

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368396573>

# Traditions and Cultural Heritage

Book · February 2023

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6

CITATIONS

0

READS

881

1 author:



Augustin F.-C. Holl

Xiamen University

139 PUBLICATIONS 949 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



The Initial History of Africa [View project](#)



The Neolithization Process: À Global Comparative Perspective [View project](#)

# Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation

*Edited by Augustin F. C. Holl*



**B P International**

**Traditions and Cultural  
Heritage: Genesis,  
Reproduction, and Preservation**



# **Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation**

India ■ United Kingdom



B P International

**Edited by**

**Augustin F. C. Holl**

Africa Research Center, Belt and Road Research Institute, Department of Anthropology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, China.  
E-mail: gaochang@xmu.edu.cn;

**FIRST EDITION 2023**

**ISBN 978-81-19039-58-6 (Print)**

**ISBN 978-81-19039-60-9 (eBook)**

**DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6**



# **Contents**

---

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2-15</b>
<b>PART I</b> OF TRADITIONS	<b>16-125</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> <b>The Origin of Austronesians from the Perspective of Customs and Traditions</b> Shen Qu	<b>16-27</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b> <b>Squatting Humanoid Rock Paintings and the Diffusion of Austronesian Ethnic Groups</b> Yu Jian	<b>28-42</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b> <b>Oedipus Complex in Traditional China: A Comparative Study towards Myths and Kinship</b> Gao Han	<b>43-51</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b> <b>Miao, Lineage and Community</b> Zhao Dandan	<b>52-62</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b> <b>An Anthropological Study of “Ethnic Culture into School”: Case Study from Longchuan County Ethnic Primary School</b> Li Kaiping	<b>63-75</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b> <b>Toujia: A Possibility of Village Autonomy in Southern Fujian?</b> Yang Xueting	<b>76-85</b>
<b>Chapter 7</b> <b>A Custom of Southern Fujian from the Perspective of Anthropology -- Buddha's Birthday</b> Huang Cuimei	<b>86-95</b>
<b>Chapter 8</b> <b>When Tradition Encounters Time: A Study on the Identity Definition of Hui Ethnic Group's “Ta Jiao” (Stepping Feet)</b> Kong Deyin	<b>96-105</b>

---

---

<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>106-115</b>
<b>The Cultural Significance of Nanyin in the Society of Fujian Region</b>	
Zhang Xingyue	
<b>Chapter 10</b>	<b>116-125</b>
<b>The Ritual Process of the Canoe Dragon Boat in the Qingshui River Basin</b>	
Zhang Zhonghai	
<b>PART II</b>	<b>126-268</b>
<b>OF CULTURAL HERITAGE</b>	
<b>Chapter 11</b>	<b>126-134</b>
<b>The Evolution and Transformation of Shaman's Roles in China</b>	
Shan Duolan	
<b>Chapter 12</b>	<b>135-146</b>
<b>The Change of Cultural Significance from the Oral Tradition of Giant Story among Taiwan's Atayal Ethnic Groups</b>	
Li Qiu Hua	
<b>Chapter 13</b>	<b>147-156</b>
<b>The "DongKuan" in Modern Society</b>	
Li Yiyan	
<b>Chapter 14</b>	<b>157-167</b>
<b>The Fracture and Reconstruction of Guzang Festival</b>	
Xinyi Luo	
<b>Chapter 15</b>	<b>168-178</b>
<b>Research on the Shadow Play Culture in Shaanxi</b>	
Xu Shuang	
<b>Chapter 16</b>	<b>179-188</b>
<b>Mobile Phone Practice of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Inheritance and Development of Gannan Tea Picking Opera</b>	
Xu Wei	
<b>Chapter 17</b>	<b>189-197</b>
<b>Television Media and the Inheritance of Chinese Traditional Culture: The Chinese Poetry Conference as an Example</b>	
Xu Xiaojing	

---

---

<b>Chapter 18</b>	<b>198-211</b>
<b>The Imagined ox Horn Souvenirs of China Hmong and European Vikings</b>	
Wang Lu	
<b>Chapter 19</b>	<b>212-221</b>
<b>The Function of Ancestral Hall in the Modernization Process</b>	
Qi Yingrui	
<b>Chapter 20</b>	<b>222-229</b>
<b>Study on Inheritance and Protection of Ling Qu: A World Heritage Site in Guangxi</b>	
Su Qian	
<b>Chapter 21</b>	<b>230-239</b>
<b>Liangcha-Commercialized Intangible Cultural Heritage</b>	
Huilin Zhou	
<b>Chapter 22</b>	<b>240-248</b>
<b>A Stone Captured History and Society: Shoushan Stone</b>	
Ma Yeung Ho	
<b>Chapter 23</b>	<b>249-257</b>
<b>The Lacquer Thread Carving in Southern Fujia</b>	
Zhang Mingli	
<b>Chapter 24</b>	<b>258-268</b>
<b>How to Become a Carpenter in the New Generation</b>	
Lin Junjie	
<b>About the Contributors</b>	<b>269-271</b>

---



# Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation

Augustin F. C. Holl <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI:10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH0

---

## ABSTRACT

The contributions assembled in this volume are the products of an intensive graduate seminar with a strong and practical focus on writing. Methodologies discourses and advices, useful as they can be have limited practical impacts. One learns how to write by writing, over and over again. Accordingly, as the seminar name “Writing Anthropology” suggests was designed through weekly written and oral exercises to practice research writing based on current standard. It is however, the teaching methodology set in place to achieve the formulated goal that set this experiment aside. The pedagogy set in place in this project empowers graduate students, through implementation of mechanisms of collective decision-making. The students are the one making decision about the research themes to be investigated during the whole semester. Each student anonymously suggests a theme. The suggested themes are then listed alphabetically with their frequency of iteration and returned to the students to craft a short list and narrow the range of choices. The student body of that semester decided to focus on a combination of two themes addressed from China perspective: traditions and cultural heritage in anthropological perspectives. Harnessing tools from archaeology, linguistics, and cultural anthropology, the contributions examine the genesis, reproduction, and preservation of these fragile treasures of human mind.

*Keywords: Writing anthropology; pedagogy; empowerment; traditions; cultural heritage; genesis; reproduction; preservation.*

---

<sup>a</sup> Africa Research Center, Belt and Road Research Institute, Department of Anthropology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: gaochang@xmu.edu.cn;

## OF TRADITIONS AND HERITAGE: AN INTRODUCTION

### INTRODUCTION

The writing anthropology graduate seminar of the department of anthropology and ethnology of Xiamen university focused on traditions and cultural heritage looking particularly at the genesis, reproduction, evolution and preservation. The concept of tradition is flexible and polysemic but it has a well agreed upon connotation in anthropologists' circles (Shanklin 1981, Tibi 2005). "A "tradition" in the anthropological literature often means a time-honored custom, and a "traditional past" usually means a pre-conquest or precolonial past. As a commonplace term, the meaning of tradition is seldom spelled out; the consequence is that the term carries unspecified assumptions" (Shanklin 1981: 71). Tradition thus tends to have two parallel meanings: it is an analytic construct in anthropological research on the one hand, and an active force in local communities indigenous and current. Accordingly, tradition refers to patterns of behaviors and beliefs that originated from the past and are transmitted from generation to generation to the present, with varying degrees of resilience. Traditions are consequently not static but are adjusted differentially to cultural change depending on circumstance. The essential characteristics to be singled out at this stage is their path-dependence. Traditions are connectors of the present to the past and as such they weigh heavily in cultures reproduction and preservation.

Cultural heritage is framed in contrast to the natural one. Despite its multiple definitions it can safely be considered as the actual materialization of traditions (Blake 2000, Holl 2018, 2021, Vecco 2010). It is a particularly ambiguous construct with distinct implications, one *de facto* and the other *de jure*. On the one hand, in the *de facto* connotation and defined broadly, it refers to anything human that has been transmitted from generation to generation since the emergence of humanity to the present. In a narrower, restricted *de jure* option on the other hand, it is constructed based on sets of criteria that may vary from times and places. It manifests itself under two main variants: tangible and intangible. The former refers to the material embodiments of past peoples' creativity represented by objects, buildings and even landscapes. The latter is made of the products of humans' cognitive creativity that does not depend on material forms for its reproduction and transmission. In summary, "Cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artifacts, cultural property, and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and bestowed for the benefit of future generations" (Makonnen et al 2022: 1-2)

Bringing together testimonies of different communities' traditions and cultural heritage, this volume explores their genesis, history, constant re-enactment conceptualized under the notion of "reproduction", and depending on circumstances their patterns and requirement for preservation in changing times. It is made of two parts: the first focused on traditions, and the second on cultural heritage with however some thematic overlap.

## **PART I: OF TRADITIONS**

Contributions on traditions can be arranged into 3 rubrics: (1) tracking an ancient tradition through material culture and the archaeological record; (2) Personhood, community and identity, and finally, (3) re-enactment and celebrations.

### *Tracking an Ancient Tradition*

Rubric 1 is made of two chapters focuses on the research on the origin and spread of speakers of Austronesian languages investigated in academic circles. It has been addressed from the perspectives of language, cultural anthropology, Ancient DNA (aDNA)/genomics, as well as archaeology (Bellwood 2013, Holl 2022, Spriggs 2011).

In chapter 1, Shen Qu examines ancient Austronesians roots and material signatures as recorded in archaeological excavations and some contemporary cultural practices in Fujian, Guangdong and Zhejiang provinces in south and southeast China. The Stepped adze, one of the most characteristic tools, very likely used in the production of canoes and oars, is documented not only in eastern China coast, but also in Taiwan, the Philippines, North Borneo, in the Pacific Ocean in Polynesia, and as far east as Hawaii and the Marquesas islands. The outrigger-canoe, another key innovation, the true Austronesians ocean-going ship that allowed for the phenomenal expansion and the formation of sea-faring traditions has been recorded in archaeological excavations in Fujian. And finally, tattoos, widespread in Austronesian world is also documented in ancient Fujian ethnic group. The author concludes that the Austronesian culture being strongly related to Fujian maritime culture, may even have originated from the Fujian Province.

In chapter 2, Yu Jian focuses on the analysis of visual representations in rock paintings featuring "Squatting Humanoids", scattered but spread all over the "Austronesian oecumene (Bellwood 2013). These representations, sharing similar iconographic styles and part of Early Austronesians spiritual culture, are found in the Pacific and south/southeastern China. For Yu Jian, the recorded distributional pattern is not an accidental coincidence but evidence of the emergence and formation of a tradition, documenting the origin and expansionary path of ancient Austronesians.

### *Personhood, Community and Identity*

Rubric 2 with 4 contributions, revolves around issues of personhood, community and identity. Chapter 3 by Gao Han deals with a critical analysis of Sigmund Freud Oedipus complex from the perspective of traditional China family structure. Contrary to the over-generalization trend kicked off by early psychoanalysis development, it has been shown that different social environment and patterns of family organization create different forms of nuclear family complex. Relying on the analysis of folklore narrative texts collected from Chinese Han society, Gao Han attempts to see if the same Oedipus complex with its repression in kinship

and expression in myths exists or not. In Chinese traditional society, the nuclear family is embedded in a larger and broader patriarchal format, making the “Father’s-Son’s” rivalry over the mother non-existent or significantly diluted.

Zhao Dandan in chapter 4 examines the role of the *Miao* – the temple – as the core structuring element of Chinese Han communities and identities at the lineage and community levels. It is ubiquitous in all Han communities from earlier times, that serves for the gods, ancestors, and ghosts’ worship. The author pays attention to the relationships between the *Miao*, the lineage and the community, explores how it is created and run, insisting on its roles in the real society instead of the spiritual world.

Chapter 5 by Li Kaiping examines the instillation of “ethnic culture” in an elementary school based on direct field observation. The subjects involved in the process include “principals, teachers, students, government management departments, social organizations, students’ parents and the inheritors of intangible cultural heritage”. The goal is clearly to enhance the appreciation and preservation of local culture, but means to achieve these goals may vary between the different stake-holders. The observed situation resulted in the formation of a “social action structure”, a dynamic structure that is constantly adjusted to address emerging issues, building compromises to sustain the promotion of ethnic culture in schools’ curricula.

In chapter 6, Yang Xueting formulates a direct and straightforward question: does the *Toujia* offer “a possibility of village autonomy in southern Fujian?”. In Southern Fujian, the *Toujia* is “the organizer of some folk festivals in the village, different from the village head and recognized by the grass-roots self-governance”. The paper then proceed in 3 steps to address the question raised. First, the explanation and clarification of the *Toujia* role based on collected field data; second, the contextualization and interpretation of that role as a tradition sanctioned informal system and grass-roots self-governance; and finally, third, an assessment of the possibility for the *Toujia* system to sustain village autonomy. *Toujia* role being strictly confined within the space of folk festivals organization, it is marginal to the core administrative and economic duties involved in villages daily life. As such it does not offer an avenue for village autonomy.

#### *Re-enactment and Celebrations*

Rubric 3, also comprised of 4 contributions explores celebrations and re-enactments, the periodic iteration and re-iteration of core cultural events and contents. The features case studies include “Buddha’s birthday” festival from southern Fujian, Hui nationality “*Ta Jiao*” (Stepping Feet), Miao nationality Guzang festival and Canoe Dragon Boat race.

Huang Cuimei in chapter 7 looks at the celebration of Buddha’s birthday, a custom from southern Fujian where religious syncretism is quite predominant. The paper offers an analysis of the Buddha’s birthday festival in the light of “social function” (E. Durkheim) and “reciprocity” (M. Mauss) theories. In fact, it is

an important traditional festival in rural areas of Southern Fujian, that irrigates interpersonal relations, culture, spirit, and village life through food procurement, sacrificial ceremony, guest banquet, drama performance. It is a grand scale display of villagers' solidarity, sharing and mutual assistance. Because festive manifestations tend to carry with them some ill-effects, such as excess drinking, sustained regulations – ban of alcohol for example – have progressively impacted the proceedings of the celebrations, leading the author to question the sustainability of that traditional custom in the ongoing modernization process.

