

The Media Use of Liuzhou Folk Song Inheritance in China: According to the Investigation in Yufeng Folk Song Field Under Yufeng Mountain in Liuzhou City

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Abstract

According to the existing research, with modern urban civilization continuously extends into traditional rural society, the survival environment of traditional national culture is suffered from the impact of various aspects, including development of new media technology. However, in the process of the technical urbanization, Liuzhou folk songs have no depression from the impact. On the contrary, because of new methods to be imported into its inheritance, Liuzhou folk songs are presenting a boom. The fieldwork found that Liuzhou folk song inheritance is experiencing shift which is from the traditional mentoring to medium teaching in the process of the modernization. These media include textbooks about folk song creating, improvised dish homemade by singers, the network video resources, and network spontaneous learning community through QQ group and other social software. The active medium use to make folk heritage can adapt to the environment change, and make folk heritage for innovation and development. That has a certain advantage. But in other hand, there has been some limitation that because of the excessive emphasis on written rules and figures of speech, it should have a certain damage on the bearing cultural connotation of Liuzhou folk songs. People should pay more attention to it.

Key words: Liuzhou folk song; Inheritance of national culture; Media utilization in cultural heritage

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INTRODUCTION

Many studies about national culture inheritance suggest that traditional ethnic culture is now facing the impact of modern technology and in urgent need of protection. Dr. Li Ya considered in her dissertation that, electronic information media dominated the modernization of the 21st century. Along with the modern urban civilization to the traditional rural society, original survival environment of traditional ethnic culture is impacted by various modernized aspects, including development of new media technology (Li, 2011). Dr. Zhuo Mecuo considered that under the impact from information technology, Thangka of Rebkong inheritance faces difficulties .the application of information technology leads to the aim of utilitarianism, which performs as traditional ritual omitted, the traditional production process and artists development of Rebkong Thangka simplified, and so on (Zhuo, 2011).

Some scholars believe that too much artificial manipulation of the folk culture to be able to cause “protective damage” instead. According to Sun Xiaoxia, in the current study of non-material cultural heritage protection and inheritance, not only must the system theory exploration be strengthen, but also should the significance of existence in the folk society be reflected, and the survival of folk cultural evolution law be found in order to avoid blind protection (Sun, 2007). Hu Bingzhang and Hu Chen considered the motion process of natural heritage is a kind of life, and only in the process of the natural heritage, folk culture can truly coruscate gives its own vitality, show their own unique cultural charm (Hu & Hu, 2008).

For the research about the impact on the transmission of ethnic culture from modern medium environment mainly stay in the phenomenon of layer, which just described more about “new technology has impact the traditional cultural heritage impact, should seek more humanistic care”, less in reason search and how to deal with this problem.

With modern urban civilization continuously extends into traditional rural society, the survival environment of traditional national culture is suffered from the impact of various aspects, including development of new media technology. However, in the process of the technical urbanization, Liuzhou folk songs have no depression from the impact; but, on the contrary, it is showing the trend of active integration with new media technology, efforts to open up its own survival in the new social environment space. Especially in recent years, Liuzhou folk songs are active in the major social network learning communities which have broken through the traditional limit of time and space, and now are fused with other folk songs in other places. Because of new methods to be imported into its inheritance, Liuzhou folk songs are presenting a boom. This special phenomenon is of great research value.

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, fieldwork is used to ask for information about various aspects of Liuzhou folk songs. Three main methods were used in this paper. Firstly, participant observation was used to know the existing media communication style of Liuzhou folk songs and the influence to folk culture itself from the media communication. Secondly, interviewing method was used to know the singer's learning situation, and the effects of different inheritance way on the singer. At last but not least, text analysis would be used to compare the content from different media transmission way, in order to know how the cultural change happen.

2. FIELDWORK RESULTS

Liuzhou folk song is a kind of folk song singed in China, which has fixed tones but impromptu lyrics rich in poetic. In 2007, Liuzhou folk song was selected into the first Non-physical Cultural Heritage list of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in China. Yufeng Mountain, which is like a fish leaping into the sky, is considered to be the original place of Liu Zhou folk song. Legend has it that Liu Sanjie, who was called Fairy singer by the Zhuang people in Guangxi, had to ride a flying fish to the sky and become immortal was here. Though there were so many vicissitudes since the Tang dynasty, there has been an important place for people singing folk songs. In every holiday afternoon, singers from the city and surrounding counties come to Yufeng mountain to sing folk songs with others.

