More than a festival: President Xi talks about Chinese traditional culture

China marked its annual Dragon Boat Festival on Monday with plenty of traditional activities and culinary feasts.

There are many legends about the Dragon Boat Festival, among which the tale of poet Qu Yuan some 2,300 years ago is the most widely remembered.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has mentioned Qu Yuan and his works on several significant occasions with far-reaching implications.

For example, Xi delivered a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the 28th General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union, which was held in Beijing in August 2012, and quoted Qu Yuan's "Heavenly Questions."

“As one of the ancient civilizations of the world, China has made important contributions to the development of astronomy. Our ancestors began to observe and explore the mysteries of the universe early in their daily labors.”

In referencing Qu Yuan and marking traditional festivals, Xi is emphasizing the Chinese culture and its development.

On the eve of Mid-Autumn Festival in 2015, President Xi addressed a reception held by the Chinese community in the United States in Seattle, and delivered a speech, encouraging overseas Chinese to make more contributions to improving the Sino-US relationship.

Xi hoped that the Chinese in the US could make full use of their bilingual skills to enhance cooperation between the two countries and deepen Americans' understanding of China and Chinese culture.

At the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium in 2014, Xi said, "Great thinkers such as Laotze (6th – 5th century BC), Confucius (551–479 BC), and Motze (470–391 BC), to name just a few, explored a wide range of topics from the universe to the earth, and from men's relations with nature to relations amongst human beings, and to that between the individuals and society."

In Xi's mind, the traditional Chinese culture has important historical influence and tangible value, and such a unique intellectual legacy has instilled a strong sense of national confidence in the Chinese people and nurtured a national spirit with patriotism at its core.

Last month, President Xi called for building world-class universities with Chinese characteristics to nurture people who are ready to join the socialist cause. He made the remark when addressing students and teachers in a meeting at Peking University on May 2.

Xi told the international students at the meeting that to understand China, they must understand Chinese history, culture, thought and development stages.

"The Chinese civilization, together with the vibrant and colorful cultures created by the people of other countries, will provide humanity with the right cultural guidance and strong motivation," Xi indicated in his speech at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris in 2014.

China has a time-honored civilization, spanning over 5,000 years and continuing uninterruptedly to this day. The Chinese characters, invented by our ancestors several millennia ago, are still being used today.

Different countries have different ways and activities to celebrate Chinese festivals, but the unique charm of the Chinese culture is showing its influence in this way.