Chapter 8 by Kong Deyin looks at the history of Hui nationality “*Ta Jiao*” – Stepping Feet – today a traditional national that originated from Ningxia Hui Autonomous region in Jingyuan county. Relying on different sources and interviews, the paper traces the evolution of “*Ta Jiao*” from Hui martial art to an hybrid form combining dance and martial art, performed today in different circumstances and celebrations. Through government intervention and sponsorship, in order to ensure cultural preservation and sustainability, the “*Ta Jiao*” is now essentially staged and performed as shows.

Xinyi Luo in chapter 9 looks at the unusual history of the Guzang festival of the Miao nationality from the Guizhou province in the Leigong and Moon mountains area of the Qiandongnan prefecture. It is asserted to have been celebrated by early Miao clans during the Xia Dynasty (2100-1600 BCE), and as such is more than 4000 years old. This festival, highly valued by the Miao people, takes place every 13 years in a 12 years cycle. Communities come together in highly festive atmosphere to worship their ancestors through drumming, songs, dances, sharing, and competitive gift-giving. The Gift-giving escalated to a potlach-like character resulting in the total bankruptcy of several families. Considered as a waste of valuable resources the festival was banned for a number of years and restored after 2000. Xinyu Luo examines the “guided” restoration, or better “reconstruction” of the new Guzang Festival relying on the pre- and post-2000 narratives and literature. Special attention is paid to what has been discarded on the one hand, and selected on the other hand, in order to figure out how the ban, a cultural fracture, was handled to recreated a new coherence in a periodic re-enactment of Miao people collective memory.

Chapter 10 by Zhang Zhonghai analyzes the ritual practices connected to the Canoe Dragon Boat race in the Qingshui River Basin in the Guizhou province. In contrast to the Chinese Dragon Boat festival celebrated in commemoration the great poet Qu Yuan (343–278 BCE), the Miao version presented in this contribution has a different origin. It celebrates the story of a fisherman, an intrepid father who killed a dangerous dragon that has harmed his son. The dragon is cut in pieces, its meat shared and eaten but at the same time and within the same frame of reference, the dragon is respected and worshipped. The contribution, based on fieldwork conducted by the author, examines the various symbols mobilized in the Miao dragon boat ritual, and scrutinizes how the Miao people construct their collective memory through rituals.

## **PART II: OF CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Part II focuses on multiple facets of cultural heritage and is made of 14 contributions addressing its intangible and tangible dimensions.

### **Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Issues of intangible cultural heritage are featured in 7 case studies arranged in 3 rubrics: 1) reproduction and transmission; 2) performing arts; and finally, 3) mass-media.

#### *Reproduction and Transmission*

Shan Duolan in chapter 11 examines the evolution and transformation of Shaman roles in China. Despite multiple sometime conflicting definitions shamanism was widespread in ancient times and was still well represented in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in northeast Asia, in Siberia and north China among such nations as the Mongolian, Manchu, Hezhen, Ewenki, to mention a few. Beside the commonly described characteristics focused on initiations, healing rituals, costumes, etc. Shan Duolan focuses on the relationships between shamans, chiefs, and priests as conveyed in folklore and myths to approach the society, kinship and cosmology. In that perspective, two options are singled out: “shaman in the court” on the one hand, and “shaman in the wild” on the other hand. The contribution explores the different implications of the variety of roles played by the shamans depending on their position in their societies “power grid”, as original leader, intermediary between society and the “over-world”, or member of royal suites. Each situation presenting distinctive characteristics.

Chapter 12 by Li Qiu Hua examines the shifting meanings of Taiwan Atayal ethnic groups featuring oral traditions of Giant stories recorded during World War II Japanese occupation of the island. These giants have different names depending on the group under consideration but the narrative lines tend to be very close. Li Qiu Hua analyzes the patterns of adaptation of these stories to the contemporary taste with some narrative components deleted and other added. This process takes place in the context of the pedagogical use of the “Giant stories” designed to teach ethnic cultures kicked off in the 1990s.

Li Yiyang in chapter 13 examines the multiple facets of the “DongKuan”, “a kind of unwritten law of the Dong nationality from Southwest China. The DongKuan had played a crucial role in the social and cultural life of the Dong people but has recently lost its role as customary law in the context of accelerated modernization of the country. It still plays a subtle but influential role in limited context such as environmental protection. The contribution looks at the “origin, development, transmission, and changes of “The Dongkuan”, and explores its possible function and significance in modern society.

#### *Performing Arts*

The Performing arts rubric is comprised of 2 contributions showcasing deeply embedded cultural entertainments, one featuring a musical genre from Fujian

and the other a puppet play from Shaanxi, both listed as “World Intangible Cultural heritage by UNESCO

In chapter 14, Zhang Xingyue presents the cultural significance of *Nanyin* in the life of Minnan people from southern Fujian. *Nanyin*, “music from the south”, considered to be the best-preserved form of ancient Chinese music, is the core of Southern Fujian cultural life and Minnan diasporas overseas (Wang 1992).



**Fig. 1. Nanyin performance**

Also called *Xianguan*, *Nanguan*, *Nanyue*, *Nanqu*, etc., it is more than 1 thousand years old and was listed in 2009 as UNESCO intangible cultural Heritage (fig. 1). Zhang Xingyue contribution present the diverse cultural elements contained in the Nanyin, examines its connection to Minnan people daily and major events of their lives, and finally, analyzes the unique form of Nanyin's "oral teaching".

In chapter 15, Xu Shuang presents research conducted on the culture of Shadow play in Shaanxi, a traditional art form that has been in operation for thousands of years, listed as UNESCO intangible cultural heritage in 2011. Shaanxi is claimed to have been the area of origin of Chinese shadow puppetry. Considered to have formed in the Han dynasty imperial court, it spread from there to the rest of the society and became particularly popular during the Song dynasty. Xu Shuang contribution delineates the characteristics and particularities of Shaanxi shadow plays, examines its history and development, and suggest patterns of preservation and promotion to enhance its sustainability.

### *Mass-media*

Rubric 3, consists of 2 contributions dealing with cultural events channeled through mass-media, mobile phones and television to reach out to broader audiences.

In chapter 16, Xu Wei addresses the history and development of Gannan Tea Picking Opera, a combination of Hakka people oral literature, songs and dances. Its origin, anchored in the development of tea gardens in mountainous areas of southern Jiangxi province, is rooted in the life and work of tea farmers. It expanded and became a pure opera performance conveying the many facets of Hakka people history, life experience and expectations, selected as China national intangible cultural heritage in 2006. Xu wei contribution outlines the difficult problem of the preservation of that art form (Xiong 2013, Zhang 2022), but also its increasing popularity due to the generalization of mobile phone use that now act as important carrier of the development and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. The paper, relying on ethnography network methodology looks at the inheritance and development of the genre in the virtual community of mobile phone users of the Gannan region, in the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in southern Gansu province. It also explores different possibilities offered by the internet for the promotion of intangible cultural heritage.

Xu Xiaojing in chapter 17 takes the *Chinese Poetry Conference* as a case study to probe the influence of television media on the dissemination and inheritance of Chinese traditional culture. The show, on China Central Television (CCTV), brings expert scholars and amateur contestants of all ages through a poetry recitation competition geared to bring back to the fore the appreciation for Chinese poetry and in the process generates better understanding of its deep cultural roots. Poetry, ancient and present, contains profound philosophy and carries emotion, and as such is a treasure of traditional Chinese culture. The paper focuses on how modern mass media like television network can be used to not only re-discover and popularize “cultural treasures” but also to assist in their preservation and promotion.

### Tangible Cultural Heritage

The tangible cultural heritage portion includes 7 contributions distributed in 2 rubrics. One, intitled “Things and Products” made of 4 articles deals with “objects” of different nature and scale. The other with 3 chapters addresses “Handicrafts” with focus on processes requiring outstanding skills.

#### *Things and Products*

Chapter 18 by Wang Lu offers a comparative analysis of Hmong (Asian) and European (Vikings) cultural symbols, in this case ox horn souvenirs featured in the respective material cultural heritage of the communities under consideration. She addresses the different roles played by these symbols, drinking containers in many rituals and festivals ceremonies for the Hmong, and attribute of helmets of

the fierce warriors for the Vikings. She shows that the construction of imagined cultural icons is an integral part of the accelerated polarizations of identity-tourism despite the antinomy between authenticity and commodification.

Qi Yingrui in chapter 19 analyzes the function of Ancestral Hall in the modernization process in the light of Max Weber assertion according to which it represents a coalescence of irrational elements and as such is an obstacle to Chinese modernization. Derived from Confucius teachings, the ancestral hall has a long history (Fig. 2). It is a “canonical” architectural landmark and represents one of the core-aspect of Chinese traditional culture, particularly in Fujian and Guangdong provinces.



**Fig. 2. An example of Ancestral Hall at Fuzhou, Fujian**

The paper looks at the evolution of ancestral halls from the Ming and Qing dynasties and shows that it has helped mitigate the ill-consequences of urbanization and, along with clan affiliation, is not in principle antinomic to capitalism development. In fact, based on southeast China evidence, eastern societies have shaped their own economic ways based on clan ethics.

Chapter 20 by Su Qian analyzes the case of the Ling qu, one of the world's oldest artificial waterways, also known as "pearl of ancient water conservancy architecture in the world", built at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE (fig. 3). Located in Xing'an county in Guangxi province, and still used for irrigation purposes, it was successfully listed in UNESCO world Heritage in 2018, boosting its high touristic attractiveness. The large number of visitors while increasing local revenue poses serious problems for the maintenance and preservation of canal's installations. Su Qian addresses that contradiction. Is the application to the World Heritage listing simply intends to boost revenue through tourism development or does it have anything at all to do with "culture"? The paper finally advocates ways of tailoring the application to the status of world cultural heritage to have culture as its main purpose.



**Fig. 3. View of the Ling qu Canal**

Huilin Zhou in chapter 21 addresses an intriguing and interesting topic, the commodification and commercialization of intangible cultural heritage, in this case, a beverage called Liangcha. "Liang cha ("cooling tea", "herbal tea" or "cool tisane" in Chinese) are herbal drinks widely produced in southern China and consumed by billions of people worldwide." (Liu et al 2013). Is it a food or medicine? commodity, craft, or both? After differentiating it from other herbal teas and defining what Liangcha is, she examines the reasons and processes through which it has gained its triple identity as intangible cultural heritage, edible substance, and commodity. Because of trade secrets all ingredients are not publicized, raising issues about possible side effects.

"There is a knowledge gap on the plant species used and commercialized for cooling herbal drinks in southern China and their associated ethnobotanical use,

habitat and conservation status” (Liu et al 2013, Wang et al 2021). For the author however, mass-production and commercialization are beneficial to the beverage.

### *Handicrafts*

The 3 chapters assembled in this rubric explore highly skilled craftsmanship required for carving Shoushan stone, making lacquer thread sculptures, and becoming a traditional carpenter.

In chapter 22, Ma Yeung Ho focuses on the exceptional mineralogical characteristics and fame of the Shoushan stone. It “is one of the famous craft carving stone in China. Transparency is one of the determining factors for the appraisal of its value. “The better the transparency is, the higher is its value (Jiang et al 2020). Its selection for carving dates as far back as the Han dynasty, around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, and has been in constant use up to present. It is mined in the Fujian province, in Fuzhou city Shoushan village.



**Fig. 4. Chinese Shoushan Stone fortune Double Dragons and fire ball statue (Quan Rong Gallery, Chatham, New Jersey, USA)**

During the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, the Shoushan stone was used to carve emperors’ seals, earning it the reputation of “the king of stone”. The Shoushan stone carving is a Chinese traditional art that requires highly skilled

craftmanship. The paper surveys some carving subjects, that include flowers, birds, humans, animals, landscapes (fig. 4). In the past, some of these Shoushan stone artworks travelled the world through the continental and maritime silk-roads.

Zhang Mingli in chapter 23 focuses on lacquer thread carving in southern Fujian in chapter 23. It is a traditional folk handicraft using well-tempered lacquer to create decorative patterns (Yangsheng 2019). Derived from the decoration of Buddhist statues, it became an independent art form some 300 years ago in the 17<sup>th</sup> century concentrated at Xiamen and Quanzhou in Fujian, listed as China's national intangible heritage in 2006. Zhang Mingli paper introduces the core elements of the lacquer thread carving art (fig. 5); then proceeds to an analysis of the images' repertoire, all more or less connected to southern Fujian folks' beliefs, and finally, addresses the change in functional meanings of the created art works. Lacquer thread carving is today a tourism commodity, particularly at Xiamen and Quanzhou.



**Fig. 5. Lacquer thread carving in progress**

Lin Jinjue in chapter 24 looks at the current fate of traditional carpenter art from the vantage point of a small specialized town in northeast Fujian and reflects on what it will take to become a carpenter mastering ancient skills in the new generation (Semprebou 2022). Judged from the historical legacy of wooden structure in Fujian and by extension China history as featured in *Toulo* – earthen castles -, wooden bridges, temples, houses, etc., wood workers were in great demand in the past. The accelerated pace of modernization after the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the sustained shift to concrete, metal and glass in modern constructions have resulted in decreased opportunities for recent generations of traditional carpenters and wood-workers.



**Fig. 6. Grandson watching his grandfather working wood**

The transmission of skills through long-term apprenticeship is also threatened (Fig. 6). The paper examines the life history of a Master Carpenter, his social status, network, customers, as well as ritual practices involved. With shift of material used in the construction of most of contemporary building, coupled with the industrial scale mass production of furniture, the demand on skilled carpenters' products has shrunk, leading to the search for new opportunities and markets using modern tools such as the internet. Winning that challenge will determine the survival of traditional carpenters in the current era.

