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Study on the Cross-cultural Communication of Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage

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Abstract: *The overseas publicity of intangible cultural heritage plays an important role in the development of Chinese society. Internally it helps to preserve and pass down the Chinese excellent traditional culture and internationally speed up the implementation of the "going global" strategy, which could enhance cultural exchange on a global scale. At present, some Chinese scholars have done researches on the protection of intangible cultural heritage and its cross-cultural communication. This article starts from discussing the meaning and characteristics of intangible cultural heritage, outlines its cultural role in cross-cultural communication, and analyzes the progress and trends of cross-cultural communication of intangible cultural heritage in China. The study has important theoretical and practical significance for the research on the inheritance and innovation of intangible cultural heritage and cross-cultural communication in the new period.*

Key words: *Intangible cultural heritage; Inheritance and protection; Cross-cultural communication*

At present, cultural integration and exclusion occurs at all time because of the acceleration of the globalization process and the arrival of the digital era, which promotes the cultural communication and cross-cultural exchange activities among different countries. Intangible cultural heritage should be given preference when a country exports its own culture for the fact that people in other countries are more easily attracted by such kind of unique regional culture. In China, the heritage is created and established by 56 nationalities throughout the country in the course of history. It fully reflects the characteristics and thoughts of the nation, contains the nation's spiritual thinking and emotional memory, and transmits and continues the nation's spiritual blood. Strengthening the protection, inheritance, excavation and development of intangible cultural heritage is not only of great importance to enhance the national self-confidence and cultural sense of belonging, but also create cultural industries to contribute to the country's economic and social development. Therefore, the intercultural communication of intangible cultural heritage is an important means of disseminating China's traditional excellent culture and embodying cultural soft power. That's the practical reason why this paper focuses on the overseas communication of intangible cultural heritage. Based on the analysis of the related research and documentation, the article attempts to explore the major communication channels of the heritage, illustrate the impact of international dissemination and propose the future development trends of the communication.

A Brief Introduction to the Intangible Cultural Heritage

Despite the fact that the development of traditional intangible cultural heritage projects had gone over

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thousands of years, the concept of intangible cultural heritage did not appear until the mid-20th century by UNESCO. In 1989, the organization expressed the important value of intangible cultural heritage in the *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* and the concept was first formally proposed nine years later in the *Oral and Intangible Heritage*. The detailed definition of the concept and meaning of intangible cultural heritage appeared in the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* by the UNESCO General Conference on 17 October 2003. In the Convention, intangible cultural heritage is defined as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated there with – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity" (2012). In brief, It is considered to be a variety of non-material forms of traditional cultural expressions that are closely related to the lives of the people and inherited from generation to generation.

China defined the item based on the combination of the international concept given by UNESCO and the national condition. In 2011, China passed the intangible cultural heritage law of the people's republic of china and began to promote protection across the country. In the law the classification of intangible cultural heritage is illustrated in detail. It includes 6 main categories: traditional oral literature and language as its carrier; traditional art, calligraphy, music, dance, drama, quyi and acrobatics; traditional skills, medicine and calendar; traditional etiquette, festivals and other folk customs; Traditional sports and entertainment; other intangible cultural heritage. The intangible cultural heritage represents a way of life for mankind. Its formation condenses the wisdom of laborers, reflects the level of productivity and aesthetic level of society at that time. It is a form of expression of human values and world outlook. Intangible cultural heritage has many characteristics, including:

1. Folklore

The intangible cultural items are produced in the daily life of human beings including clothing, food, transportation, weddings, funerals, weddings, and festivals. People's needs and pursuits of all aspects of life are a hotbed of intangible cultural heritage. After experiencing the test of reality and historical accumulation, the intangible cultural heritage has been given strong folk attributes. For example, folk music, dance, riding, sports, etc. are mostly born due to specific folk customs and activities. Without the participation and support of the people, this folklore has lost its source of life.

2. Locality

Intangible cultural heritage is a unique culture spawned by a combination of specific natural conditions, social and cultural conditions, and is popular and spread in a fixed area. Therefore, community groups with a common cultural background are the foundation of the existence of intangible cultural heritage. Take the new year traditional paintings for example, there are four main types of lunar new year paintings in China (Yang Liuqing in Tianjin, Tao Huawu in Suzhou, Yang Jiabu in Weifang, FoShan). Although the paintings produced in these areas are all used for blessing, the way of painting and usage of color are totally different due to the social environment it comes from, which reflects the locality of the intangible cultural heritage item.

