



# Digital Narrative and Memory Reconstruction: International Dissemination Strategies for the Rural Cultural Heritage of Qilu in the Yellow River Basin

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## Abstract

The international dissemination of rural culture is a vital pathway to enhance cultural soft power and foster mutual understanding among civilizations. Focusing on the rural cultural heritage of Qilu within the Yellow River Basin, this paper investigates its current status, inherent challenges, and potential strategies for global outreach. Drawing upon existing research, we identify three core dilemmas: the fragmentation of rural cultural memory carriers, the insufficiency of participatory and immersive international narrative platforms, and the gap in specialized talents for cross-cultural communication. To address these, the study proposes a multi-faceted strategy. This includes constructing a holistic digital ecosystem for rural cultural memory, developing transmedia storytelling frameworks that emphasize authenticity and experience, and establishing cross-cultural co-creation mechanisms alongside cultivating globally-minded communication specialists. This research argues that leveraging digital technology for narrative innovation and memory reconstruction is crucial for transforming localized rural heritage into globally resonant cultural assets. It provides a targeted framework for the international promotion of regional rural cultures in China.

## Subject Areas

International Communication, Cultural Heritage Studies, Digital Humanities, Rural Development

## Keywords

Rural Culture, Qilu Cultural Heritage, Yellow River Basin, International

## 1. Introduction

The international dissemination of rural culture has emerged as a significant field within global cultural exchange, moving beyond the mere display of folk symbols to encompass the communication of deeper ecological wisdom, social structures, and value systems embedded within traditional lifestyles. The rural cultural heritage of Qilu, nurtured along the Yellow River Basin in Shandong, China, represents a profound repository of such knowledge. It encompasses tangible elements like traditional village layouts, vernacular architecture, and agricultural landscapes, as well as intangible aspects including local rituals, oral traditions, handicrafts, and community-based ecological management practices [1]. This heritage is not static but a living legacy continually shaped by interaction with its environment.

Promoting this rural Qilu culture internationally aligns strategically with China's national initiatives for Rural Revitalization and the Ecological Conservation and High-quality Development of the Yellow River Basin. Effective global communication can transform local cultural resources into assets for sustainable rural development, enhancing the cultural confidence of communities while contributing to global cultural diversity [2]. However, this endeavor faces substantial challenges. The inherent locality and context-specific nature of rural culture often lead to significant "cultural discount" when presented to international audiences unfamiliar with its background. Furthermore, the rapid urbanization and social transformation in rural China threaten the very carriers of this memory [3].

Digital technology presents a transformative opportunity to overcome these barriers. It offers tools not only for preservation but for creative reinterpretation and engaging storytelling. This paper posits that the key to effective international dissemination lies in shifting from declarative presentation to participatory **digital narrative**, and from fragmented preservation to systematic **memory reconstruction**. By analyzing current limitations and synthesizing insights from relevant research, this study aims to construct a practical strategic framework for sharing the rural soul of Qilu culture with the world.

## 2. Theoretical Grounding and Current Context

### 2.1. The Essence and Value of Rural Qilu Culture

Rural Qilu culture is the foundational layer of the broader Qilu cultural system. Its value extends beyond aesthetic appeal to embody practical philosophies of harmonious human-nature interaction (e.g., traditional water management, organic farming techniques), intricate social cohesion mechanisms visible in village governance and festivals, and a rich tapestry of folk arts that convey historical memory and moral teachings [1]. This culture forms the bedrock of regional iden-

tity. As noted in studies on rural revitalization, the vitality of such local culture is crucial for holistic village development, providing spiritual motivation and social capital [2]. Its international communication, therefore, is not about exporting a fossilized past but about sharing living philosophies and sustainable practices.

## 2.2. The Digital Imperative: Narrative and Memory

Contemporary international audiences, especially younger demographics, engage with culture through experiential and narrative-driven media. Digital narrative theory emphasizes the power of interactive, multi-sensory storytelling to foster empathy and understanding. Applying this to rural culture means moving beyond documentary footage to create immersive experiences that allow users to “inhabit” contextualized stories [3]. Concurrently, memory studies highlight that cultural memory is not simply retrieved but actively reconstructed through media. Digital platforms become active agents in this process, allowing for the reassembly of fragmented rural memories (scattered artifacts, oral fragments, decaying sites) into coherent, accessible, and meaningful digital forms [2]. This reconstructed digital memory becomes the primary interface for international engagement.

## 2.3. Existing Challenges: A Synthesis from Literature

A review of related work reveals persistent gaps:

- **Memory Carrier Fragmentation:** The living transmission chain of rural culture is vulnerable. As rural demographics shift, the intergenerational passage of intangible skills and knowledge weakens [3]. Physical heritage, like traditional dwellings, faces deterioration. This leads to a scattered and incomplete cultural resource base for any dissemination effort.
- **Inadequate Narrative Platforms:** Current efforts in international presentation often rely on static museum websites or promotional tourism videos. These lack depth, interactivity, and the ability to convey the nuanced, experiential essence of daily rural life and its underlying values [1]. They fail to create the “storyworlds” necessary for deep audience engagement.
- **Talent and Mechanism Deficits:** There is a shortage of professionals who possess a deep understanding of rural Qilu culture, proficiency in digital storytelling tools, and savvy in international communication channels and audience psychology [2]. Furthermore, mechanisms for genuine cross-cultural dialogue and co-creation, which could lend authenticity and broaden appeal, are underdeveloped.