## **CONCLUSION**

This volume, resulting from one intensive semester long seminar, assembles a sample of cultural practices from Taiwan and China mainland. The papers, arranged in two parts, explores the dynamics of traditions and cultural heritage. The authors, with different emphasis examines the genesis, enactment and reproduction of the traditions and cultural heritage practices under investigation and assess their resilience, adjustment to change and preservation potentials. It is clear from all the contributions that traditions cannot be left either to decay or kept unchanged. Many are threatened by changes in demography and/or the lack of interest of younger generations. The main challenge for all the reviewed traditions is therefore to strike a subtle but unstable balance between what has to be left to go and what is to be preserved. Traditions are consequently living collective memories.

The concept of Cultural Heritage is constitutively ambiguous. Everything human is a heritage from the previous generations. A limited aspects of that de facto

inheritance from the past is deemed “Cultural Heritage”, a construct with variable geometry depending on time and place. Started from sharp differentiation between natural enhanced and human-made things, initially with dominant perspective of outstanding buildings -architecture - and constructed environment – cultural landscape -, the legal concept of cultural heritage has been expanded to include intangible creations of the human’s mind, and their material manifestations. As assessed by some of the contributors, culture appears to be the main casualty of successful application to the coveted status “UNESCO world Heritage”.

## REFERENCES

- Bellwood P. 2013. 'Southeast Asian islands: archaeology', in Peter Bellwood (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration Volume 1 Prehistory*. Pp: 284-292. Oxford; Wiley-Blackwell.
- Blake, J. 2000. On Defining the Cultural Heritage. *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 49(1), 61-85. doi:10.1017/S002058930006396X.
- Holl, A. F. C. 2018 Senegambian megaliths as world cultural heritage. *Art and Humanities Open Access Journal* 2(3):179-185. DOI: 10.15406/ahoaj.2018.02.00055
- Holl, A. F. C. 2021 *Du Local au Global: Archeologie des Paysages Culturels*. Dakar; IFAN-Cheikh Anta Diop.
- Holl, A. F. C. 2022 *The Mobility Imperative: A Global Evolutionary Perspective of Human Migration*. London/Lanham; Lexington Books.
- Jiang, Guojian, Qing Tao, Wei Dong Liu, Jiayue Xu, Hong Yang Zhao, Ying Fei Xiong, Yong-Zheng Fang and Cheng Zhang 2010 “Study on the Relationship between Transparency and Morphology of Shoushan Stone.” *Advanced Materials Research* 152-153: 1297 - 1300.
- Liu, Y., Ahmed, S. & Long, C. 2013 Ethnobotanical survey of cooling herbal drinks from southern China. *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* 9, 82. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1746-4269-9-82>
- Mekonnen H., Z. Bires and K. Berhanu 2022 Practices and challenges of cultural heritage conservation in historical and religious heritage sites: evidence from North Shoa Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. *Heritage Science* 10:172 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-022-00802-6>
- Spriggs, M. 2011 Archaeology and the Austronesian Expansion: Where are we now? *Antiquity* 85(328): 510-528. Doi:10.1017/S0003598X00067910
- Tibi, B. 2005. Culture and Social Change: Tradition and Innovation in Cultural Analysis. In: *Islam between Culture and Politics*. Palgrave Macmilln, London. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230204157\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230204157_4).
- Semprebon, G. 2022 Design Driven Research for Countryside Revitalization of a Rural Settlement of the Fujian Province, China *Architecture* 2(2), 255-276; <https://doi.org/10.3390/architecture2020015>
- Shanklim, E. 1981 Two Meanings and Uses of Tradition. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 37(1): 71-89.
- Vecco, M, 2010 A definition of cultural heritage: From the tangible to the intangible. *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 11(3): 321-324.

- Wang, Y. 1992 The "Mosaic Structure" of Nanguan Songs: An application of Semiotic Analysis. *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 24: 24-51. Doi:10.2307/768469.
- Wang J, Zhou B, Hu X, Dong S, Hong M, Wang J, Chen J, Zhang J, Zhang Q, Li X, Shikov AN, Hu S and Hu X 2021 Deciphering the Formulation Secret Underlying Chinese Huo-Clearing Herbal Drink. *Frontiers in Pharmacology*.12:654699. doi: 10.3389/fphar.2021.654699.
- Xiong, L. 2013 Research on Translation of Gannan Tea-Picking Opera. In: Du, W. (eds) *Informatics and Management Science IV. Lecture Notes in Electrical Engineering*, vol 207. Springer, London. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4471-4793-0\\_84](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4471-4793-0_84)
- Yangsheng, L. 2019 Analysis of the application of lacquer thread sculpture in silk figure craft. In *Smart Science, Design & Technology*. Edited By Art de Lam, Stephen Prior, Siu-Tsen Shen, Sheng-Joue Young, Liang-Wen Ji. CRC Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1201/9780429058127>
- Zhang, N. 2022 An Exploration of the Environment, Composition, and Transmission of the Development of Local Theater and Music in the Natural Environment and Folklore Activities of Tea Picking. *Journal of Environmental and Public Health*. DOI: 10.1155/2022/9491745.

## **PART I: OF TRADITIONS**

# The Origin of Austronesians from the Perspective of Customs and Traditions

Shen Qu <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH1

---

## ABSTRACT

From the perspective of customs and traditions, Austronesians have connection with Fujian early ancestors, through material production and social life. For example, stepped adzes are one of the most characteristic production tools in the vast area of the eastern China coast, excavated in large quantities from many sites in Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, and were used in the manufacture and production of canoes and oars. In addition, stepped adzes have been found in Taiwan Province, the Philippines, North Borneo and many islands of Polynesia in the Pacific Ocean, as far as Hawaii and Marquesas islands. It has also become one of the most important material item used to map the migration of early Austronesians across the ocean. Another representative product is the outrigger canoe, true ocean-going ship for Austronesians, and an important part of their heritage. There are excavations of canoes in Fujian, more than 2,000 years old, which shows the connection between the prehistoric people of Fujian and Austronesian population. Similarly, Austronesian custom of tattoos and broken hair are also found in ancient ethnic groups in Fujian. These converging testimonies indicate that Austronesian culture is strongly related to Fujian maritime culture and, it may even be said that Austronesian culture and population originated in Fujian.

*Key words: Austronesian; origin; marine culture; customs and traditions.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the identification of Austronesian, academic research on Austronesian has been conducted for a century. Among the many research topics, one of the most interesting and controversial is the issue of the origin and spread of Austronesian. The question of the origin and spread of Austronesian was initially a matter of linguistic practice. However, due to the limitations of their own theories, methods, and materials, linguists have not reached a consensus on this issue because they have been working in their own way. The research of the early origin of Austronesian is a internationally significant topic that matters many

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 10620210156692@stu.xmu.edu.cn;

disciplines. Different scholars have proposed the New Guinea theory, the Malay theory, the Taiwan theory, and the mainland theory. At present, the mainland theory and its related Taiwan theory are recognized by most international researchers, and their mainstream practices are mostly centered on linguistic, archaeological, anthropological and genetic studies related to Austronesian from the mainland region of South China to Taiwan and out of Taiwan, and the origin and spread of Austronesian are discussed from the perspective of different disciplines. The migration routes of Austronesian ancestors from the coastal areas of South China to Taiwan, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands, as outlined in archaeological studies by the Southeast Asian Maritime Zone and agricultural-linguistic co-propagation theories, confirm the homology of the prehistoric South China indigenous groups and the continental origin and maritime spread of Austronesian, as seen in the Austronesian-Dong-Kadai integration. This paper discusses the origins of Austronesian in southeastern China from the perspective of Customs and Traditions, including material production and social life customs, from the composition and comparison of representative prehistoric cultural factors such as stepped adzes, pottery, rice and canoe.

## **2. THE AUSTRONESIAN CONCEPT**

Austronesian, also known as Malay-Polynesian, is spoken in the islands of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, as well as in Southeast Asia, including China-Indochina Peninsula and Malay Archipelago, with a population of about 400 million and more than 1,200 languages. Austronesian population widely distribute, north to Taiwan and Hawaii, south to New Zealand, east to Easter Island, and west to Madagascar. Austronesian are generally divided into two major regions, East and West, based mainly on linguistic taxonomy. The eastern Oceanic group includes Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, while the western Hesperonesian group, formerly known as Indonesian, includes Taiwan (China), the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

Since the identification of Austronesian, academic research on Austronesian has been conducted for a century. Among many research topics, one of the most striking and controversial is the issue of the origin and spread of Austronesian. The question of the origin and spread of Austronesian came from the practice of linguistics in the beginning. The more prominent scholars now are R. Blust, a linguist at the University of Hawaii, and Peter Bellwood, an archaeologist at the Australian National University. Based on new archaeological data and the most diverse and complex linguistic classification of Taiwan's aboriginal languages in Austronesian, the "Express-Train" model was proposed, suggesting that Taiwan is the origin of Austronesian and that the ancestors of Austronesian were Neolithic farmers who lived on the southeast coast of the China mainland. In recent years, Phylogenetic trees based on biology have been applied to linguistic research. Gray, Jordan, Drummond, and Greenhill have used Phylogenetic tree analysis to construct a tree of Austronesian and supporting the "Express-Train" model.

Archaeological evidence for the origin of Austronesian in the southeastern part of the mainland is also becoming clearer. In the early years, Lin Huixiang and Ling Chunsheng elaborated the relationship between Taiwan formosan aborigines and Baiyue people of the southeastern coast of the motherland based on some archaeological evidence. Zhang Guangzhi (1987), from the archaeological cultural perspective, argued that Austronesian of Taiwan originated in the southeastern coastal region of the mainland, mainly in the coastal area of Fujian. At present, the archaeological cultural sequence of Taiwan has been roughly established, and the cultural factors of Taiwan Dabengkeng Culture have many similarities with the archaeological cultures of the Neolithic sites along the coast of the southeastern provinces of the mainland, such as the Keqitou sites in Pingtan, Fujian, the Fuguodun site, the Nanshan site in Mingxi County, and the Jinguishan site. Some archaeologists further speculate that the keqitou site, the Fuguodun site and the Dabengkeng culture can be traced back to the Hemudu and Majiabang cultures in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, and the remains of both corn and rice were found at the Nanshan site in Sanming, which is consistent with the Dabengkeng culture. In recent years, new discoveries in Pingtan County, Fujian have provided more direct evidence for the origin of Austronesian in the mainland. However, the developmental lineage between the Neolithic archaeological cultures across the Taiwan Strait has not been fully sorted out yet, and the process by which mainland populations moved to Taiwan and created early cultures needs to be further studied.

Among them, research on stone adzes is really important. The attention of the archaeologists to the Neolithic culture of the southeastern coastal region of China began in the 1930s. Early scholars had speculated that China was the origin of stone adzes in the Pacific based on the type of stone adzes and went further to suggest that the ancestors of Polynesians would have been in Southeast Asia and along the southeast coast of China. A scholar Heine-Geldern, who first proposed this idea in 1932, suggested that the stone adzes from Southeast Asia and the southeast coast of China were the ancestral forms of the Pacific region, especially stepped adzes. This argument inspired Roger Duff, a New Zealand archaeologist, who conducted a comprehensive survey of stone adzes in China and Southeast Asia in the 1950s. based on the materials he collected, Duff published a monograph, *Stone Adzes in Southeast Asian*, which argued that stepped adzes in the Pacific were spread over from the southeast coast of China, and drew a detailed road map of the spread. Chinese scholars such as Lin Huixiang had introduced this theory and further elaborated it based on the archaeological and ethnographic materials.

Since the birth of modern molecular biology, the origin of Austronesian has been a hot topic of research. Different scholars have studied from classical genetic markers (Gm blood group, HLA, etc.), maternal mitochondrial DNA, paternal Y chromosome DNA and whole genome. Studies on maternal lineage have shown that the most typical maternal "Polynesian motif" of Austronesian population originates from the southeastern coastal region of China, and the maternal lineage types of the various branches of the Taiwan formosan aborigines are mainly haplogroups B4, B5a, F1a, F3b, E and M7, which are very similar to those

of the Tai-Kadai population in southern China. The maternal genetic structure of the Tai-Kadai population in southern China is very similar. Patrilineal studies have shown that the patrilineal types of the Taiwanese populations (Formosan aborigines and Taiwanese Han) can be traced to the mainland, while the predominant patrilineal O2-N6 of Austronesian population can be traced to the eastern coastal region of North China. In contrast, the results of testing ancient DNA of 8,000-7500 years old Liangdao people from coastal Fujian provide more direct evidence that Austronesian population originated in the southeastern coastal region of China.

However, due to the limitations of their own theories, methods, and materials, scholars have not reached a consensus. In this article, I will pay my attention to the customs and traditions to illustrate the origin of Austronesian, and further to clarify the objective history of the origin and spread of Austronesian in mainland of China, its spread to Taiwan, and then to Southeast Asia and Oceania, providing more conclusive evidence to counter and refute "Taiwanese independence" with a scientific basis.

### **3. THE STEPPED ADZE IN AUSTRONESIAN AND SE CHINA**

There are lots of material production customs and social life customs in China mainland, Taiwan island, Pacific island and so on to support that Austronesian culture and population originated in southeast of Fujian.

The stepped adze is an important feature of the Neolithic culture of southeast China, and lots of stepped adze have been found in the southeast region, a few in the eastern part of North China slightly have been found, no stepped adze in the western part of North China have been found. Stepped adze is a stone tool of peculiar shape, and it looks like the ordinary stone adze. It is often rectangular flat object, and the blade is cut diagonally, with the blade slanted upward side. Its central bulge into a horizontal ridge, which makes the back side be divided into two parts. And the front is thicker, the rear is thinner. Additionally, people used it with mounted handle.