3. Dynamic nature

Intangible cultural heritage is called active cultural relics, and its core feature is that it must have aliveness instead of being static. This feature can be seen from the name of the intangible cultural heritage. It has no material as a carrier of inheritance, and it can only depend on people to preserve and spread. In the past, oral teaching was usually the main method of inheriting intangible cultural heritage. Now, the development of science and technology makes it possible that these heritage projects can be shown to the public through mass media such as documentaries, movies, and the Internet, which attract more people to participate in its protection and inheritance. Shaolin Wushu is a good example of dynamic inheritance. Through the display in the movie, it has aroused the interest of many foreigners. They spend a few months each year in Mount Song to learn Shaolin Kung Fu, and then return to their country to teach the local people, which undoubtedly makes many foreigners appreciate the charm of Chinese culture.

The Cross-cultural Communication of Intangible Cultural Heritage

A brief introduction to cross-cultural communication

Cross-cultural communication means "interaction and interaction between different cultures and members of society with different cultural backgrounds, involving information dissemination and interpersonal communication activities between members of different cultures and various social backgrounds as well as the share and penetration of cultural elements in the global society" (Sun, 2015). The term "cross-cultural communication" was first proposed by Edward Twitchell Hall in his book *The Silent Language* in 1959, in which Hall argued that culture plays an important role in communication (Hall, 1959). After that, the research field attracted many scholars and experts in sociology and anthropology, which made it become an interdisciplinary subject. In the 1970s, a book named *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication* co-authored by John Carl Condon and Fathi S. Yousef (1985) introduced cross-cultural communication comprehensively, laying the foundation for the intercultural communication field. Then many universities in the United States began to set up cross-cultural communication courses and trained a large number of scholars, which promotes the development of the cross-cultural communication field.

There are two categories of intercultural communication, one occurs among different countries and cultures, the other refers to the cultural communication between different groups within a country. The subject of this article is discussed under the first situation. The reason why cross-cultural communication has become a universal phenomenon worldwide is firstly due to the development of technology, but also due to the global migration of population and the integration of the world economy. From a macro perspective, the core issues of cross-cultural communication research are to understand how we communicate with others, how to promote understanding and eliminate misunderstandings between people with different cultural backgrounds, and how to enhance communication across different genders, nationalities, races,etc. (Shan, 2018). Therefore, cross-cultural communication is an important part of the overall communication activities of human society, and is an indispensable communication activity between people and countries. It is precisely because of the existence of intercultural communication that human culture has a worldwide character, and civilizations around the world can be formed.

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Research status of intercultural communication of intangible cultural heritage

In the era of globalization, Intercultural communication has become one of the important activities between countries. As a living cultural heritage of human beings, intangible cultural heritage has always survived under the threshold of cultural transmission and folk heritage. China's intangible cultural heritage is a representative of China's outstanding traditional culture, and should become an important part of the spread of Chinese culture to the outside world. In recent years, many Chinese experts and scholars have conducted research on the cross-cultural communication of national intangible cultural heritage. The main research status is as follows.

Some scholars focus on the research of a certain type of intangible cultural heritage' overseas communication. Zhang Anhua (2015) explored the overseas appeal of Chinese artworks and the international influence of Chinese artists from the perspective of traditional Chinese plastic arts, so as to promote China's cultural art International recognition and enhance China's cultural soft power. Wang Jie (2015) discussed about the current status of the inheritance and protection of many other traditional martial arts, and explored the inheritance and protection of Luoyang Nan Wuquan. Huang Yanxin (2019) analyzes the repertoire of Opera-Yue Opera and explored the cross-cultural development of Yue Opera. In addition, Chen Hong (2018) explored the cross-cultural transmission of music intangible cultural heritage from the perspective of music; Wu Dan (2016) explored the Mongolian intangible cultural heritage Cross-cultural communication from the perspective of translation, etc..

Other scholars pay close attention to the strategies and approaches for intercultural communication of intangible cultural heritage. Liu Chang and Feng Yuqiao (2018) took shadow play as an example to explore the characteristics and motivations of cross-cultural communication of intangible cultural heritage. Hu Ting (2019) took the Kunqu Youth Edition *Peony Pavilion* as an example to study the cross-cultural communication strategy of Chinese opera. Zhang Houxing and Ren Xiaofei (2019) analyzed the existing research on the overseas communication of the *Huang Emperor's Internal Classic*, the theoretical source of traditional Chinese medicine. Combining with Bourdieu's cultural capital theory, this paper discussed the overseas communication of *Yellow Emperor's Internal Classic* as a cultural product. Wu Xinming (2012) analyzed the characteristics of inheritors behavior during the dissemination process of intangible cultural heritage from the perspective of cultural communication.

After consulting the references, the author finds that the study mainly is concentrated on the in-depth insight of a certain heritage project, including the field of literature, traditional sports activities, folk customs, traditional music, traditional dance, traditional Chinese medicine, art and fine arts, etc.. There is a lack of integrity and inclusiveness in the research frameworks and outcomes. The study needs to be integrate and systematic.

