and the impact on cultural quality education in various periods. Step 3: The researcher uses the in-depth interview method to conduct in-depth interviews with experts and scholars who study the "Six Arts" system to collect their suggestions on the contemporary application of the "Six Arts" system. The researchers investigated the introduction and implementation of the "Six Arts" in the modern education system, such as traditional schools, Confucian temples, and academies, as well as the application and impact of the "Six Arts" on the real life of the educated. Step 4: Summarize the final results and the analysis of the collected data, organize them into research results and write a report. The report

deeply analyzes the philosophical thoughts of China's "Six Arts", presents the results of the survey data, and integrates the essence of the "Six Arts" system into the innovation points of China's contemporary cultural quality education. These results will be fed back to the cultural industry departments and relevant practitioners of cultural quality education, providing reference inspiration and enlightenment for their innovative work.

2. In order to comprehensively and deeply analyze the collected data, the researchers used a variety of research methods, such as descriptive statistical analysis and content analysis. Through literature research and in-depth interviews, the researchers discovered the evolution, inheritance and development laws of the "Six Arts" system from ancient times to modern times.





China is the birthplace of the "Six Arts" system. The researchers found that in the cultural quality education of schools and educational institutions in many regions, the essence of the "Six Arts" system has been inherited and carried forward, becoming an important tool for shaping students' character and moral concepts. The "Six Arts" culture has been continued and inherited to a certain extent in contemporary China, and it also occupies an important position in contemporary cultural confidence education.



In creating and innovating the contemporary cultural quality education system, the educational concept of the ancient "Six Arts" system can be integrated with the modern "Six Arts" education to create knowledge education, moral education and aesthetic education that conform to modern society. Through in-depth interviews, questionnaires and field investigations, researchers learned that if cultural quality education is better implemented, the education system should be people-oriented, and the reform of the teaching structure is to change the traditional teacher-centered teaching structure, and create a new teaching structure that can not only play the role of teachers in guidance, but also fully reflect the role of students as the main body, so that teaching can be transformed from "teaching" to "learning", so that students can take the initiative in learning and have more room for self-study and research. Looking at history and reality, whether it is the education of the "Six Arts" system or today's diversified educational ideas, they actually have a common meaning, the same in ancient and modern times, and have only one purpose, to cultivate high-quality talents who adapt to the development of the times, that is, both moral and talented, and both civil and military. Focusing on integration with Chinese traditional culture is not necessarily a regression of educational concepts. It is hoped that through research and discussion, modern "Six Arts" education can be innovated, process of China's cultural confidence can be promoted, and relevant institutions can cultivate more talents with comprehensive abilities.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS**

The following tables show the meanings of the Six Arts in ancient times and the Six Arts in modern times.


**Table 1** Meaning of the "six arts" in ancient times

No.	Ancient Illustrations of the Six Arts	Name	Meaning
1		Etiquette	Etiquette: Rites of Passage , the five rites of passage, auspicious, fierce, guest, military, and jia; the five rites of passage are at its core and are an important part of the ancient ritual system. The existence of its various rites and rituals helped the exchange and communication between people of all colors, as well as the maintenance of social stability and order. Ritual system emphasizes importance of status, position and social relations, and is most important component of traditional Chinese culture.
2		Music	Music: music, six music: Yunmen, Dahan, Dashao, Daxia, Do Ho Suh, Dawu and other ancient music; music has a very important position in the six arts, not only as a form of artistic expression, but also as an important manifestation of human emotion and spiritual life. They not only constructed the ancient court music system, but also embodied the intrinsic value of ancient culture and traditional thought. At the same time, their performance and circulation have also formed a diversified and colorful cultural phenomenon, which is a splendid treasure of Chinese culture.
3		Shooting	Shooting: archery techniques, these five shooting skills are: white yards, senlian, hexagonal injection, Xiangshi, Jingyi; shooting in the six arts is a skill related to martial arts, but also one of the necessary talents of the ancient scholars. The five shooting skills are archery techniques summarized by the ancient archers to improve their archery techniques and archery effects; these shooting skills reflect very high importance and reverence of the ancient archers for archery, and at the same time reflect the ancient people's love and pursuit of martial arts.
4		Drive	Drive: harnessing Wagon. The technique of chariots The five imperials: Song and Luan, song by water, Passing King's Table, Dancing through the Quarter, and Passing the Fowl Left The Five Imperials: Song and Luan, Dance through the Quarter, and Drive through the Fowl; The Five Imperials is an important skill in the Six Arts in ancient times, i.e., Skill of driving horse-drawn carriages and chariots. Existence of five wu reflects the importance that ancient Chinese people attached to culture of horse

No.	Ancient Illustrations of the Six Arts	Name	Meaning
			and carriage and driving techniques, and embodies their complete and unique driving culture system.
5		Write	Write: Calligraphy hieroglyphics, Referring to things, ideograms, morpho-sound, transcription, and pseudo-borrowing. Shu in the Six Arts refers to calligraphy, one of the treasures of traditional Chinese culture. These forms and ways of writing represent the peak of ancient Chinese calligraphy and demonstrate the great depth of traditional Chinese culture. They not only reflect the cultural heritage and wisdom of the ancient Chinese people, but also demonstrate the unique value and flavor of ancient culture through the art form of calligraphy.
6		Math	Math: Number refers to the ancient art of counting, i.e., computation and mathematical techniques. The Nine Chapters of Arithmetic, one of the representatives of ancient Chinese mathematics, is one of the most authoritative and important mathematical works of ancient China; its importance played a great role in promoting the development of mathematics in ancient China, paving the way for the development of mathematics for the future generations and laying a brilliant foundation for the achievements of science, technology and mathematics in ancient China. Meanwhile, its achievements are still widely recognized and drawn upon in the world of mathematics today.