The question of stepped adze is an international scientific issue, in the South Pacific, because of its widely distribution. Stepped adze have been found in the Pacific islands, such as Philippines, Sulawesi, Polynesia and so on. The shape of stepped adze in the Pacific islands is very similar with those in the southeast region of China, almost difficult to distinguish. Stepped adze is not only very important cultural relic in the study of the Neolithic period in southeast of China, but also the international important cultural relic in the study of history of Southeast Asia and the Pacific islands. The result of the study can not only understand the Neolithic culture of southeast China, but also help to understand the ancient condition of Southeast Asia and the Pacific islands.

Regarding the origin of stepped adze, Lin Huixiang speculates that it originated in southeastern China and was transmitted to Taiwan, Philippines and Polynesia. This is mainly due to: First, from the perspective of time, Asian mainland

***Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation***  
*The Origin of Austronesians from the Perspective of Customs and Traditions*

Neolithic era ended in three or four thousand years ago, Taiwan ended in more than a thousand years ago, Philippines in about one or two thousand years, and the Pacific Polynesian islands more recently, about three or four hundred years ago. Generally, culture spread from place with a long history to the place which harbors the shorter history. Second, from the perspective of geographical location, the ancient culture usually occurred in the mainland and then spread to the small islands. Third, from the perspective of development stage of stepped adze, the place with more primary shape stepped stones should be the origin. Actually, stepped adzes in mainland showed more primary and intermediate type. On the contrary, Philippines and the Pacific harbor the more advanced ones.

Fujian was once considered to be the origin of stepped adze, but the archaeological discoveries in recent years show that stepped adze found in Fujian area are relatively late in the era. It is not appropriate to take it as the origin of the center. In recent years, with the in-depth archaeological work in the southeast region of China, especially the excavation of Hemudu site in Yuyao, Zhejiang and Luojiajiao site in Tongxiang, as well as the establishment of the Neolithic cultural sequence in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, clearly shows that the lower reaches of the Yangtze River not only has a high degree of development in the Liangzhu Culture period at the latest, but also as early as the early stages of the Hemudu Culture and Majiabang Culture has appeared the most primary type of stepped adze. And there are stepped adzes appeared in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River as the most primary. If set it as the center, there is an obvious trend of decreasing in turn to the north, west, south. Stepped adze in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River appeared earlier, at the same time the decline is also earlier. This provides new evidence for the origin center of stepped adze, that is, to support the origin center of stepped adze is the lower Yangtze River area.

There are lots of stepped adzes found in the Philippines, but their appearance and end time are later than those in southern China. The upper limit of stepped adze's appearance in the Polynesian islands is less clear, but its lower limit is later—it was used until the early nineteenth century.

The wooden quant and ceramic boat excavated from the Hemudu site keep the shape of the later excavated canoe. Together with a large number of stepped adzes in the site, experts believe that stepped adzes are advanced production tools for making canoes in the Neolithic period. It is the characteristic of Hemudu Culture and spreads in all directions, and is the physical evidence of the spread of Hemudu Culture overseas through the drifting voyage against the equator.

The direction of spread of stepped adze corroborates the migration direction of the corresponding population, that is, the ancestors of Austronesian population originated in the southeastern mainland of China and spread westward through Taiwan to the Philippines and then to the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

In the study of the spread of Hemudu Culture overseas, the status of Taiwan and the Philippines becomes very important. If Taiwan was a maritime transit point between the motherland and the Philippines during the original seafaring activities, Philippines was a maritime bridge that led China mainland to the Pacific islands via Taiwan. They used to make important contributions in spreading Chinese civilization and promoting the Chinese nation to the sea.

The stepped adzes of the Yuanshan Culture are similar to those of the Tanshishan Culture and the Huanguashan Culture, and the start of the Tanshishan Culture is earlier than that of the Yuanshan Culture. Therefore, it is likely that stepped adzes of the Yuanshan Culture were introduced through the Tanshishan Culture. And the origin of the stone adze excavated from the site of Damaoshan shows that the vast majority of its raw materials from the Penghu Islands. Overall, during the Neolithic period, southeastern of China was in close contact with Taiwan, and, cultures migrated from the mainland to the islands with the population.

#### **4. AUSTRONESIAN AND SE CHINA OTHER CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

##### *Pottery*

There are many sites containing colored pottery from both the Tumshishan Culture and the Fengbitou culture, and these sites are basically located in the east and west coast areas of the Taiwan Strait. For example, the Tumshishan Culture of Minhou County Tumshishan, Xitou sites of Baisha Town, Zhuangbianshan sites are in the lower reaches of the Min River into the sea. The distribution of the pottery found in the Fengbitou culture is roughly similar to that of the Tumshishan culture, which is distributed along the west coast of Taiwan. This geographical distribution feature encompasses the role of numerous cultural transmission and exchange across the Strait. The common features of painted pottery in both places are several simple basic line patterns consisting of straight lines, folds, and oval dots, with red painted pottery as the characteristic feature. But the development of Fengbitou Culture painted pottery is later than that of Tanshiyama Culture, reflecting the strong influence of geometric patterned painted pottery culture from the southeast coast of the mainland. At the same time, the pottery from the Damashan site has strong similarities with the pottery from many sites on the Penghu Islands and the main island of Taiwan. In all, evidence of painted pottery from archaeological sites shows signs of migration of Austronesian people from southeast China to Taiwan.

##### *Canoes*

The boat civilization of the ancient Yue people in southeastern of China mainland inherited, evolved, and developed along the southeastern coast. From the 7,000-year-old wooden paddle unearthed at Hemudu in Zhejiang to the 2,000-year-old dugout canoe unearthed at Lianjiang in Fujian, some of the characteristics of boat production can be seen. The Lianjiang dugout boat is more than 7 meters

long, with a narrow head and wide tail, a raised wooden seat in the middle, and obvious traces of fire and stone splitting on the surface of the dugout boat. The ancient Yue people also used special processing tools—stepped adzes. This is a typical method of processing dugout canoes in the Stone Age. The ancient Yue people who crossed the sea to Taiwan can see traces of the spread of these people's sailing and shipbuilding techniques and cultural traits in the surviving Yami canoes, with their ornate decoration of two pointed high ends, and the boat-shaped huts still preserved by the Alpine people. Interestingly, A typical example is the word "canoe", which is pronounced "Dumuhou" in Polynesia, with only one less "z" than in Chinese pinyin.

The similarities between the Damaoshan Culture and the sites of the Penghu Islands and the main island of Taiwan indicate that the inhabitants of the Damaoshan Culture already had sufficient navigational ability and technology to cross the Taiwan Strait, and that the residents on both sides of the Strait were quite closely connected in this period. All of these materials further indicate that navigation developed to a high level at this stage, and that a maritime culture with strong maritime adaptability was in place. The navigation of the Neolithic in the Taiwan Strait is the beginning of the navigation of the Austronesian, and the navigation of the ancestors of the Damaoshan Culture is an important page of the early navigation of Austronesian populations.

Their sailing activities in the Spring and Autumn period are also recorded on bronze tools, such as tool bronze battle-axes and bronze carrying tubes, and on ritual or battle instruments. These colorful decorative patterns of boats and ships imaginatively reflect the social life, customs and habits, and religious consciousness of the local people at that time. The pottery and wooden boat models with various structures in the tombs, even the living rooms, the boat remains of the boat in the boat home or the land housing, such as the big alley with warped ridge of Minnan housing and the boat-shaped stone house of Taiwan Alpine tribe, as well as the boat-shaped burial apparatus after death—Wuyi boat coffin, all retain the most basic boat creation of this nation.

### *Rice*

The rice remains from Hemudu, dated by carbon 14 to 7,000 years ago, have been unanimously confirmed by Chinese and foreign scholars as the earliest source of rice in the world. Chinese researchers have further argued that Hemudu was the birthplace of rice agriculture in China, and that it spread in all directions, all the way to the Pacific islands via Taiwan and Philippines.

### *Others*

In addition, almost all Polynesians have tattoos on their bodies, including their place of origin, parents, events and places they have visited, etc. In fact, this tradition is exactly the same as the custom of the Min-yue people in ancient Quanzhou to "break their hair and tattoo". This may provide another clue to support that Austronesian culture and population originated in Fujian

And in linguistic field, there are many evidence supporting this. In 1942, P.K. Benedict, an American scholar was the first one to suggest that the Dong-Tai languages of the indigenous peoples of southern China were cognate with Austronesian. In his article, Thai, Kadai and Indonesian: A New Alignment in Southeastern Asia, he first compared Austronesian and Tai-Kadai, listed nearly 30 cognates of Austronesian and Tai-Kadai, discussed the cognate relationship between Austronesian and Tai-Kadai, and concluded that they share a common origin in South China with ethnological and archaeological knowledge. A.G. Haudricourt, a French scholar, also holds the same view. He believes that the origin of Austronesian should be attributed to the southeast coast of the Asian mainland, between Hainan Island and Taiwan; because this region is not only the most divergent and the most archaic, but also has relatives or contacts with various languages of South China, northern Vietnam, Hainan. In the 1940s, Benedict proposed a Tai-Kadai-Austronesian homology, which was further discussed in the 1970s, thus attracting the attention of scholars. The Tai-Kadai-Austronesian affinities have been discussed and confirmed by scholars such as Ni Dabai, Meng Smu, Long Yao Hong, Chen Bao Ya, Ou Ya Jue Ya and Zheng Yi Qing, Deng Xiaohua and Wang Shi Yuan, and Deng Xiaohua and Deng Xiao Ling.

## **5. SUPPLEMENTARY EVIDENCE IN MOLECULAR ANTHROPOLOGY**

Molecular anthropology is a discipline that uses human genetic information to analyze many aspects of human origins, community evolution, ancient social and cultural structures. In the process of inheritance, DNA accumulates mutations due to replication errors, and the type of mutation varies proportionally between populations under the effect of genetic drift, bottleneck effect or natural selection.

The study of the paternal Y-chromosome ancient DNA of Austronesian is focused on the study of the 2000-1500 years old Hanben site in Taiwan and the Ritidian Cave site population in Guan this year. Both regions are key areas in the expansion of Austronesian in archaeological studies, which undertook the connection between mainland China and Taiwan and between Taiwan and Oceania, respectively. In terms of Y-SNP haplogroup distribution, the Early Iron Age population in Taiwan is dominated by O1a-M119 and O2a2b2-N6, both of which are among the major founder paternal lineages of Austronesian. Of interest is the haplogroup O2a2b2-N6 and its clade, which can be traced to the eastern coastal region of northern China, and its early parapatric clade also shows a clear trend of distribution along the eastern coastline of mainland East Asia. Moreover, the modern Austronesian of Southeast Asian islands and the high-frequency haplogroups P164+ and M134- of Taiwan's aborigines Amis and Siraya all belong to the unique downstream clade O2a2b2-N6, O2a2b2a2b-B451, reflecting the influence of the larger southward migration of populations from the northern part of mainland East Asia. Whereas haplogroup O1a-M119 and its clade have a higher frequency distribution among Austronesian, Dong-Kadai and Chinese populations in coastal region and island of southeast China

and Southeast Asia, downstream clades O1a1a-P203 and O1a2-M110 are high frequency distributions among Austronesian in both Taiwan aborigines and island of Southeast Asia, and also higher than other East Asian populations among Dong-Kadai and Malay populations; but in Austronesian in Oceania are extremely low-frequency or absent, meaning that this clade may be missing from populations in the region due to long-distance migration or bottleneck effects. The Guan population in the western Manyana Islands, another region, is dominated by the distribution of the upstream haplogroup O2a2-P201 of O2a2b2-N6, a haplogroup that is more widely distributed across the mainland, islands and Oceania in eastern Asia, broadly pointing to the continental nature of the population's origin.

In the study of mitochondrial ancient DNA of the maternal lineages related to Austronesian, the full mitochondrial sequence of the "Liangdao people" found at the Liangdao I site in Lianjiang, Fujian is one of the most important studies to explore the origin and spread of Austronesian. The two early Neolithic burials found at the I site have each unearthed one human skeleton, named Liangdao Man No. 1 and Liangdao Man No. 2. The 8,200-year-old Liangdao Man No. 1 is the ancestor type of haplogroup E1, which is between haplogroup E and E1. Haplogroup E is the downstream branch of the common maternal haplogroup M9 in East Asia (mainly in the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau), and its clades E1 and E2 are widely distributed in ancient and modern populations in Taiwan, Southeast Asian islands, and Oceania, among which E2a is mainly found in ancient populations in Guan. Moreover, a comparison with the mitochondrial whole-genome sequences of the Taiwan aboriginal people and the Philippine and Indonesian populations showed that the closest haplotype variation point of Liangdao Man 1 is only 4 points away from the Taiwan aboriginal people, while it is at least 5 points away from the Indonesian or Philippine populations, which directly supports the mainland origin and exit of Taiwan hypothesis. The 7,600-year-old Liangdao people's haplogroup R9 is mainly found in the Shao people group of the present Taiwan aboriginal people and the Dai, Miao, and Yao groups in mainland of South China, and is closely related to the modern South China Dong-Kadai and Austronesian. This further confirms the unity and mainland origin of the indigenous groups in South China, including the Taiwan aboriginal group. It can be seen that both haplogroup E of Liangdao Man 1 and haplogroup R9 of Liangdao Man 2 have different degrees of common ancestry with the Taiwan aboriginal group and other Southeast Asian groups such as the Philippines and Indonesia, confirming that the ancient Asian continent was with expansion. It is evident that there was an indigenous ancestral group with the same maternal lineage as the original Austronesian in the southeastern region, and that the group began to travel across the sea since the early Neolithic period, wandering among the islands along the southeastern coast of the mainland.

