

Value Orientation and Practical Exploration of Chinese Folk Songs in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection System

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Abstract. This paper explores the value orientation of Chinese folk songs in the intangible cultural heritage protection system, as well as the practical exploration of their protection and inheritance. The study points out that folk songs, as carriers of cultural inheritance, artistic aesthetics, social cohesion, educational enlightenment, and economic resources, possess multi-dimensional values. Facing challenges such as the impact of modernization, lack of inheritors, crisis of cultural identity, limited communication channels, and inadequacies in the education system, effective strategies for the protection and inheritance of Chinese folk songs are proposed through practical approaches including policy support, digital protection, integration into education, community participation, and innovative development, promoting their vitality in modern society.

Keywords: Chinese folk songs, intangible cultural heritage, value orientation, protection and inheritance, practical exploration

1. Introduction

As a treasure in the cultural treasure house of the Chinese nation, Chinese folk songs carry rich historical memories and national spirit. They are not only the crystallization of the wisdom of all ethnic groups but also a vivid embodiment of cultural diversity. However, under the impact of modernization, the inheritance and development of folk songs face numerous difficulties. How to achieve the sustainable development of folk songs on the basis of protecting traditions has become an urgent issue to be addressed. This paper aims to provide theoretical support and practical paths for the protection and development of this intangible cultural heritage by analyzing the value orientation and practical exploration of folk songs.

2. Value orientation of chinese folk songs in the intangible cultural heritage protection system

As an important part of intangible cultural heritage, Chinese folk songs contain rich cultural connotations and unique artistic values. In the intangible cultural heritage protection system, the value orientation of folk songs is not only reflected in their role as carriers of traditional culture but also in their contribution to the cohesion of national spirit and cultural diversity. The following is a detailed discussion from the aspects of cultural inheritance, artistic aesthetics, social cohesion, educational significance, and economic value.

2.1. Cultural inheritance: a living carrier of historical memory

Folk songs are a vivid embodiment of the history and culture of various ethnic groups. They record the lifestyle, customs, religious beliefs, and social changes of ethnic groups through oral inheritance. Each folk song is a vivid history, reflecting the social features and people's lives in a specific period. In the intangible cultural heritage protection system, the value of folk songs is first reflected in their role as an important carrier of cultural inheritance [1]. Through singing passed down from generation to generation, folk songs continue the historical memory of the nation, serving as a bridge connecting the past and the present. This living inheritance method makes folk songs not only an artistic form but also a transmission of cultural genes, carrying the cultural memory and identity of the nation.

2.2. Artistic aesthetics: the unique charm of national art

The artistic value of folk songs lies in their unique musical styles and forms of expression. Different ethnic groups and regions have their own unique melodies, rhythms, and singing methods, which together constitute the rich and colorful artistic landscape of Chinese folk songs. From the Xintianyou in the north to the mountain songs in the south, from the long songs on the grasslands to the ditties in the regions south of the Yangtze River, each type of folk song demonstrates the unique charm of national art [2]. In the intangible cultural heritage protection system, the artistic and aesthetic value of folk songs is reflected not only in their musical forms but also in the literary value contained in their lyrics.

2.3. Social cohesion: a unifying force of national spirit

Folk songs are not only expressions of art but also an important force for social cohesion. In social life, folk songs often appear as a form of collective activity, such as festival celebrations, weddings, funerals, and labor scenes. Through singing folk songs together, people express their love for life, reverence for nature, and sense of belonging to society. In the intangible cultural heritage protection system, the social cohesion value of folk songs is reflected in their role in unifying national spirit. It can enhance national cohesion and solidarity, enabling people to find a sense of identity and belonging in common cultural symbols. This social cohesion function makes folk songs significant in maintaining social stability and promoting national unity.

2.4. Educational significance: an educational carrier for cultural inheritance

Folk songs also have important educational significance in cultural inheritance. As a vivid cultural carrier, folk songs can impart historical and cultural knowledge to people in an accessible way. By learning and singing folk songs, people can better understand the history, culture, and social values of the nation. In the intangible cultural heritage protection system, the educational value of folk songs is reflected in their role in cultural enlightenment for young people. Incorporating folk songs into the education system can not only enrich educational content but also cultivate young people's interest and love for traditional culture, enhancing their cultural confidence. This educational function makes folk songs irreplaceable in cultural inheritance, serving as a link connecting the past and the future.

2.5. Economic value: a potential resource for cultural industries

With the rise of cultural industries, folk songs, as a form of intangible cultural heritage, also have important economic value. The protection and inheritance of folk songs can not only promote the development of cultural tourism but also create economic benefits through music creation, performances, and recordings. In the intangible cultural heritage protection system, the economic value of folk songs is reflected in their role in promoting cultural industries [3]. Through rational development and utilization of folk song resources, local economic development can be promoted, and financial support can be provided for the protection of traditional culture. The realization of this economic value can not only provide material guarantee for the protection of traditional culture but also promote the sustainable development of culture.

