

Innovative Approaches to Ensure the Future Survival of Qinqiang - Challenges, Community Engagement and the Vulnerability of Intangible Cultural Heritage

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Abstract: As one of China's traditional theatres, the Qinqiang was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2006. With the development of globalization and urbanization, Qinqiang, one of China's oldest opera genres, is facing a series of problems such as aging audiences and a succession of inheritors. The article analyses the challenges faced by local communities in the process of preserving this intangible cultural heritage by discussing the cultural value of Qinqiang and the problems it has encountered in the process of its development. It also proposes a series of innovative conservation methods based on the challenges faced by the Qinqiang in the process of conservation. This thesis mainly adopts the literature analysis method and the case study method to provide theoretical support for the research by combing and summarising the development status in other important literature and the problems encountered in the research process, and by combining it with the current status of the development of intangible cultural heritage, such as Filipino folk dances, to provide theoretical support for the research. After analysis, this thesis finds that although Qinqiang has a long history of development and unique cultural value, it faces challenges in the process of development and conservation such as urbanisation and the ageing of its audience, and needs to put forward new methods of inheritance and conservation on the basis of summarising past conservation experiences.

Keywords: Qinqiang, Cultural value, Community protection, Challenge, Innovation protection

1. Introduction

Qinqiang, as the oldest and largest extant theatre genre, is known as the source of all operas. It is popular throughout Northwest China around Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Tibet. Qinqiang has extremely rich historical and cultural values. In terms of its historical development and origin, Qinqiang originated in the Qin Dynasty and has evolved through many dynasties, preserving the core aesthetics of traditional Chinese theatre. The Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties were the most prosperous periods for the development of Qinqiang. The Ming Dynasty even spread it to the Jiangnan generation of China, laying the foundation for Qinqiang to become famous throughout the country. This demonstrated Qinqiang's strong vitality and ability to spread across regions, and its ability to adapt to the development of the times. During the Qing Dynasty, the Qinqiang reached its

heyday [1]. In 2006, it was included in the first batch of China's national intangible cultural heritage list. The reason it became a national intangible cultural heritage is, on the one hand, its unique performance style and musical form. On the other hand, it is the rich historical and cultural connotations it contains. However, with the development of modern society. Many traditional cultures, such as opera, face challenges such as aging audiences, difficulties in transmission, and urbanization. Many Chinese and foreign researchers and scholars have found that the attraction of opera for young people is gradually declining [2]. To cope with this predicament, innovative conservation methods and wider social participation have become key ways to ensure its future survival [3]. The goal of this paper is to analyse the dilemmas faced by Qinqiang, an intangible cultural heritage, in modern society. By exploring the safeguarding measures for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) adopted at this stage, more innovative methods are proposed to promote the inheritance and protection of Qinqiang.

2. The Current Development of Qinqiang and the Threats It Faces

From the analysis of the historical background and cultural value of Qinqiang, it can be seen that Qinqiang had a high social status in ancient China. However, since the end of the Qing Dynasty, the spread of Qinqiang has gradually shrunk [4]. After entering modern society, the spread of Qinqiang returned to the northwestern region. The reason for this phenomenon is, on the one hand, because the linguistic characteristics of Qinqiang match the identity of the people in the Northwest. But for the people in other regions, the dialect of Shaanxi region is more difficult to understand. Therefore, it is easier for Qinqiang to maintain its audience base and cultural spread in the Northwest. On the other hand, it is because of the economic development of the northwestern region. The economic development of the northwestern region is relatively backward in China, and the region's cultural development has been limited as a result.

With the gradual return of Qinqiang's spread to the northwest, the situation of this traditional theatre has become more and more confined in modern society, and the threats it faces have become more and more pronounced.

Firstly, urbanization and globalization have impacted traditional industries. Many young people feel that learning opera such as Qinqiang does not bring them good economic benefits. In an opera industry such as Qinqiang, one needs to learn the basics from a young age if one wants to work in the industry for a long time. Learning Qinqiang requires a great deal of effort and time, and many students will choose to give up during the learning process because it is too difficult.

This phenomenon is not only found in the theatre industry. In UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage, there are many intangible cultural heritages that need to be safeguarded urgently, and many of them face the problem of insufficient interest of potential inheritors in traditional trades. For example, in the case of Pasto Varnish, urbanization has created more lucrative options for young people, leading to their interest in other professions and trades. Jobs such as Pasto Varnish, which are not economically profitable, require a lot of hard work and have a high-risk factor, are 'backward' for young people [5].

Secondly, with the promotion of Putonghua throughout the country, young people are becoming more and more unfamiliar with the dialect. However, the interpretation of Qinqiang uses the dialect of the Shaanxi region. This leads to the fact that young audiences may face a language barrier in appreciating and learning Qinqiang, and may not be able to fully understand the dialogue and chants in the play, which in turn undermines their interest in this traditional art form. Take the example of traditional Philippine folk dances. As a multicultural country, the Philippines has a rich diversity of folk traditional dance forms. These dance forms are usually closely linked to specific local cultures, dialects and customs. However, with the popularity of English and Filipino in the country, local

languages and cultures are gradually being marginalised [6]. This phenomenon has weakened the cultural background and context of traditional dance.