Skoglund, Lipson, and Posth analyzed the whole genome of ancient DNA from Vanuatu and Tonga in Polynesia 3100-2300 years ago and compared it with the data collected from modern population samples from East Asia and Oceania. The data were compared with the collected samples of modern populations from East Asia and Oceania, and the results of the study revealed that the ancestors

of the Far Oceanic populations associated with the early Lapita culture spread from Taiwan to the Philippines, through West Melanesia, and finally to Far Oceania about 5000 years ago. However, a certain amount of genetic contributions related to indigenous Papuan populations were found in the modern populations of Near and Far Oceania, which lived in the highlands of New Guinea before the arrival of Austronesian. Therefore, they further analyzed the whole genome of Vanuatu ancient DNA from 2900-150 years ago and found that the related lineage of Papuan populations arrived in Vanuatu and Tonga around 2300 years ago, which probably reflects the migration of people from the late Lapita culture hundreds of years ago. In addition, Lipson et al. analyzed whole-genome microarray data from 56 Southeast Asian island populations and found that all Austronesian in Southeast Asia were strongly related to Austronesian in Taiwan, and also received genetic contributions from South Asian-speaking populations in the South Central Peninsula on the mainland. This South Asian-related genetic contribution may be due to the presence of South Asian-speaking populations in Southeast Asian islands before the South Islanders migrated; or the South Islanders spread to eastern Indonesia via the South Central Peninsula corridor.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The study of the early origin and early formation process of Austronesian is a challenging and internationally significant frontier topic that cannot be accomplished by a single discipline. The related research is a worldwide academic hotspot, and it is necessary to follow the standard practice of international academics, both to absorb the international related research results comprehensively and to publish the results using more international common academic languages. At the same time, it is necessary to conduct multidisciplinary cross-research in linguistics, archaeology and molecular biology, focusing on the language, archaeological culture and population evolution in the same historical period, while paying attention to the integration of humanities and natural science research in order to achieve top research results.

On the basis of the pluralistic cultural pattern of the Chinese nation, we will reconstruct the genealogy of the development of Austronesian (especially the Taiwanese aborigines) and the people of the southeast coast of the mainland (especially the Dong-Kadai people), reveal the origin and evolution process of the "Austronesian-Dong-Kadai unity", eliminate the basis of the theories of the Taiwanese aborigines, such as the "South-coming theory", the "independence of the Taiwanese nation" and the "national Taiwan independence" with scientific and empirical materials and systematic arguments, and comprehensively refute the false evidence, false logic and false theories on the island of Taiwan, and expound the correct historical view of the development of Austronesian.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## REFERENCES

- Bellwood, P, 1995, Austronesian prehistory in Southeast Asia: homeland, expansion and Transformation. In *The Austronesians: historical and comparative perspectives*. Edited by P. Bellwood, J. Fox, and D. Tryon, 96-111. Canberra, Australian National University.
- Bellwood, P. 2007, Southeast China and the prehistory of the Austronesians. In T. Jiao ed. *Lost Maritime Cultures: China and the Pacific*. Pp36-53. Bishop Museum Press.
- Bellwood, P.1988. A hypothesis for Austronesian origins. *Asian Perspectives*. 26(1):107-117.
- Beyer H. O. 1948, Philippine and East Asian Archaeology and its relation to the Origin of the Pacific Island: Population, Manila, National Research Council of the Philippines.
- Chang, K. C. & Ward H. Goodenough. 1996. Archaeology of southeastern China and its bearing on the Austronesian homeland. In *Prehistoric Settlement of the Pacific*. W. H. Goodenough(ed.). Pp.28-35. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society.
- Chen Zhongyu, "Liangdao people," Lianjiang: Lianjiang County Government, 2013, pp. 22.
- Duff, R. 1970, Stone Adzes of Southeast Asia: an illustrated typology. New Zealand: Canterbury Museum.
- Dyen, I. 1956 "Language distribution and migration theory". *Language* 32(4): 30-35.
- Fan Z Q, Deng X H, Wang C C, 2018, Languages and Genes: Comment on the Origin and Dispersal of Austronesian, *Academic Monthly* 10:175-184.
- Friedlaender, J. et al. 2008, The Genetic Structure of Pacific Islanders. *Public Library of Science Genetic*, Vol.4(1).
- Guo, Z. , T. Jiao, Rolett, B. , Liu, J. Fan, X. Lin, G. , 2005, Tracking the Neolithic interactions in Southeast China: Evidence from Stone adze geometry. *Geoarchaeology* 20(8): 765-776.
- Haudricourt A. G. 1954 "Les origines asistiques des langue malayo-polynesiennes" *JSO*10, 1954, pp. 1- 7.
- Heine-Geldern, R.,1946, Research on Southeast Asia: problems and suggestions, *American Anthropologists* April: 149-175.
- Jiao. T. 2007, *The Neolithic of Southeast China*. New York: Cambria Press.
- Jiao. T. 2007, *The Neolithic of Southeast China*. New York: Cambria Press.
- Jiao. T., 2003, Studies of Stone Adzes in Polynesian Archaeology, *Archaeology* 01:78-89.
- Jiao. T., Fan. X.,2010, *Fujian and Austronesian*. Zhonghua Book Company.
- Ko Albert M S, Chen, C. Y., Fu, Q. M. et al., 2014 Early Austronesians: Into and out of Taiwan, *American Journal of Human Genetics*.94(3):426-36.
- Li, H., Wen, B., Chen, S. J. et al., Paternal genetic affinity between western Austronesians and Daic populations, *BMC Biol*. 2008, 8, p. 146.
- McColl, H., Racimo, F., Vinner, L. et al, *Science*, 2018, 361, pp. 88-92.
- McColl, H., Racimo, F., Vinner, L. et al., 2018 The prehistoric peopling of Southeast Asia, *Science* 361: 88-92.

- Melton T, et al, 1995, Polynesian genetic affinities with Southeast Asian populations as identified by mtDNA analysis. *American Journal of Human Genetics* 57:403-414.
- Pugach, I., Hubner, A., Hung, H. C., Ancient DNA from Guam and the peopling of the Pacific, *PNAS*, 2021, 118(1), p. e2022112118.
- Ralph J. et al. 2002, Voyagers of the Pacific: Rock art and the Austronesian dispersal. *Rock Art Research*. 19: 79-105.
- Shi, H., Zhong, H., Peng, Y. et al. evidence of earliest modern human settlement in East Asia and multiple origins of Tibetan and Japanese populations, *BMC Biol*, 2008, 6, pp. 45.
- Shi, H., Zhong, H., Peng, Y. et al., 2008 Y chromosome evidence of earliest modern human settlement in East Asia and multiple origins of Tibetan and Japanese populations, *BMC Biol* 6, p. 45.
- Su B, Jin L et al, 2000, Polynesian origins: Insights from the Y chromosome. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA*,97:8225-8228.
- Trejaut J A, et al, 2005, Traces of Archaic Mitochondrial Lineages Persist in Austronesian-Speaking Formosan Populations. *PLoS Biol*,3.8:1362-1372.
- Trejaut, et al, 2005, Traces of Archaic Mitochondrial Lineages Persist in Austronesian -speaking formosan Populations, *Public Library of Science Biology*, Vol. 3(8).
- Wang, C. C., Yeh, H. Y., Popov, A. N. et al, Genomic insights into the formation of human populations in East Asia. *Nature*, 2021.
- Wei L H, Yan S et al, 2017, Phylogeography of Y-chromosome haplogroup O3a2b2-N6 reveals patrilineal traces of Austronesian populations on the eastern coastal regions of Asia, *PLoS ONE* 12(4):1-12.
- Wei, L. H., Yan, S., Teo, Y. Y. et al., Phylogeography of Y-chromosome haplogroup O3a2b2-N6 reveals patrilineal traces of Austronesian populations on the eastern coastal regions of Asia, *PLoS One*, 2017, 12, p. e0175080.
- Zang Z H, 1999, Adaptation and Expansion of Prehistoric Cultures on the Southeast Coast of China. *Archaeology and Heritage* 3:20-33.

# **Squatting Humanoid Rock Paintings and the Diffusion of Austronesian Ethnic Groups**

Yu Jian <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH2

---

## **ABSTRACT**

The research on the origin and spread of the Austronesian group has always been the focus of debate in the academic circles, and Scholars have addressed it from the perspectives of language, ethnology, gene, archaeology, etc. Rock paintings are a projection of early human spiritual culture, while squatting humanoid rock paintings are a manifestation of a special human cultural phenomenon. In the present Pacific Austronesian distribution area and the disputed Ancient Austronesian distribution area in southern China, there have been a large number of squatting humanoid rock paintings with similar artistic styles. It is not a simple coincidence, but a relationship between the outside and the inside. The squatting humanoid rock paintings in the Austronesian distribution area are relatively scattered, and the number is not as large as that in South China, but in form it has a strong similarity with the rock paintings of South China, especially there are many accompanying symbols near the squatting humanoid rock paintings. We believe that these squatting humanoid petroglyphs come from the same source, and their distribution and chronology are highly coincident with the migration path of the Austronesian peoples.

*Keywords: Squatting humanoid; rock paintings; Austronesian; ethnic migration.*

## **1. ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES**

The Austronesian family is spread over the islands in the Pacific and Indian oceans and the Central and South Malay Islands in Southeast Asia, with a population of about 4 00 million and over 1200 languages, from Taiwan and Hawaii in the north, south to New Zealand, Easter Island in the East and Madagascar in the west. This part addresses the origin and diffusion of Austronesian languages from linguistic, archaeological, and genomic perspectives.

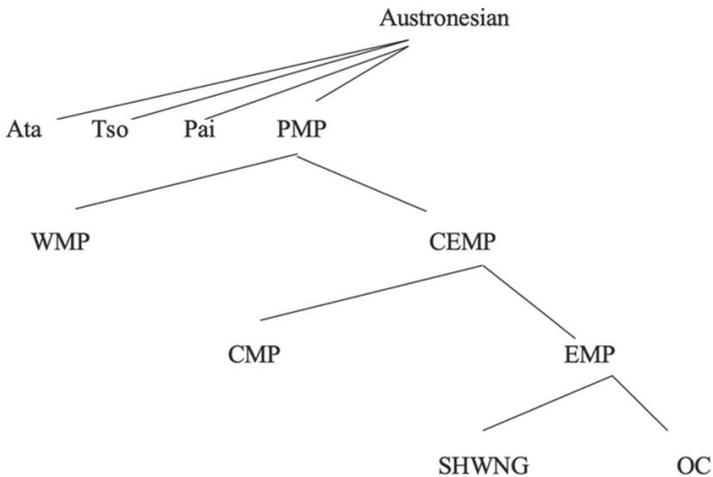
---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 10620210156695@stu.xmu.edu.cn;

The expansion of the Austronesians into the Pacific represents one of the widest human dispersals through seafaring in the pre-Columbian world. Austronesians discovered and settled on nearly every inhabitable island in the Pacific, including the archipelagoes of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia. As a result of these extraordinary expansions, the Austronesian languages are spoken as far east as Easter Island and as far west as Madagascar. The indigenous population in Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia universally speak Austronesian. Before the seventeenth century, the Austronesian language was the most widely dispersed language family in the world. Where and when the Austronesian ancestors started their ocean-going expansion have fascinated both scholars and the public over the past century, making the search for the Austronesian homeland one of the major academic issues in Pacific archaeology, linguistics, and genetic studies. After much debate and enormous efforts by generations of scholars, new evidence from multiple disciplines have increasingly demonstrated that southeast China is very likely the ultimate Austronesian homeland.

The most direct and forceful evidence are from linguistics. There is almost a universal agreement that the homeland of the Austronesian language is today's Chinese Taiwan island and the adjacent southeast China coast. This consensus is based on a widely accepted subgrouping model of the Austronesian language family proposed by Robert Blust. (Fig. 1)



**Fig. 1. Phylogenetic tree of Austronesian languages**

The first order of this “family tree” includes at least three sub-groups of the Austronesian languages spoken on the island of Taiwan. To Blust, this clearly indicates that “the most likely homeland of the AN (Austronesian) languages was on Taiwan, although it was not necessarily confined to that island. From Taiwan population expansion into the northern Philippines begun by perhaps 5500

BP...From the southern Philippines the linguistic evidence strongly suggests a split into two major population segments, a western one ancestral to Western (Malayo-Polynesian), and an eastern one ancestral to Central (Malayo-Polynesian)”

Despite the fact that Austronesian languages have been replaced by Chinese on the coast of southeast China, recent studies suggest that there are still Austronesian elements among the several dialects in Fujian, particularly in the southern Fujian dialect. Linguists Deng Xiaohua and William S.-Y. Wang argue that this “linguistic bottom” indicates that Austronesian languages were spoken on the mainland in prehistory. This linguistic model has been warmly endorsed by archaeologists such as Peter Bellwood and K.C. Chang. On the basis of a comprehensive review of archaeological data throughout the Pacific, Bellwood proposes five stages in the Austronesian expansions. The first two stages are centered on mainland southeast China and the island of Taiwan:

1. Pre-Austronesian moves to Taiwan from Southern China.
2. A period in Taiwan to allow the Formosan Austronesian languages to develop a head start in primary subgroup diversity compared to all other Austronesian areas.
3. Rapid movement through the Philippines, Indonesia and Oceania, to as far east as Samoa.
4. A further pause in expansion in western Polynesia, perhaps for up to a millennium.
5. Eastern Polynesian dispersal, the greatest in geographical terms, within the past 1,500 years according to archaeology, with populations finally reaching New Zealand less than 1,000 years ago.