The significance of intercultural communication in the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage

Intangible cultural heritage exists in an intangible form and embodies the customs, will, interests and hobbies of a country and a nation. It is not only a unique expression of traditional culture, but also an important component of national culture, occupying an important position in national culture. The dissemination of

intangible cultural heritage is a powerful and important link in the cultural process and is related to the construction of a cultural dissemination system.

Therefore, the relationship between intangible cultural heritage and national culture can be understood as the relationship between part and whole. That is to say, it can be considered that the intangible cultural heritage communication plays a vital role in the national cultural communication category.

1. Promoting intercultural communication and enriching cultural diversity

Due to the development of the world economy and the formation of a unified global market, cross-cultural communication and exchange have become a necessary and urgent matter. Only when mutual understanding is enhanced can economic, cultural, and political exchanges be smooth, and international cooperation can be equal and effective. Cross-cultural communication is the bridge for cultural subjects or individuals with different cultural backgrounds.

China has a wealth of intangible cultural heritage, sharing and disseminating the precious heritage with the world undoubtedly could enrich cultural diversity on a global scale. With the proposal of the Belt and Road strategy, there is more favorable propagation conditions for the intangible cultural heritage. As an example of Chinese traditional culture going out, the intangible cultural heritage provides mutual understanding, cultural exchange and creation among different countries, ethnic groups and religions.

2. Expanding the influence of intangible cultural heritage and enhancing national cultural soft power

With the changes in the international situation, culture is becoming an area where major countries compete in the world, like politics, military and economy. The spread of Chinese culture to the outside world is also an important means of fighting for the right to speak internationally and maintaining the safety of our culture. China has the cultural essence accumulated for thousands of years, which is not only the internal driving force of China's development, but also an important path choice for China to go to the world.

Reform and opening up has brought about rapid growth of China’s economy and rapid advancement of its international status. China’s politics, economy, society, and culture have undergone all-round changes. The people’s living standards have been significantly improved. However, many countries still lack an understanding of China. Therefore, by exporting its intangible cultural heritage to the outside world, China has shown the charming culture to the world, thereby expanding its influence and enhancing its cultural soft power.

3. Strengthening foreign cultural trade and accelerating China’s economic development

There are tangible assets and intangible assets in the international trade. Usually many countries just focus on the transactions between physical assets and ignore the huge benefits brought by intangible assets.

Cultural products refer to consumer goods that spread ideas, symbols, and lifestyles. They can provide information and entertainment, which helps to shape identity of groups and affect cultural behaviors (Ju, 2018). A variety of cultural commodities such as books, magazines, multimedia products can be used as the carrier of

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intangible culture, and they can continuously copied and appended during the cross-cultural communication to produce benefit. Today, with the rapid development of cultural industries such as digital movies and online games, developing intangible cultural heritage and cultural product industries is a kind of productive protection of China's intangible cultural heritage (Liu, 2017). As far as the current types of intangible cultural heritage in China are concerned, traditional fine arts, traditional skills, and traditional medicine intangible cultural heritage projects have strong industrialization development conditions because of their final product output, while traditional drama, Quyi, traditional sports entertainment and acrobatics projects, due to their commercial nature, are also partially equipped with conditions for industrial development. Therefore, if China can vigorously promote the non-material cultural foreign trade, it will greatly promote China's economic development.

The Trend of Cross-cultural Communication of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Driven by innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, big data, and virtual reality technology, intangible cultural heritage has gradually become more intelligent when it spreads across cultures (Peng, 2016). And some research progress has been made, such as intelligent live experience based on human-computer interaction, intelligent scene adaptation based on algorithm model, and intelligent user feedback based on biological perception (Nie,2019). This type of communication method incorporating new technologies will greatly promote the cross-cultural communication of intangible cultural heritage, bringing overseas users a convenient and three-dimensional service experience. With the use of various new technologies, the heritage could be showed vividly to overseas users, which may further stimulate foreign users' interest in intangible cultural heritage. Thus the effective integration of cultural creativity and modern technology should be achieved in the short run to develop an intelligent intangible culture.

In addition, intangible cultural heritage will have a deeper collision and integration with the tourism industry, making tourism a live natural platform for spreading intangible cultural heritage. The proposal of the Belt and Road strategy has brought unprecedented opportunities for the rapid integration and development of intangible cultural heritage and the cultural tourism industry. Many heritage items having historical origins with the Silk Road can be used as a local characteristics to develop tourism. Therefore, we should give full play to the advantages of historical and cultural resources, strengthen the integration and development of intangible cultural heritage and cultural tourism industry, and realize the mutual benefit of the activation of intangible cultural heritage and the economy.

In general, under the trend of blessing new technologies and pursuing diversified development, the intangible cultural heritage will rejuvenate with a new look.

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