3. Challenges facing the protection and inheritance of chinese folk songs

As an important part of intangible cultural heritage, Chinese folk songs carry rich historical and cultural connotations and national spirit. However, in the rapid development of modern society, the protection and inheritance of folk songs face numerous challenges. These challenges not only come from changes in the external environment but also involve difficulties in the internal inheritance mechanism. The following is a detailed discussion from the aspects of the impact of modernization, lack of inheritors, crisis of cultural identity, limited communication channels, and inadequacies in the education system.

3.1. Modernization impact: collision between tradition and modernity

The process of modernization has had a profound impact on traditional culture, and Chinese folk songs are no exception. With the acceleration of urbanization and the popularization of modern lifestyles, traditional rural life has gradually changed, and the living soil of folk songs has also changed accordingly. The diversification of entertainment methods brought by modernization has gradually squeezed the share of folk songs in the cultural market. Modern entertainment forms such as television, the Internet, and pop music have attracted a large number of audiences, especially the younger generation, whose attention to traditional folk songs has gradually decreased. This impact of modernization has not only weakened the communication foundation of folk songs but also reduced their influence in modern society.

3.2. Lack of inheritors: the dilemma of no successors

Inheritors are the key to the continuation of folk songs. However, with the gradual passing of the older generation of folk song artists, the cultivation of new-generation inheritors faces many difficulties. The inheritance of folk songs mainly relies on oral tradition, which, although unique, is easily limited by the quantity and quality of inheritors. The younger generation's lack of interest in folk songs has led to fewer and fewer people willing to learn and inherit them [4]. In addition, learning folk songs requires long-term accumulation and practice, which is in sharp contrast to the fast-paced lifestyle of modern society. The problem of insufficient inheritors not only affects the inheritance of folk songs but also puts many precious versions of folk songs at risk of being lost.

3.3. Crisis of cultural identity: weakening of identity

Cultural identity is an important foundation for the inheritance of folk songs. However, in the context of globalization and modernization, the sense of cultural identity in many regions has gradually weakened. The younger generation, impacted by foreign cultures, has gradually reduced their sense of identity and belonging to local culture. This crisis of cultural identity not only affects the inheritance of folk songs but also puts folk songs in a difficult position in the protection of cultural diversity. The weakening of cultural identity has gradually marginalized the status of folk songs in society, making it difficult for them to receive sufficient attention and support. This phenomenon is particularly prominent in some ethnic minority areas, where many ethnic minority folk songs are at risk of being forgotten.

3.4. Limited communication channels: the dilemma of insufficient dissemination

In today's era of information explosion, the diversification of communication channels has provided unprecedented convenience for the dissemination of various cultures, but it has also intensified competition in the field of cultural communication. As a traditional art form, folk songs do not perform well in modern communication channels. Compared with pop music, film and television works, etc., the communication channels of folk songs are relatively single, mainly relying on traditional TV programs, radio, and cultural activities. These channels have limited dissemination power and are difficult to cover a wide audience. In addition, the content of folk song dissemination is relatively single, lacking innovation and attractiveness, making it difficult to meet the needs of modern audiences. The limitation of communication channels makes folk songs less competitive in the cultural market, making it difficult for them to obtain sufficient attention and development space.

3.5. Inadequacies in the education system: shortcomings in the inheritance mechanism

Education is an important way for cultural inheritance, but the current education system has obvious deficiencies in the inheritance of folk songs. In school education, the emphasis on folk songs is low, the teaching content of folk songs is limited, and there is a lack of systematic curriculum design. In some regions, folk song teaching only exists as an interest class or elective course, making it difficult to form an effective inheritance mechanism [5]. In addition, the lack of educational teachers is also an important issue. The number of teachers who can teach folk songs is limited, and their professional levels are uneven. The inadequacies in the education system restrict the dissemination and inheritance of folk songs among young people, making it difficult to cultivate a new generation of inheritors.

4. Practical exploration on the protection and inheritance of chinese folk songs

Facing the various challenges encountered by Chinese folk songs in the process of modernization, the task of protecting and inheriting this intangible cultural heritage is particularly urgent. In recent years, all sectors of society have carried out many beneficial practical explorations from different angles, aiming to open up new paths for the continuation and development of this ancient art form.

4.1. Policy support and legal guarantee: consolidating the foundation of protection

The government plays a key role in the protection and inheritance of folk songs. Through the formulation of relevant policies and regulations, a solid institutional guarantee has been provided for

this cause. From the national to the local level, a series of intangible cultural heritage protection policies have been introduced, incorporating folk songs into key protection objects. These policies not only clarify protection goals and principles but also provide support in terms of funding investment, project application, and identification of inheritors. For example, special protection funds have been established to fund field surveys, data collation, and training of inheritors of folk songs; a folk song protection list has been established to focus on protecting representative types of folk songs.