In addition, the Qinqiang itself suffers from a lack of innovation and heavy programming. Most of Qinqiang's scriptwriting is based on ancient folktales, myths and legends. From the perspective of modern people, some concepts in Qinqiang are in conflict with the ideology of people in modern life. For example, in Qinqiang's interpretation, there are often traditional concepts that convey feudal ethical views. This clash of values leads to a disconnect in the emotional identity of the audience. This also limits the spread and influence of Qinqiang in contemporary culture to a certain extent.

3. The Process of Preserving Qinqiang

Firstly, the government, in order to safeguard Qinqiang's legacy, strengthened people's attention to Qinqiang as an intangible cultural heritage. The central government included Qinqiang in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage at the National Level [1]. At the same time, the government has provided special financial support for the continued development of Qinqiang, encouraging local communities and theatre troupes to organise various forms of Qinqiang festivals, tours, and other activities, so as to keep this intangible cultural heritage alive in the public eye.

Secondly, the community, as the carrier of Qinqiang culture, plays a key role in its preservation and transmission. Communities often make Qinqiang a part of local cultural life by organising folk activities such as temple fairs and weddings. This form of activity, on the one hand, provides the inheritors of Qinqiang with a platform for interpretation and space for display. On the other hand, it can also stimulate the interest of the audience.

In addition, in the process of preserving Qinqiang, many schools have set up special theatre studies majors. It provides strong academic support for the inheritance and innovation of this traditional art. Through these majors, students can systematically learn about the history of Qinqiang, performance techniques, singing music and stage design, thus training a new generation of Qinqiang inheritors.

4. Challenges Faced by the Qinqiang Protection Process

Qinqiang has also encountered many difficulties in the process of conservation. For example, the lack of funding for theatre troupes has been a major constraint on the development of Qinqiang. As mentioned before, the government has given financial support to Qinqiang. However, due to the weak market competitiveness of traditional theatre, profitability is not high. The government's financial support does not completely solve the problem of Qinqiang's limited long-term development. In China, there are so many intangible cultural heritages like Qinqiang that the government is not able to give every intangible cultural heritage sustained and adequate financial support, and therefore, the conservation of Qinqiang is still facing a serious shortage of funds.

In addition, the biggest problem facing the preservation process of Qinqiang at this stage is the serious loss of inheritors as the older generation of Qinqiang performing artists retire or pass away. Although there are opera schools and training courses to train newcomers, the unstable development of an opera career has made many young people reluctant to choose this career, leading to an intensification of the talent gap.

In the face of these multifaceted challenges, relying on traditional means alone is no longer sufficient to preserve the Qinqiang. Next, we will explore some innovative conservation methods to ensure that Qinqiang can adapt to the changes in modern society and continue to be passed on.

5. Innovative Conservation Methods

The problem of Qinqiang dialect can be addressed by drawing on the practices of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. Vanuatu Culture These advocate reconnecting young people with traditional culture in their

presentation of cultural heritage [7]. They have launched the Urban Youth Heritage School which aims to teach young people about traditional culture, the use of local languages and the development of skills using local resources. In the case of Qinqi, one of the main barriers to its development is the dialect of the Northwest Territories. This is similar to the situation in Vanuatu. However, this approach through education and training needs to focus on “superficial forms of transmission”. In order to avoid this superficial inheritance. While maintaining the linguistic characteristics of Qinqiang in the educational process, young people need to be helped to understand the cultural essence of Qinqiang in depth.

Cultural promotion can be promoted through other focuses on the development of tourism in the region, which in turn will lead to a focus on Qinqiang culture. This research on this point is based on the interaction between cultural heritage and the tourism industry in modern society. Culture can create local uniqueness for tourism, while tourism offers the potential to enhance and support cultural production [8]. The development of tourism can, on the one hand, connect tourists to local culture through events such as cultural festivals and Qinqi performances. On the other hand, tourism funding can provide economic support for theatre groups and promote their sustainable development. At the same time, the participation of tourists will also increase the exposure to Qinqiang and promote the modern dissemination of this traditional art. However, is it possible that the promotion of tourism could lead to a distortion of Qinqiang culture or a shift in cultural focus [9]? For example, the performance style may be weakened to cater to tourists' preferences, and the dramatic storytelling may become more shallow and accessible. This requires finding a balance between cultural promotion and local cultural preservation. For example, transforming a single cultural export into an interactive cultural exchange. In the process of interaction between different cultures, the integrity of their cultural identity can be maintained while the innovative development of different cultures can be promoted.

6. Conclusion

The above discusses the current state of development of the Qinqiang, the conservation process, and proposes innovative conservation methods. It is worth considering that cultural heritage itself is dynamic. It is constantly evolving with social, technological and economic development. We need to consider whether a hard-line approach based on past conservation experiences is necessary to “secure” the future of the Qinqiang, and whether such an approach will lose the significance of the Qinqiang as a living culture. If rigid conservation measures are taken to “secure” the future of the Qinqiang, it may hinder its integration with modern life and weaken its vitality. For the continuation of the Qinqiang, we still need to find a balance between preservation and development. This balance should be reflected in respecting the traditional essence of the Qinqiang while integrating it with the changes and needs of modern society. Through innovative and adaptive conservation methods, the Qinqiang will be able to maintain its cultural roots and, at the same time, develop new vitality and continue to be passed on. Although this thesis proposes innovative conservation methods to address the developmental challenges faced by Qinqiang, such as aging audiences and dialects, these methods still need to be explored in depth in terms of concrete practice. In future research, a more general framework of thinking and practical guidance is needed to address the question of whether or not Qinqiang's intangible cultural heritage remains only a superficial form of transmission.

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