## 3. Strategic Pathways for International Dissemination

### 3.1. Constructing an Integrated Digital Memory Ecosystem

The first step is to systematically convert scattered rural heritage into a unified, structured digital resource. This requires a coordinated initiative to build a “Yellow River Rural Qilu Culture Digital Repository.”

- **Comprehensive Documentation:** Employ ethnography, 3D scanning, GIS mapping, and high-quality audiovisual recording to document not just objects, but processes (a craft being made), places (the layout of a village square during a festival), and people (the stories of elders).
- **Semantic Organization:** Use a standardized ontology and multilingual metadata (English, etc.) to tag resources by theme (e.g., “water wisdom,” “clan rituals,” “local cuisine”), material, technique, and geographical origin. This enables sophisticated search and thematic exploration for international researchers and content creators.
- **Open-Access Principles:** While respecting intellectual property, adopt tiered access to encourage use. High-resolution assets might require permission, while curated datasets and narrative content should be freely accessible to foster global creative reuse.

### 3.2. Developing Authentic and Immersive Transmedia Narratives

The raw digital memory must be woven into compelling stories. Strategies include:

- **Interactive Documentary & VR Experiences:** Produce non-linear documentaries where international viewers can choose pathways—following a farmer through a season, a potter through her creative process, or exploring the history of a local temple. VR experiences can recreate significant cultural events or allow virtual walks through historically reconstructed villages.
- **Gamification for Cultural Learning:** Develop mobile or web-based games that teach through interaction. For example, a game could involve managing a virtual Qilu village based on traditional ecological principles, or solving puzzles based on patterns in local textiles or woodcarvings.
- **Micro-content for Social Media:** Create a series of short, visually stunning videos or image stories for platforms like Instagram or YouTube, focusing on specific, relatable elements: “A Day in the Life of a Shandong Weaver,” “The Philosophy Behind a Traditional Courtyard House.” These should prioritize beautiful cinematography and minimal, impactful subtitles.

### 3.3. Fostering Cross-Cultural Dialogue and Co-Creation

To move from transmission to exchange, proactive engagement with international actors is key.

- **International Artist/Researcher Residencies:** Establish programs that bring foreign documentary filmmakers, digital artists, writers, or anthropologists to live in Qilu rural communities. Their external perspectives will create novel interpretations for global audiences.
- **Collaborative Digital Projects:** Partner with international museums, universities, or digital archives on joint projects. Examples could include a virtual exhibition co-curated with a European museum on “Agricultural Festivals of the World,” featuring Qilu traditions alongside others.

- Global Storytelling Contests: Launch online contests inviting people worldwide to create digital stories (short films, animations, photo essays) inspired by elements from the Digital Repository. This engages a global creative community as active promoters.

### 3.4. Cultivating a New Generation of “Cultural Bridge” Specialists

Investment in human capital is essential.

- Interdisciplinary University Programs: Support MA or PhD programs that combine cultural heritage studies, digital media production, and international communication strategy.
- Community Digital Literacy Training: Empower local culture bearers—artisans, festival organizers, village historians—with skills to document their own culture and share it directly via social media or community blogs, adding an invaluable layer of authenticity.
- “Cultural Ambassador” Fellowships: Fund recent graduates or young professionals to undertake projects that creatively interpret Qilu rural culture for specific foreign markets, providing them with mentorship and platforms to showcase their work.

## 4. Implementation Considerations

### 4.1. Ethical and Authenticity Safeguards

All digital narrative work must be conducted in close collaboration with source communities, ensuring respectful representation and shared benefits. Protocols for Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) should be followed when documenting living traditions or individuals.

### 4.2. Sustainable Models and Partnerships

Seek hybrid funding models combining public grants, academic research funds, and ethical partnerships with cultural/tech enterprises. Long-term sustainability depends on demonstrating the social, cultural, and indirect economic value of these digital assets.

### 4.3. Impact Assessment

Develop metrics beyond web traffic, focusing on qualitative indicators: depth of audience engagement (time spent, interaction levels), sentiment in international media coverage, uptake of resources by foreign educators or creators, and feedback from source communities on the representation.

## 5. Conclusion

The international dissemination of Qilu’s rural cultural heritage is a complex but vital undertaking in our interconnected world. It requires moving from seeing this heritage as a set of artifacts to be displayed, to understanding it as a constellation

of memories, practices, and values to be experienced and dialogued with. Digital technology, through narrative and reconstruction, provides the essential toolkit for this shift. By building a robust digital memory foundation, authoring captivating transmedia stories, inviting global collaboration, and nurturing skilled communicators, the profound wisdom and beauty embedded in the villages along the Yellow River can find a resonant and meaningful place in global cultural consciousness. This process ultimately serves not only cultural diplomacy but also the vital empowerment and sustainable future of the rural communities themselves.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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