When singers want to sing, they usually sing a song to introduce themselves, or ask some riddles by singing. They call this starting-song. If someone is willing to sing with them, he/she must to give response by singing, too. The main content of songs refers to love, daily life, society, politics, and so on. Love is the most popular.

In January, March and April 2013, the writer met many excellent singers and interviewed them when she investigated here. According to the interview, most of the singers are 50 years age or older, and have different careers. They are famers, merchants, teachers, students, polices, and so on. There are some professional singers too, but account for only a small proportion. Yang Qingmei, one singer from Xiangzhou county, was a farmer several years ago. Now she is doing some small business with her husband in Liuzhou. After a day's work, she likes to sing with her partners under Yufeng Mountain, or in Jiangbin Park beside Liujiang River. “I learned to sing when I was fourteen. Because of my desperate to encounter, I am good at bitter love songs”, she said.

Although Liuzhou folk song has a long history, most singers started learning folk songs in recent years. They learn folk songs from books or CDs, that is very different from learning folk songs from the master in the past. There are also some online learning communities for folk song learning. Members of the communities come from broader areas, such as Guizhou, Yunnan, Hunan, Sichuan, Chongqing, where are all next to Guangxi. They learn folk songs by reading online tutorial, downloading network videos, or chatting with other members in QQ groups—a kind of chat tool in China.

The use of new media during the transmission of Liuzhou folk songs embodies the pro technology, active use of technology, and due to the use of media technology shows a tendency of more prosperous in the national cultural heritage. The traditional oral way of transmission is almost completely replaced by new media. The traditional masters gradually lost their position in folk song learning.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Tutors Is Needed When Learning Folk Songs

In nowadays, Liuzhou folk song inheritance includes several kinds of ways. They are traditional mentoring, textbooks, CDs, TV, newspapers, Internet, and so on. Though the inheritance is experiencing shift, traditional mentoring is thought to be important by singers. Wei Liemian, who is called Little Luorong¹, began to learn

¹ Singers call each other in place name in habits. Luorong is one town of Luzhai county in Liuzhou. Once a very famous singer called Old Luorong lived here, but now he's dead. Because of his exquisite song skills, Wei Liemian was considered to be along with Old Luorong. But he is younger than Old Luorong, so he is called Little Luorong now.

folk songs seven or eight years ago, earlier than other singers. Even some singers learned folk songs from him. He introduced his learning experience to the investigator like this:

I like folk songs when I was young, and began to learn it when I was retired. There was no teacher taught me folk songs. I learn it by listening myself. For example, when I was free, I listen to other singers, or listen to the CD player. I bought a lot of CDs about folk songs from Kunming city which is in Yunnan province when I was travelling there. I spent all my money that I nearly could not come home. But I don't think that's enough to folk song singing. The master's guidance is very important in folk song learning. When I have doubts in learning, I would like to ask the master very much.

People like to study folk song with teachers, not only because they can solve the doubts more quickly and directly, but also they can gain more achievements than learn by themselves. Li Longqiu, a doctor of traditional Chinese medicine in Rongshui county, is a famous folk song singer in Liuzhou. In 2009, he was engaged to be the inheritance people of Liuzhou folk songs. He learned folk songs from his two uncles, Liang Huanzhang and Liang Huanqi, who were his mother's two brothers. And now, he has 10 disciples, 9 of whom were called Vocal King of Guangxi, Liuzhou or Beijiang River.

3.2 Textbook Learning: The Transition From Traditional to Modern

Early songbook was the main written material for singers' folk song learning, which was in the ancient Zhuang characters by hand written. Few people know the ancient Zhuang characters, so this kind of songbook was not easy to circulate. Later, singers turned to use Chinese characters to record their songs. The songbook recorded in Chinese characters is easier accepted by folk song learners than wrote in the ancient Zhuang characters. But there were still some defects. Such as this kind of books didn't introduce the singing or written rules directly. Singers can only get some beautiful sentences as his songs, singing/written rules and reply skills can only be done by individual understanding. That's only a kind of implicit learning, which effect is uncertain and work slowly.