K.C. Chang strongly believes that the Neolithic cultures on the west side of the Taiwan Strait were directly related to the proto-Austronesians. As a matter of fact, Chang’s concern with the origins of the even more remote proto-Austronesians goes beyond the Taiwan Strait. In a co-authored paper with Ward H. Goodenough, Chang further pushed the origins of proto-Austronesian back to the Neolithic cultures of the Lower Yangzi region: “These cultures spread southward up the Yangzi’s southern tributaries into Guangdong and eastern Guangxi, eastward into the region of Lake Tai and Hangzhou Gulf, and south from there down the Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong coast and into Taiwan.” Genetic investigation of the origins of the Austronesians did not start until the mid-1990s. Until very recently, different studies have produced highly polarized interpretations. One of the reasons for these disputes is the lack of direct evidence from ancient genetic data. This void has been filled by a groundbreaking study conducted by an international team in 2020. With their success in retrieving and decoding the ancient genetic markers on human bones from a number of Neolithic burials on the coast of southeast China, this study has provided direct evidence for the genetic connection between the Neolithic people and the Austronesians, clearly demonstrating that southeast China was the ultimate homeland of the Austronesians.

## **2. THE ORIGIN OF THE SQUAT-TYPE HUMANOID ROCK PAINTINGS AND THE AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGE PEOPLE**

The consistency of the painting style of the squat rock painting in South China will naturally suggest that there may be some interweaving between the families of the early squat rock painting creation, and they may be the descendants of the early Austronesian-speaking people.

### *The creator of squat human-shaped rock paintings*

The southwest region where the rock paintings of Guangxi, Yunnan and Sichuan are located are the most complex ethnic areas in history. Since the Shang and Zhou Period, "Baipu" and "Baiyue" are in a mixed state here. As for the creation family of squat humanoid rock paintings in Guangxi, most researchers believe that it should be Luo Yue people, according to the content of the rock paintings and the analysis of their region. They are the ancestors of the current Zhuang and Dong-language people. According to ancient books, the distribution range of Luoyue is roughly the Zuo and Right River basins in Guangxi and present's Red River Delta and Hainan Island in Vietnam. It is also difficult for the authors of Yunnan Cangyuan rock paintings to lock down the immediate ancestors of an ethnic group or ethnic group. Themes similar to the rock paintings seem to be found in both the Wa and Dai cultural factors. With the deepening of research, Cangyuan rock paintings are considered to be the legacy of the Gupu people who settled in southwest Yunnan in the early stage, and have certain links to Bashu in culture. Mattangba rock paintings in Gongxian County, Sichuan Province coexist with hanging coffin burial culture. Hanging coffin is a bureaucratic burial custom, and the rock paintings are mostly characterized by bureaucrats, so they may be the works of bureaucrats from the Han and Jin Dynasty to the Song Dynasty and Ming Dynasty. Hua'an in Fujian are usually regarded as the folk characters of the Yue people in the late Warring States Period. Although there have been objections to the researchers of the rock painting creators in the four places, it is generally believed that the cultural approximation of the four squat human-shaped rock paintings should be related between their creators. Rock paintings should be a presentation of their early national migration and cultural integration.

Although the rock painting creation group in Guangxi is the Luoyue ethnic group, it originated initially from Baipu. It had certain contacts with the northern people in the pre-Qin period. The slow cultural build-up has been developing its own culture independently. About 334 BC, Chu destroyed Yue. Some of the Dong 'ou Yue people migrated from Fujian and Hainan to southwest Guangdong and southern Guangxi, living with the local Luo Yue people. The first place to arrive was Gui County, which was the political center of Xi' ou. After the unification of lingnan, because of west Ou river, convenient transportation, contact with the central plains Han, part of the Han assimilation, the other part fled to avoid war, many of them along the Xijiang river or along the red river west, scattered in the river basin mixed with Luoyue people, and soon integrated into one. The name of "Xi Ou" disappeared from history after the Western Han Dynasty, while Luo Yue

still existed until the Eastern Han Dynasty. Therefore, although the Luoyue ethnic group originated from Baipu, it is greatly influenced by the Yue culture. Accordingly, the rock paintings of Yunnan, Sichuan and Guangxi are highly consistent in expression content and techniques. Fujian and Guangxi are similar in content, but the expression techniques are consistent with the southeast coastal rock painting system. From the techniques of rock painting in the four places, although some differences, but still show a preference for the "squat human shape".

*The relationship between the Austronesian language ethnic groups and the rock painting ethnic groups*

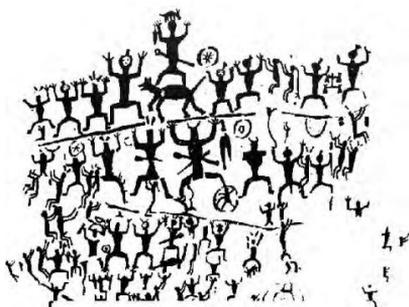
In a recent study of Austronesian families, a study from the perspective of residual Austronesian vocabulary concluded that Austronesian families are related to the Kadai and Dai group images. Mr. Rong Guanqiong also proposed that the Li and Zhuang and Dong languages now on Hainan Island are all part of the Austronesian language family. Deng Xiaohua and Wang Shiyuan believe that the current Zhuang Dong languages distributed in southwest China are far more closely related to the Austronesian language than to the Han-Tibetan family. The ancestors of the Zhuang Dong nationality were Austronesian immigrants who migrated from the southeast coast. Scholars also explored ethnology mainly with a variety of disciplines, and proved that the ancestors of the Austronesian language people were the Yue and Pu people in early South China, and the current Fujian and Guangdong, Li and Zhuang and Dong people may be the descendants of the Austronesian language speaking people. According to previous studies, it is judged that the creators of squat rock paintings in South China are likely to be the early Austronesian speaking people.

More rock painting creators in Yunnan and Sichuan are from Baepu, while Fujian rock paintings are the culture created by the Yue people. Although the creator of Guangxi rock paintings is LuoYue, it is a cultural fusion of Puyue ethnic group. The cultural characteristics of the Austronesian language preference for squatting human images spread from rock paintings to the islands from Fujian to the Pacific Ocean. In fact, Fujian has long been considered as an important stronghold in the spread of Austral-speaking peoples from South China to Taiwan. After Deng Xiaohua and other researchers focused on the analysis of the current Minnan dialect, they found that there were a considerable number of Austronesian language vocabulary, and then deduced that the Austronesian language is the language of the prehistoric and ancient ancestors of Fujian. With the comparative research of new archaeological discoveries and space-space from the South China mainland to Taiwan, Southeast Asia and southwest Pacific, as well as the lineage construction of prehistoric archaeological culture of this indigenous area and the interpretation of ethnic history, converging rich evidence clearly show that Fujian and Taiwan are at the core of this community. This region is an important part of the spread of the Austronesian-speaking family to the Pacific. It has a more direct connection with today's Austronesian language group, so the squat humanoid rock paintings in this region show great agreement with the today-s Austronesian language rock paintings. At the same time, we

have also noticed that the squatting humanoid rock paintings in the current Austronesian speakers' distribution area are relatively scattered, and they are not as large as those in South China. Especially in Taiwan, as one of the earliest origins of the Austronesian speakers, the squatting humanoid rock paintings are far from the South China rock paintings. The reason is that although squatting humanoid is a cultural element favored by the Austronesian language group, the carrier of squatting humanoid image has changed with the extensive migration and cultural integration. The image of "squatting human shape" mainly appears in the form of rock painting in the southwest, and in the process of spreading to the southeast coastal area, one is, the rock painting production techniques become chisel; the other is, the form of artistic expression is mostly presented into folk art. In Taiwan, squatting human shapes are everywhere in wood carvings, stone carvings, handicrafts, and folk art such as costumes. squatting figure is also common in the folk art of Hainan Li nationality. The Pacific Ocean is one of the main centers of tribal art in the world, and the Austronesian-speaking people in the Pacific Ocean often use squat humanoid images as the main material for folk art design.

### 3. SQUATTING HUMANOID ROCK PAINTINGS IN CHINA

Squatting humanoid rock paintings are mainly distributed in Guangxi, Fujian and Sichuan and Yunnan in southwest China. The squat humanoid rock paintings in these areas show a strong similarity in their form characteristics and performance content.



**Fig. 2. Zuo Jiang rock painting in Guangxi**



**Fig. 3. Rock paintings in Yuanjiang, Yunnan**

In South China, the most widespread squatting humanoid rock paintings is the Zuojiang rock paintings in Guangxi, where the squatting humanoid accounts for more than 90 percent of the thematic content. The dense squat type human form is accompanied by a large number of boats, circles, dogs, birds and other symbols to form a warm scene (Fig. 2). More than 60 rock paintings have been recorded in Yunnan, over an area of more than 1,400 square meters. Squatting human figures account for a large part of most figures with heads, animal horns, tails or body feathers, accompanied by dry houses, cattle and other horns

(Fig. 3). The rock paintings in Gongxian County, Sichuan Province focus on the activities of the limbs. The body is an inverted triangle or oval shape, accompanied by circles and horses. The production materials of the three local rock paintings are mostly single red pigments and drafted by painting method (Fig. 4).

The squat rock paintings in Hua'an, Fujian Province are special (Fig. 4). Although it is very similar to the above regional rock paintings in formal characteristics and content, there are obvious differences in the production methods. The rock paintings of Hua'an Xianzitan mainly use the carving method of the northern and southeast coastal rock painting system. The squat human shape image belongs to the line drawing, which is similar to the early stick human shape of Zuojiang rock paintings (Fig. 5). It is an expressionist style, and the accompanying symbols have human figures and concentric circles.



Fig. 4. Rock paintings in Gongxian County, Sichuan Province



Fig. 5. Fujian Hua'an Xian Zi Tan rock paintings

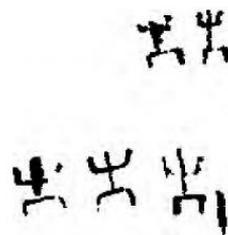


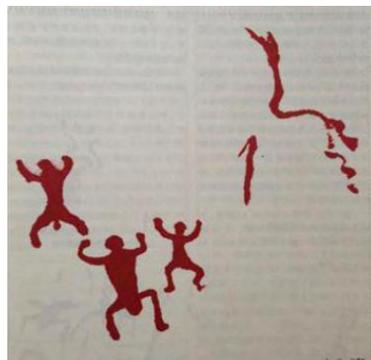
Fig. 6. Zuojiang Chongzuo rock paintings

The Nu, Lancang and Jinsha rivers, which originate from the snowy plateau, are strangled by the Hengduan Mountains as soon as they enter Yunnan, thus forming a world wonder of three rivers flowing side by side between the lofty mountains and mountains. The petroglyphs in Yunnan are mainly distributed on the ancient golden waterways of the Nu River, Lancang River, Nanpan River, Red River and Jinsha River. Crouching humanoid petroglyphs are mainly distributed in Yuanjiang County and Malipo in the Red River Basin; Shanglin County, Mile County and Qiubei County in the NanpanJiang River Basin; in addition, there are also some in Cangyuan County and Gengma County in the Lancang River Basin.

The Yuanjiang Taq rock paintings in the Red River Basin are located at an altitude of 2340 meters above sea level, the petroglyphs are 19.5 meters long, 3 meters wide, 2.15 meters from the ground, and there are 120 existing images, of which 62 are figures, and the rest are animals and other symbols such as the sun and water ripples. The petroglyphs are ochre red, mostly silhouette flat (Fig. 6-10).The Ma Li Po petroglyphs are divided into one district and two districts, and there are more than 10 squatting humanoid petroglyphs, of which the squatting humanoid figures in the Dawangya petroglyphs are the most famous. In the petroglyphs, two crouching humanoid figures with masks are 3 meters tall (Fig. 7).The rock paintings of Yanla Mountain, not far from Mali Slope, are painted in a rock house, 1.3 meters above the ground. In the 2003 survey data, there were 20 images that could be seen, including 13 figures, all of which were crouched. In the first set of petroglyphs, the three figures are relatively stout, and some have an object in front of them, resembling male genitalia (Fig. 7).



**Fig. 7. Petroglyphs of District 1**



**Fig. 8. Rock paintings of Yanlashan Mountain**

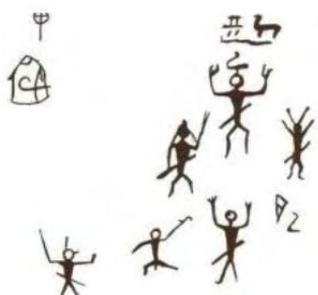
In the stone forest petroglyphs of the Nanpan River Basin, the squatting figure has ornaments on its head, holds a weapon in its hand, and has bent legs (Fig. 11). In addition, the Nongka petroglyphs and the Pingshan petroglyphs in the Quang Nam petroglyphs also have some crouching images, mostly accompanied by the sun and horses (Fig. 12). In addition, the Puge rock paintings in Qiubei County in this area also need to be paid attention to.



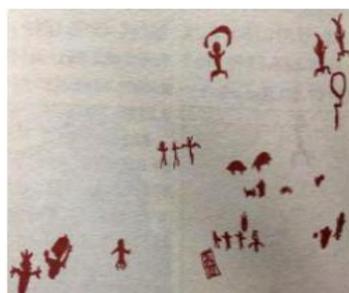
**Fig. 9. Petroglyphs of District 2**



**Fig. 10. Petroglyphs of Yuanjiang Tak**



**Fig. 11. Stone Forest Petroglyph**



**Fig. 12. Pingshan Petroglyph District 2**

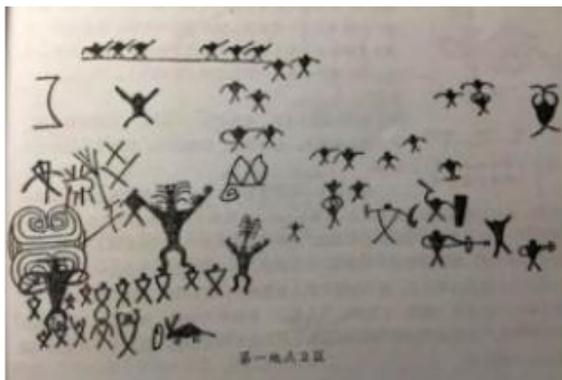
There are many rock art symbols in the Lancang River Basin, and the scene is relatively large (Fig. 13-15). The crouching human figure in the first site of the Cangyuan petroglyphs in District 2 is the most eye-catching (Fig. 13). In this picture, in addition to a symbol similar to the Puge rock painting in Qiubei County in front of it, among the many figures in the whole picture, the crouching figures are particularly prominent, they are not only large, but also richly decorated, and occupy a central position in the picture. Although the figure in the Gengma County Great Radiant Rock Painting is not obvious, the outwardly flipped legs are very attractive (Fig 14).