Source: Yiqun Lou

**Table 2** Meaning of the six arts of Confucius in contemporary times

No.	Modern Illustrations of the Six Arts	Name (of thing)	Hidden meaning
1		Etiquette	Etiquette: In modern education, etiquette, as a code of conduct and a way of socializing, plays a great role in influencing the development of behavioral habits and the formation of character qualities. Because the importance of how to live with others and respect moral norms needs to be emphasized in the process of personal growth, ritual education has become a very important educational topic in family education and school education. In school education, various activities and rituals are used to promote the development of personal codes of conduct and moral



			<p>norms, so that individuals can grow up with the values of respecting others and treating others with humility.</p>
2		Music	<p>Music: in modern education it represents a way of life and values. Participation in various musical arts such as dancing, singing, acting, etc. not only develops individuals to build a beautiful spiritual world, but also develops their imagination and creativity. Performance of music and dance conveys beautiful emotions, shapes a positive personality, stimulates the inner world of the individual, etc., thus contributing to the improvement of the overall quality of the individual.</p>
3		Shooting	<p>Shooting: the skill of shooting with a bow and arrow and other skills; has become a popular sport in modern education. Shooting can provide individuals with good opportunities for physical exercise and comprehensive quality development, as well as helping to improve physical fitness, mental fitness and social skills. It also has a positive impact on the development of self-cultivation and values in the process of personal growth.</p>
4		Drive	<p>Drive: In modern education, the need to acquire knowledge of riding maneuvers, traffic rules and safety awareness are essential skills for individuals to master. And in modern society, the term is used to denote equestrian skills, referring to the sport of horseback riding and related techniques and training. Through learning, one can not only acquire skills and techniques similar to those of Mikado, but also develop one's own qualities such as self-confidence, courage, and endurance, which are very important skills in daily life and growth.</p>
5		Write	<p>Write: as an excellent cultural art, embodies unique artistic charm and cultural connotation, and in modern education calligraphy is an important part of cultural education, a form of education that can promote creativity. Calligraphy is not only aesthetically pleasing, but it also helps to cultivate children's exquisite delicacy and grandeur, and improve their thinking and expression. A love of calligraphy can be very helpful in improving one's language skills and literary abilities.</p>



Math: is a core part of computer science, but also the basis of scientific and technological innovation, modern education in mathematics education takes into account the charm and interest, but also focuses on the structure and development of mathematical knowledge. Mathematics education needs to provide richer experiential teaching and diversified mathematics education materials, with a simultaneous focus on the development of hands-on skills and the intention to solve problems to overcome challenges.

Source: Yiqun Lou

## CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Through the evolution of the ancient "six arts" and the modern "six arts", it can be found from the comparison of data and related literature collection and analysis:

Confucius took rites and benevolence as his standards. Confucius put forward the basics of the "six arts" for solving puzzles: rites, music, archery, imperialism, calligraphy, and mathematics, and was concerned about the education of students. Confucius's idea of solving puzzles is extremely important for solving today's educational problems. There are two basic criteria for having a sense of social responsibility and caring about society: Confucius trained seventy-two sages and educated thousands of students by combining teaching and learning. Confucius' educational ideas have proved to be accurate, innovative and inspiring. From the perspective of ancient "six arts" education to modern "six arts" education, analyzing Confucius' idea of solving the riddle of combining learning and teaching, as well as exploring the concept of higher education implied by Confucianism's idea of solving the riddle, can provide practical inspiration and reference for solving the current educational dilemma reference. Therefore, we must emphasize and develop the theoretical quality and practical revelation of Confucianism, and use the philosophy of the six arts to resolve doubts. Provide a model of theory and practice for modern education.

The Six Arts of Confucius are based on the classical spirit as the core, which are constantly adjusted and transformed with the changes of the times, maintaining the continuity of Chinese civilization. This continuity determines the continuity of the academic lineage of the research itself, and the research methodology and the research object have become an important part of the classical Chinese academic history. Modern Chinese academic research is a natural extension of the long chain of traditional Chinese academic history, and the scholars concerned cannot and should not sever the spiritual bloodline of classical Chinese scholarship. The classical spirit and classical character of the classical era are the genes of the style and style of modern Chinese scholarship, as well as the birthmark of modern Chinese scholarship. The Six Arts provide researchers with a new perspective to study the formation of Chinese classical scholarship and to re- understand China's excellent traditional culture. After classicization, the Six Arts became the Confucian metacode, condensed into the spirit of classical Chinese scholarship, and continued to have an impact on future generations. The classical academic discipline of "the teaching of the six arts", the classical academic mechanism of "the study of the six arts", the classical linguistic characteristics of "the writing of the six

arts", the classical humanistic beliefs of "the way of the six arts", and the classical philosophy of "the way of the six arts" have all contributed to the creation of a new perspective on Chinese outstanding traditional culture. The classical academic mechanism of "the study of the six arts", the classical language characteristics of "the literature of the six arts", and the classical humanistic beliefs of "the way of the six arts" have given Chinese classical academics a unique spiritual weather and classical character. With the development of the times and the evolution of civilization, classical Chinese academics have been observing the correctness in the changes and innovating in the correctness, and the double ensemble of changes and constancy has formed the classical melody of classical tradition and the spirit of the times, which is constantly played in the time and space of historical China. Through the changes and constancy of the six arts, scholars should have a deeper understanding of the brilliant glory and everlasting charm of Chinese classical scholarship, and the significance of its era of inheriting civilization and tradition, enhancing cultural confidence, and reviving Chinese culture.

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