In recent years, some books about the skills of folk song writing or the experience of folk song singers have been published. These publications are written with standardized words and artistic technique, through explicit way for everybody to learn folk songs. The book "*Teaching with Mobile Phone*" recorded all the process that two people from the acquaintance to mentoring relationships established, then on folk song teaching with mobile phone in poetic way, which is called folk song without the tune. It contains how the teaching begins, the first singing/writing rules of folk songs, the additional rhetoric of folk songs, the skills when the singer is against with others, and so on. (Qin & Mo, 2010) Just as Qin wrote in his book: The past learn songs by oral, when ten learned nine

lost; Now learn songs for script, ten thousand generations can keep. (Qin, 2012)

3.3 Audio and Video Products: To Be Fond by the Elderly

With the speeding up of urbanization process, more and more farmers lose their land and to be far away from their old way of life. Liuzhou folk songs are going into cities along with these farmers. Due to the low standards of living in cities, the younger of them must struggle for their living, working instead of folk songs became to be their daily necessities, and gradually they feel strange about folk songs. So when we walk in the Yufeng folk song field, we would find both the singer and the audience are mostly the elderly over the age of 60. The audio and video products become their favorite learning styles because of which is straightforward and easy to operate.

The audio and video products current Liuzhou folk song learners use is mostly from individuals. They record the singer's singing process with the hand-held camera or portable speaker which has the function of recording, make CD or VCD only after simple editing or not, then sell to people in need at low prices. We can buy most of the local famous folk song singers' VCD products and some famous folk song contest VCD products.

Zhang Meixing, a singer from Liucheng county, learned folk songs with video disks which is made by Wei Liemian who has been mentioned before in this paper. And now she sells her singing VCD to others, too. Singing on the song field and selling CDs become her main source of income.

Though there are so many audio and video products be popular in singers and audiences, "Miao Xiang Lovers" is currently the only legitimate folk song singing VCD in public publication, which was sung by Li Longqiu and Huang Sisters, another two famous singers from Yizhou city.

3.4 Singing on the Internet: The Choice of New Generation

The earliest news reports about the transmission of folk song by network was in 2002. In the past two years, with the loss of the network access threshold, more and more people join in the network to folk song transmission. Network transmission style also had some new changes. Some mainstream mass media are also working to network singing fair. Hechi Daily Press Group has opened up a "Sanjie singing fair" discussion boards on its website. At the same time network folk song games had been held not regularly here. During the Spring Festival in 2013, Hechi Daily Press Group's "2013 New Year Network Folk Song Games" had attracted nearly more than 300 comments, the atmosphere was very warm.

It is the most popular way to younger people who love folk song that using the QQ friend group developed by Tencent Company. The two most active QQ groups are Guangxi Liuzhou Folk Songs of Smile Group and

Guangxi Folk Songs Teaching Group. They can sing together across the country, with no limitation of time and space, and with no language barrier, too. Young singers would like to upload the folk fair video that they have taken part in to some video web sites for everyone to exchange and share. Other young folk song lovers can get these free videos for amusement and learning. The establishment of folk songs online learning community is expanding the scope of the spread of folk songs, promoting the rapid integration of folk song styles from different ethnic groups around the country. Singing on the web is favored by more and more young people. Some old famous singers also involve in now.

4. DISCUSSION

As a form of folk art, the inheritance and spread of the folk song is not only people's personal activities, but also to maintain a place and the role, characters and emotions of a group. Traditional way of folk song inheritance mainly focusses on the interactions with true feelings of the participants. When visiting the song contest in real scene, learners can hear from the scene of the song, moved by singer's body languages and the scene atmosphere. All feeling has rhythmic and imagination. It's a kind of more diversified and three-dimensional way of interpersonal communication, will carry the plain kind and vivid aesthetic characteristics of the nation (Qin, 2004).

Due to the traditional way of inheriting mainly aims at the cultivation of the elite individuals rather than groups, It is inefficient and can not adapt to fast-paced requirements of modern society. The way of Liuzhou folk song inheritance has moved towards a more quick and efficient way of media transmission. Classic mentoring system of folk song inheritance is gradually reduced. Mentoring relationship is also gradually reduced to a relatively equal partnership. Singers learn folk songs independently with other media such as textbooks, video disks or video online, online communities, and so on. They can get information much more quickly than before. But some limitations are also gradually revealed in the new media environment.