**Fig. 13. Cangyuan Petroglyph Sixth Point 6 District 6**



**Fig. 14. Cangyuan Petroglyph Fifth Point 5 District**



**Fig. 15. Cangyuan Petroglyph First Point 2 Area**

Guangdong petroglyphs are mainly found on Gaolan Island in the west of Zhuhai. Located 48 kilometers from Downtown Zhuhai, Gaolan Island is the main island of the Gaolan Archipelago, the main peak of Guanyin Mountain is 418 meters high, and there is another mountain pass between the Windy Eagle Mountain, the guide of the mountain pass is Nanyi Bay, Baojing Bay is a small bay in Nanqi Bay, named after a stone in the bay carved with a circular "Treasure Mirror" (Fig 16). Connected to Baojing Bay is the slopes of Windy Eagle Mountain, where petroglyphs are distributed on the beach and hillsides. So far, 7 petroglyphs have been found in 5 places. The crouching human figures in the petroglyphs here are distributed on the treasure cave stone carvings in Baojing Bay, Gaolan Island, Zhuhai.



**Fig. 16. Rock paintings of Baojing Bay in Zhuhai**

Located on the mountainside, the treasure cave is formed by the collapse of a huge granite rock, and the crack covers three large stones, forming a rock

building. Treasure Cave Rock paintings are the most wonderful part of Guangdong rock paintings, it is the east and west walls, crouched humanoid rock paintings are mainly distributed on the east wall of the treasure cave.

In the upper right of the petroglyph on the east wall there is a dancing crouching figure (Fig. 17), At 48.5 cm in height, it looks like a naked male body, with elbows bent at the waist, hands turned outwards, and a square, flat top, and a curved line on the top of the head. At the center of the east wall petroglyphs, the crouching figure is 53 cm high and 10–37 cm wide. Its feet are skimmed outward, its head is turned to the left, its left hand is whip-like and thrown over the top of its head, and its right hand is curved outward. Its left toe is connected to a pointed fork. The whole body is full of strength, rigidity and rhythm. There is a "T" shaped mark under the crotch of the character. The waist is depicted slender and lean (Fig. 18). The center and highest part of the petroglyph of the treasure cave are two boats stacked on top of each other, and on the central axis of the ship is carved a human figure wearing a feather crown and has no outline, known as the "Boat of the King", and there is a silhouette-less human face on the right side of the bow, and there are several round holes on the crown ornament. Below these two boats is a group of squatting humanoid dancers, and under the dancers' feet is a group of boats with elaborate patterns (Fig. 19).



Fig. 17. Male Witch



Fig. 18. Witch



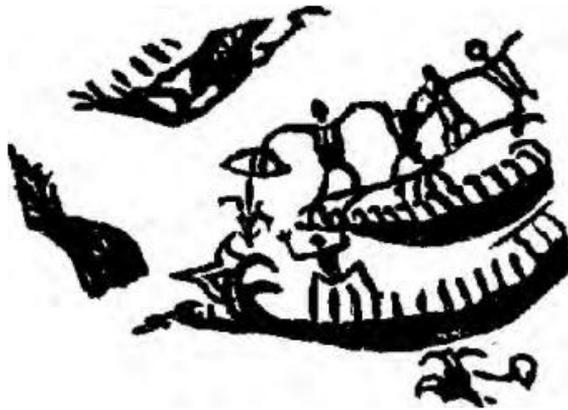
Fig. 19. Dancer

#### **4. SQUATTING HUMANOID ROCK PAINTINGS IN TODAY'S AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGE GROUP DISTRIBUTION AREA**

In the study of the Austronesian language origin, scholars generally believe that Taiwan should be one of the earliest origins of the Austronesian language. The squat humanoid is the main content of the rock paintings of Guba Chae, one of the three rock paintings of Wanshan rock carvings in Taiwan. The Wanshan rock carvings in Taiwan are distributed in the original forest near Wantulan Mountain, Maolin Township, Kaohsiung County. The carrier of the rock carvings is a gentle slope near the water source relying on the cliff wall. Rock carving is cut out method. The companion symbol of squat human shape someone head, heavy round grain, circular vortex lines, symmetrical inverted curve lines, serpentine,

curves, pits and dense concave lines and concave points, like the body with chisel lines, is considered to be maternal or bisexual.

Rock paintings with the squat human shape are also an important part of the rock paintings in Southeast Asia. The Philippine petroglyphs are in the Ancola Cave discoverable. There is only one picture in the recording material, with no more instructions, so we can only see the outer outline of the squat human shape, which is not very clear about the symbol combination form with it and the specific painting method and age. However, we can see that the rock paintings mainly show an inverted ladder squat human figure with an expressive style, accompanied by symbolic reproductive symbols. The Malaysian rock paintings are painted out. Fuzzy red Neolithic paintings were found in a rocky mountain cave named Nia, consisting of people squatting on the boat with their hands high or with their hands held up, known as the "Boat of the Soul" (Fig. 20). The cave rock paintings in Indonesia underwent a long journey from the Paleolithic to the metal Age. Squat humanoid style is diverse, both the patterned animal shape, and the main drawing and line combination of expressive style of ancestral idol, companion symbols are hand shape, foot shape, eyes, vulva, birds, lizards, sun, boat, etc.



**Fig. 20. Malaysian rock paintings**

There are squat-shaped petroglyphs in the Pacific Hawaiian Islands, Marxas and New Guinea, with the most in Polynesia. Hawaii is called "Painting Island" by artists because it is the most densely distributed area of petroglyphs in the Oceania region. Almost all of the sites of lithography are close to the coast. The layout and composition technique of squat humanoid rock paintings here is similar to that of South China. Circle cles are the main symbols. In addition, there are many pictures accompanied by people and dogs in Hawaiian rock paintings. In the Marxas Islands, at the eastern end of Polynesia, there are rich Neolithic sites, with some stone and painted figures in addition to the original art figures. The characters legs, sometimes a dog around, the lines are simple and frank (Fig. 21).



**Fig. 21. Hawaii Rock Painting**

It can be seen from the picture layout and expression characteristics of squat human rock paintings in the distribution area, Guangxi\Yunnan, Fujian and Sichuan in South China are the concentrated distribution areas of squat human rock paintings. They show cultural consistency in the painting style, but the production method of Fujian rock paintings shows differences from the other three places. Nowadays, the squatting humanoid rock paintings in the Austronesian language distribution area are relatively scattered and not as large as those in South China, but they have a strong formal similarity with the rock paintings in South China, especially the accompanying symbols near the squatting humanoid rock paintings are many the same. South China is thousands of miles away from the Pacific islands, and they all have similar squat human-shaped rock paintings and companion symbols. In reality, the distribution or distribution of squat rock paintings implicitly or entirely is related to the origin and diffusion of Austronesian language.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

According to the research in linguistics, archaeology and genetics, the ancestors of the Dongtai-Austronesian people were Neolithic residents living in the southeastern part of the Asian continent. "Mediterranean cultural circle" built a huge indigenous cultural community system before other foreign cultures were transplanted one after another. ②About 5000-6000 years ago, it began to migrate and spread out. In the long and complicated historical evolution of East Asia, the farmers who stayed in the southern part of China, part of them were influenced by the Central Plains culture in East Asia and merged with the Han Chinese who migrated south for a long time, forming the southern Han people and the southern Chinese. There are still a number of southern Chinese at the bottom of the southern Chinese. The island language is the "lower level"; the other part has gradually evolved into the current Dong-Taiwan population. Due to the long-term influence of the surrounding monosyllable and tonal languages, the Dong-Taiwan language has undergone a "language type conversion" ③. Those

who left South China: 1) One group migrated eastward to Taiwan. After arriving in Taiwan, it evolved and developed independently on the island, and then went south through the Philippines to eastern Indonesia and produced the early Lapita culture, and then it was as fast as "Express-Train". It spread to Oceania and became the early ancestors of the Polynesian population; 2) The westward group moved south through the Indochina Peninsula and Southeast Asia Island Corridor, and migrated to eastern Indonesia. Around 2,300 years ago, the Austronesian people from East Asia gradually began to contact and communicate with the Papuan-speaking people of New Guinea, and then spread and migrated to Polynesia. And this article further confirms the conclusion that "Zhuang Dong-Austronesian group" is a community by exploring the unique cultural perspective of squatting humanoid rock paintings.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## REFERENCES

- Bellwood, Peter. 2009. Formosan prehistory and Austronesian dispersal. In *Austronesian Taiwan: Linguistics, history, ethnology, prehistory*, ed. David Blundell, Rev. ed., 336–364. Berkeley, CA: Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology.
- Blust R., 1999 "Subgrouping ,circularity and extinction: Some issues in Austronesian comparative linguistics,"In Elizabeth Zeitoun and Paul Jen-kuei Li, eds, *Selected Papers from the 8th International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics, Symposium Series of the Institute of Linguistics (Preparatory Office),Taipei: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica*, pp. 31–94.
- Chang, K. C. & Goodenough, W.H.. 1996. Archaeology of southeastern China and its bearing on the Austronesian homeland. In Goodenough, W. H. (ed.)
- Deng Xiaohua, Wang Shiyuan. *The Mathematical Classification and Time Depth of Zhuang and Dong Languages*[J]. *Chinese Language*, 2007(6) .
- Deng Xiaohua, Wang Shiyuan.*Mathematical Classification and Time Depth of Zhuang and Dong Languages*[J].*Chinese Language*,2007(06)
- Edited by Deng Qiyao. *Yunnan rock painting art* [M]. Kunming: Yunnan Fine Arts Publishing House. 2004.
- Edited by Li Kunsheng. *Wenshan Rock Paintings* [M]. Kunming: Yunnan People's Publishing House. 2005.
- Kirch, Patrick V.. 2000 "On the Road of the Winds: An Archaeological History of the Pacific Islands before European Contact." Berkeley; University of California Press.
- Prehistoric Settlement of the Pacific: 28–35. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society.
- Rong Guanqiong. *Research on the Early History of the Li Nationality* [C]. The Eighth Series of Ethnic Studies in Guangdong, Guangzhou: Guangdong People's Publishing House, 1995.

- Shi Zhongjian. On the relationship between rock murals in Guangxi and petroglyphs in Fujian [J]. Academic Forum, 1978(1).
- Su Wenqing. Viewing the relationship between Taiwan and Fujian from the perspective of Austronesian languages [J]. Journal of Fujian Institute of Socialism, 2012(4).
- Wang Zhenyong, Lin Weiwen, Fan Wanchun. Investigation Notes on the Stone Carvings of Xianzitan in Huaan, Fujian[J]. Southeast Culture, 1991(06):185-189.
- Xiao Yiting. Religion and Art Reflected in Rock Paintings along the South China Sea [A]. Edited by Nanjing Museum. Nanjing Museum Collection 13[C]. Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 2013.
- Yang, Melinda A et al. 2020 "Ancient DNA indicates human population shifts and admixture in northern and southern China." Science 369: 282-288. doi:10.1126/science.aba0909
- Zhang Guangzhi (K.C. Chang). The Taiwan Strait in the Neolithic Age[J]. Archeology, 1989(06).

# **Oedipus Complex in Traditional China: A Comparative Study towards Myths and Kinship**

**Gao Han** <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH3

---

## **ABSTRACT**

This article gives a general introduction towards the paradigm of psycho-analysis dealing with Oedipus complex, which thereafter was challenged for its western-centered prejudices by anthropologists with their observations in remote Archipelago societies. Among these, Malinowski's study about the nuclear complex in Trobriand Islands is the pioneering work. This article follows the conclusion given in the Malinowski's masterpiece, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, that different social environment and patterns of family organization create different forms of nuclear complex. On the one hand, by generalizing the peculiar characteristics of Chinese familial structure and kinship system mainly demonstrated by Fei Xiaotong, this article makes an attempt on a preliminary analysis towards narrative texts of folklores collected from Chinese Han society to see if there exists the same Oedipus complex with its repression in kinship and expression in myths or not. This article is, on the other hand, a comparative study about forms of patriarchal family between Chinese Han and Western society, aiming at extending the comparative framework between savage society and western modern society, as Malinowski has set up, to an eastern imperial society, China.

*Keywords:* Oedipus complex; Chinese Han society; myths; kinship; Malinowski; fei xiaotong.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This essay aims to discuss whether there is Oedipus complex in traditional Chinese rural society. The writer's contemporary conclusion is negative. This discussion starts with the introduction to the background of Oedipus complex, through the description of Chinese myths and kinship, comes to an end via a brief conclusion with an open question left. The first component of this essay is going to introduce the main idea of the ancient Greek legend about the hero

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: hgaoah@foxmail.com;

Oedipus, followed by the concepts and contents of the Oedipus complex. It is named after the pathetic Ancient Greek mythological hero: Oedipus. Psychoanalysts developed the Oedipal theory by selecting the killing-old plots that happened in this hero's legend. Oedipal theory was inspiring for the academy to probe the psychological characteristics of children. This theory asserted that all male children in all human society would develop this complex during their childhood. This universalism was criticized by anthropologists in a perspective of cultural particularism. To some degree, this essay is articulated on particularism, too. The second component is going to discuss the Chinese folklore in a "Fairy Maiden and the Mortal" prototype. This concept was prompted by a Chinese intellectual, Qi Lingyun, who believes that this kind of myths shows the existence of Oedipus complex in Chinese society because the male leading is usually an orphan and marry a maiden with maternal quality. I only partially agree with Qi on the symbolic meaning of those fairy maidens as mothers but disagree with his judgment. One the one hand, I find it unconvincing that an orphan status can derive from [deduced] the fear of patriarchal authority; on the other hand, based on the demonstration of Chinese kinship and family structure proposed in the third component, I consider Oedipus complex lacks basic forming elements, which is the sexual attraction to the mother and strong suppression of the boy by the father, accordingly, the Oedipus complex has no materiality in traditional Chinese Han society.