4.2. Digital protection: expanding the boundaries of dissemination

With the rapid development of information technology, digital means have brought new opportunities for the protection and dissemination of traditional culture. In the field of folk songs, digital protection has become an important practice. Through technical means such as audio and video recording, the singing process of folk songs is completely recorded to form digital archives. These archives can not only preserve the original style of folk songs for a long time but also achieve wide dissemination through Internet platforms. Professor Zhang Tiantong from China Conservatory of Music is a typical practitioner of digital protection. Over more than 20 years, she has been engaged in the protection of folk music, visiting more than 20 provinces, leading teams to interview and record endangered music forms such as Naxi Dongba Heaven Worship, Baisha Fine Music, and Kazakh Akyn Singing, collecting dozens of endangered folk song types and thousands of songs, including precious recordings of many centenarian artists and intangible cultural heritage inheritors. The national publishing fund project she presided over, *Songs from the Fields: Project for Rescuing Endangered Folk Music of Northern Chinese Ethnic Minorities — Daur, Oroqen, Ewenki*, was published in the form of video + text, online and offline integration, building a systematic digital inheritance system for folk songs of northern ethnic minorities. With the help of digital platforms, folk songs have broken through geographical restrictions, allowing more people to access them. Digital protection is not only about recording and storage but also greatly expanding the scope of dissemination through Internet technology. Modern channels such as online music platforms, social media, and video websites have broken the boundaries of time and space, enabling folk songs to be enjoyed anytime and anywhere, especially facilitating the younger generation far from the birthplace to discover and understand them. At the same time, interactive experience projects of folk songs developed with technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality allow audiences to experience their charm immersively, effectively attracting young people's attention and injecting new vitality into inheritance.

4.3. Integration into education: cultivating the soil for inheritance

Education is an important way for cultural inheritance, and incorporating folk songs into the education system is the key to realizing their sustainable inheritance. In the stage of basic education, compile folk song textbooks and integrate them into music courses, allowing students to be exposed to folk songs from an early age and understand their cultural connotations and artistic values. Through various forms such as classroom teaching and extracurricular activities, stimulate students' interest in folk songs and cultivate their awareness of inheritance. Professor Zhang Tiantong has also actively promoted the integration of folk songs into college education. She invited folk singers to perform in the school, founded the "New Folk Song Society" in 2018, and took students to hold lecture-concerts at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, building a three-dimensional inheritance system of "folk society + academic community + government", promoting two-way

interaction between folk society and academia, and between the field and the stage, making folk songs a living culture on campus. In the field of higher education, offer professional courses related to folk songs to cultivate professional talents for research, inheritance, and innovation of folk songs. In addition, efforts should be made to strengthen the construction of the teaching staff and improve teachers' folk song teaching level through training to ensure educational quality.

4.4. Community participation: activating the vitality of inheritance

As the basic unit of society, the community is an important place for the inheritance of folk songs, and community residents are the main force in the inheritance of folk songs. In the process of protecting and inheriting folk songs, the role of the community cannot be underestimated. Encourage residents to participate in folk song inheritance by organizing community activities such as folk song singing competitions and folk song workshops. Taking the inheritance of Shanghai Pudong folk songs as an example, Xi Baoguo, a municipal-level inheritor, brought Pudong folk songs to the municipal stage, recorded and sorted out the folk songs in his memory into textbooks for teaching, and formed a folk song team to attract more people to join; Qingpu District of Shanghai established a Field Folk Song Inheritance Base in 2005, and formulated an inheritance and development model that combines with schools, one-on-one teaching, integration of culture and tourism, and uniting folk forces, keeping Qingpu Field (Mountain) Songs active in community life. In some ethnic minority areas, communities also inherit and develop folk songs in traditional festivals by holding traditional festival activities and combining folk songs with folk customs.

4.5. Innovative development: endowing with the new meaning of the times

On the basis of protecting traditions, innovative development is a key path for the inheritance of folk songs. Adapting folk songs by integrating modern musical elements can make them more in line with contemporary aesthetics. Taking the inheritance of Shanghai Pudong folk songs as an example, Xi Baoguo, a municipal-level inheritor, promoted “cultivating new talents and creating new works”, and his sorted work Four Seasons Song of the Poor won an award in the traditional group of the Jiangnan Folk Song Competition. The local area also established a Jiangnan folk song training base, and four “creation, training, and performance” incubation bases developed according to regional characteristics, forming a joint force for innovative inheritance. Creators can integrate pop music rhythms and harmonies into folk songs, or use them as materials to develop musicals, dances, and other works, expanding the forms of expression. At the same time, stimulate creative enthusiasm by holding folk song innovation competitions, allowing traditional folk songs to radiate the vitality of the times in innovation, and enhancing their attractiveness and vitality in modern society.

5. Conclusion

The protection and inheritance of Chinese folk songs is a long-term and arduous task that requires the joint efforts of the whole society. By clarifying their value orientation in the intangible cultural heritage protection system and combining practical explorations such as policy support, digital protection, integration into education, community participation, and innovative development, the inheritance and development of folk songs can be effectively promoted. In the future, we should continue to strengthen multi-party collaboration, optimize the protection mechanism, enhance the vitality of inheritance, let folk songs shine with new brilliance in the new era, and contribute to the prosperity of Chinese culture.

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