4.1 The Folk Song Learning in Media Environment Paid too Many Attention to the Explicit Form of Culture

According to Harold Innis, three influences must be produced by communication technologies change inevitably: a) Change the structure of the people's interests; b) Change the nature of symbols (which is to think about); c) Change the nature of the community. (Innis, 1950, 2013) Due to the change of medium, including the textbook, video disks, network, and so on, Folk song learners' personal interest structure changes in the first place, that they may pay too much attention to a faster, easier media way to gain revealed folk songs

written rules, rhetorical devices, the local form folk song tunes thereof instead of the field overall but inner perception of folk song culture. The way of thinking about the world which triggered by the folk song itself is changed accordingly. The important cultural connotation in imperceptible bearing by folk song itself, such as life value, and so on, is overlooked by learners. At last, The real meaning of folk song heritage is lost.

According to a netizen named "Longlin Old A'niu", folk song is sacred that people could not always sing it when they want in Debao county- his hometown several years ago. There has been a kind of special ceremony called "inviting the goddess of the moon" on the night of the Mid-Autumn festival. People could sing folk songs only after the special ceremony succeed, that three or more women who could not sing folk songs anymore change their possessed to sing with other famous singers skillfully. If this special ceremony is failure, people can only wait until the next successful ceremony next Mid-Autumn night. But now, singers sing folk songs everywhere at any time. A video from network which was recorded in 2010² displays that the ceremony held at the same time folk songs were being sung. The divine of folk songs has ceased to exist.

4.2 The Bias of the Network Media Spread Environment Lead to Distortion of Cultural Inheritance

Because of the using of computer coding technology, and there are no limitation of times and spaces, the language barrier between all nationalities is eliminated, the scope of the spread of folk songs is expanded by networks, and the folk songs from different ethnic around are integrated. But at the same time, because of the special bias of network media, when singers sing online, they mainly communicate in the text without any folk song tune. At the same time, they can respond to the opponent when they are convenient, some times soon, some times not. Or more precisely, they are folk song writers rather than singers at this moment. The atmosphere of folk songs of improvisation gradually disappears, and some traditional folk tunes would be eroded. Liuzhou folk song online is losing its own charm.

A netizen named "No.1 Silence", a learner from Shandong province, began to learn Liuzhou folk song in the internet after a Guangxi tour. He thinks that, the most difficult thing in Liuzhou folk song learning is Liuzhou dialect learning. But when the interviewer asked him how he learn the tune, he said, "I don't know any folk tune. And I don't need to know that anymore." And it is impossible if somebody wants to let him know the culture behind the Liuzhou folk song.

² The video online address: http://www.56.com/u51/v_NTUzMzgZMTI.html

CONCLUSION

As a technology, media itself is also a kind of culture. Neil Postman, a medium environmentalists, said that, "Media is the technology that the culture can grow in it", "The way medium interact with you endows the culture with characteristics". (Postman, 1993, 2007) Medium has been applied in national culture inheritance and dissemination process, the essence of which is technology culture and national culture fusion process. People use media to spread its culture, at the same time to herself in the media environment, and to be constrained by the laws of media culture itself. Therefore people in the media environment is the subject with double culture identity, that is the national culture identity and media culture identity. There are some problems need to solve. The problems are as follow: a) how to coordinate the relationship between the two cultures; b) how to make the national culture to reasonably use the spread of the operating mechanism of media culture, and c) how to complete the heritage and development itself.

On the other hand, the media dissemination is still a kind of secondary form in Liuzhou folk song inheritance. And it is also in a state of chaos. People can only perceive it to make up for some defects in traditional inheritance model function, and may enlarge the utility of this function at the same time so that they worship media technology blindly. Too much emphasis on the advantages of medium in the process of cultural transmission and neglect the limitations of the medium itself, would lack the consciousness of media culture, thus blindly rely on the group of media dissemination way of self organization to inherit national culture activities such as folk songs. It's no doubt that will have serious damage on national culture itself. The balance

between the cultural protection and media utilization will become a new trend for future related research.

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