## **2. BACKGROUND OF OEDIPAL THEORY**

Psychoanalysts considered that Oedipus Complex was common and deeply rooted in everyone, that even human society was formed by brothers killing their fathers and marrying their mothers (Malinowski, 1927). However, anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski disagreed with them and demonstrated that Trobriand Society have a different Matrilineal Complex (Malinowski, 1927). This part is going to go over this known debate. Before that, I will introduce who is Oedipus as well as what is the Complex named after him.

Oedipus was a famous character in an Ancient Greek tragedy. Laius, the father of Oedipus and king of Thebes, was cursed that his household was meant to die out and would not last long. Laius was married to Jocaste. They didn't have a child for a long time since they married. Thus, they asked for Delphi's Oracle about how they could have a posterity. Delphi's Oracle said, "if you had a son, he would kill his father and have incest with his mother." The King's couple were so scared that after Oedipus birth they decided to abandon him to death. They nailed up his feels and sent him to a herdsman. However, the herdsman saved little Oedipus out of mercy and gave him to King couple of Corinth City, and the latter became Oedipus's adoptive parents (Vernant, 2003).

Oedipus was brought up strong and outstanding, with rumors always around him, saying that he wasn't the King's real born son. Oedipus decided to question the Delphi's Oracle about the truth of these rumors. The Oracle did not answer to his question but only said that he would kill his father and have incest with his mother. After hearing this, Oedipus fled out of Corinth City for he was afraid that

the oracle would be realized on his beloved adoptive parents some day. From a prince he turned into a wanderer, and moved towards Thebes. At that time, Thebes was suffering from a severe epidemic, and King Laius went out of the city to ask Delphi for help. Laius came across Oedipus at a triple crossing-road without knowing each other. They fought for who had the priority to go through the intersection. Oedipus was stronger and killed them all. His father King Laius died because of him, but he did not know that.

After Oedipus arrived at Thebes, he defeated the monster Sphinx, so he was awarded to marry Queen Jocaste, and became the governor of city. He and Jocaste gave birth to two sons and two daughters. Then, a horrible epidemic struck Thebes but nobody knew why. Delphi's Oracle told them that this was due to the murderer of King Laius. Prophet Tiresias learned from his master Apollo about the truth of Oedipus's destiny, but he refused to reveal it. One of the retainers of King Laius knew who was the murderer, but he refused to tell, too. At this time, a person from Corinth City brought news that the King's couple was dead. Knowing that he was not responsible for the death of his "parents", Oedipus was in a great relief and lost faith in the Delphi's Oracle. However, the guest told him that the King's Couple of Corinth was not King Oedipus's birth parents, that Oedipus was brought in Corinth by a herdsman. Queen Jocaste finally realized that her husband and King was exactly the infant she gave birth to but abandoned. It was Oedipus who killed his father Laius, had children with his mother and wife Jocaste. After knowing this, Jocaste hung herself, and Oedipus blinded his own eyes, had to leave the Thebes homeless (Vernant, 2003).

That is the outline of Oedipus legend. The story features the potential anger and competition between the father and son: realizing that his son is going to kill him and take his throne once grown up, king Laius expels his son out of the city. On the other hand, the precondition of Oedipus coming back to the homeland and wearing the crown he deserved was killing his father and becoming a hero that defeats the epidemic that old king Laius was unable to handle.

Based on the killing-father plot in Oedipus's legend, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud demonstrated that killing-father takes place because sons want to compete with their fathers for their mothers (Ling, 2021). He believes that culture was formed when sons committed their killing father crimes and abhorred incest with the mother. They began to make rules forbidding incest, that is how culture began. Although suppressed by morals and laws, this psychological motivation still remains in unconsciousness, and was named as Oedipus complex (Malinowski, 1927). In modern society, the Oedipus complex is a triangular constellation involving a boy, his father, and his mother. The boy's sexual desire for the mother leads to hostility towards his father (and his siblings), because the boy wishes to monopolize the mother's love. Based on Freud's theory, Oedipus complex is merely a small portion of the boy's complicated constellation towards his parents. The boy's multidimensional affection contains not only the hostility towards the father, but also the reverence and love towards the father for his ability to afford the family and authorized charisma. Similarly, the boy is attracted

by the mother as well as feels hurt and annoyed when the mother refuses his superabundant affection. (Melford, 1982).

Malinowski argued that the Oedipus complex is not universal to all human societies but applies only to western society, where patrilineal Aryan family, Roman law and Christian morals, system of bourgeois are unique cultural factors (Malinowski, 1927, 20). On the other hand, Trobriand society is of matrilineal descent, where authority belongs to the mother's brother rather than the father, and intimate attachment are forbidden between brothers and sisters. For Trobriand children, their fathers are kind, helpful friends, thus there are less conflicts between Trobriand fathers and kids. Furthermore, Trobriand kids are usually weaned late, so they become independent naturally when they arrive the age. By contrast, western children are weaned at a very young age, leaving them strong desire for intimation with their mother. Most people's oedipal feelings fade out after childhood, only hide in an unconscious way. In addition, Trobriand children are allowed to have sexual activities with their playfellows, so that their sexual desires could be released. All in all, there is a totally different kind of complex in the Trobriands, named Matrilineal complex by Malinowski, that boys want to kill their maternal uncles and marry their sisters (Spiro 1982).

### **3. ANALYSIS OF CHINESE MYTHS**

According to psychoanalytic theory, male Oedipus complex is a common constellation experienced by boys before six years old. That love and hatred towards his mother and father respectively, leading to the motivation to kill the father and monopolize the mother's love. As his superego develops, the young boy realizes that this emotion is anti-social and inhibits it. If the inhibition fails that impulse would last to be diminished in the puberty. Although the psycho-characteristics are prohibited, they find their outlets in the relatively free-expressed literature and arts in a less evident way. Some prototype shows itself in some myths and fairy tales repeatedly, which gives information on collective unconsciousness of the people that create those myths and fairy tales (Qi, 2001).

There are universal stories in a "Fairy Maiden and the Mortal" prototype in China. The common prototype of these stories is like this: the male leading lost his father or parents at a very early age, having to live a miserable and diligent life. By accident, he comes across a fairy maiden and falls in love with her. After combination with the fairy maiden, his life gets improved. There are two types of ending of this prototype: one is to live a happy life forever, the other is that fairy maiden has to leave due to some external forces. There are the cowboy and the weaver girl, river-snail girl and Wangxiao, dragon girl and the woodcutter, one-hundred-bird clothes stories sharing this "Fairy Maiden and the Mortal" prototype (Qi, 2001). One of these stories is presented below.

There was a cowboy born in a poor rural family. His parents had died when he was a child. He made a living by herding cattle and was always abused by his brother and his wife with whom he lived. When it was the time for the household fortune to be distributed among the brothers, the cowboy's brother only gave him

an old cattle but took charge of the whole left. This old cattle was originally a god from heaven, he was resourceful and able to speak like humans. One day, there were a group of goddess taking the bath in a river near cowboy's house. The old cattle told cowboy to take away a piece of red clothes that belonged to the seventh goddess, Zhinv (the weaver girl). Zhinv was smart and pretty, who could make up the cloth in seven colors. Zhinv came out of the river with no clothing, so she had to turn to the cowboy for help. This way, they were married. They gave birth to a son and a daughter, living a happy life. Three years past, the old cattle was about to die. He told cowboy to skin him and use the skin to make a pair of boots, by which the cowboy could go up to the heaven. The cowboy did what he was told. Shortly after the old cattle's death, the queen goddess of the heaven, called "mother goddess", came down to the earth in person to take Zhinv away from her mortal husband and back to the heaven. Cowboy and Zhinv had to be separated reluctantly. Cowboy put on the boots made from skin of the old cattle, carried the shoulder hole with a pair of children in them and ran after the heaven soldiers. In the very second that he could catch them, the mother goddess turned her hairpin into a sky river, which lied between the cowboy and Zhinv. They stood at the different sides of the sky river, with their children crying and crying. Finally, their love moved mother goddess, so she gave them special permission to meet once a year in the seventh day of the seventh month in the lunar calendar (Wang, 2006).

The figure of Zhinv represents image of mothers in two ways: First, the cowboy used to be a lonely person living in a poor bungalow, no one cared about him, nor anyone cooked or weaved for him, all his accompany was just from an old cattle. After his acquaintance with Zhinv, his life has a thorough transformation that Zhinv cooks for him, turns the bungalow into a bigger tile-roofed house. Here, the fairy maiden represents for the fertile, abundant, warm and rich, just like mothers do. Secondly, there is a plot that children of the fairy maiden cry as well as looking for their mother after she left them. This is the prototype of seeking for mothers, which shows the desire and reliance for mother evidently, which is the classical symbolized love for mothers (Qi, 2001).

On the other hand, there are three factors in this Cowboy and Zhinv myth to consider. The cowboy lost his father when he was a child, the only patriarchal relative left is his elder brother, who lost connection with the cowboy after the household division, too. The absence of patriarchal authority let space for the happening of goddess- mortal marriage, especially succeeding by practicing tricks. This reflects that this kind of marriage is an exception for matched marriages in patrilineal society (Qi, 2001). Also, Zhinv disobeys the laws for goddess by marrying a mortal husband, thus she and her family are separated by the heaven power in the last. This plot conveys that violation to the marrying-mother taboo, just like the love between the immortals and the mortals, is bound to be punished by natural laws, which shows that in the myths there still exist the morals and ethics for marriages in real Chinese society. Furthermore, Zhinv only accompanies with Niulang for three years before leaving him forever, this shows a tragic destiny that fortune and warmth accepted from mothers are brilliant but short-living, just like a dream or fantasy. In conclusion, in those kind of "Fairy

Maiden and the Mortal” myths, “fairy maiden” represent for “mother”, the combination between mortals and fairy maidens partially reflects the unconscious Oedipus complex in traditional Chinese society. However, due to the fear towards patrilineal regulations, this kind of myths tends to weaken the functions of fathers by giving the male leading an orphan status.

#### **4. ANALYSIS OF CHINESE KINSHIP SYSTEM**

The myth above shows that the male leading potentially yearns for maternal love. But this love is essentially different from passion, especially sexual passion, for the mother in the oedipal theory. The Oedipus complex is articulated on the fact that the boy is attracted by the mother’s charisma so that he wants to develop sexual relation with her. He consequently develops jealousy to the father who is already intimately related with the mother. It is the impulse to monopolize the mother’s body and affection that leads to the boy’s hatred to the father and tendency to murder him. The boy’s hatred of the father is the result of the love for the mother, which is key to understanding Freud’s oedipal theory (Melford, 1982). Comparatively, there is no such causal logic in the “Fairy Maiden and the Mortal” myth analyzed above, nor does this myth reflect any plots that involve the boy hatred to or feeling of being suppressed by the father in a direct form. In summary, this “Fairy Maiden and the Mortal” prototype reflects a universal love for mothers in Chinese traditional family, but merely has a quite remote relation to the affection for the mother in the Oedipus complex. Therefore, it is not convincing to get a conclusion about whether Oedipus complex is applicable to Chinese traditional society based on the analysis of myths mentioned in part two. Still there is a need to analyze the family structure and parent-child relationship in Chinese Han society, and to make a comparison with western family where Oedipus complex is originally formed.

According to Fei Xiaotong, families in Chinese rural society and in western modern society are different in structure and internal relationship. The more appropriate name for Chinese family is rather as ‘small clan’ than merely a ‘family’ for two reasons: On the one hand, Chinese rural family remains united after the offspring grows up. Chinese parents would remain living with their grown-up son in the same house for decades. They help their son to marry a wife, to give birth to children so that they become grandparents. They keep living as a big family until they grow very old till death. On the other hand, small clan is a multi-functional organization, not only for the aim of reproduction and nurturing children, but also for economic reasons (Fei, 2021a). In the Jiang Village, where Fei Xiaotong conducted his fieldwork in southern China, people’s livelihood includes agriculture and household sericulture. The male labor from one family work together in their family-owned land, taking up over 70% of their household income; and the female labor work in their own house, taking up the left deficit. Each family is the basic unit for economic reproduction (Fei, 2021b). In the collective living mode, there are two main axes in Chinese rural family: one is father-to-son relationship, and the other is mother-in-law to daughter-in-law relationship. The two-axes form leads to those phenomena: First, women also have power in internal household affair. Second, family members are divided into

two parts: men and women. These two parts are separated in different working space without intimate communication. Couples get married for the aim of giving birth to children. Apart from this purpose, they are not encouraged to generate romantic passion towards each other because intensive emotions are threatening to the unity of clan. Usually, they are busy for the daily landing and weaving assignments respectively, for the livelihood of the small clan rather than their own property, most of the income they earn belongs to the small clan. Furthermore, the young couple do not have their private living space, they share with their parents and children (Fei, 2021b).

Their western counterpart has a different form of living mode. In western modern family, couple relationship is the main axis to form a family (Fei Xiaotong, 2021b). A man and a woman leave their original born families and combine out of sexual relations on the basis of romantic passion, confidence and responsibility. They give birth to their children and form their own nuclear family which has a clear boundary with the old family. When the children grow up and leave the family to form their new ones, the old family would depart to the initial couple relation. It is in western nuclear family that the triangle constellation between the boy, the mother and the father could develop.

In Chinese society, along the extending of two main axes between father and son, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, the newly-born grandson and granddaughter are taught to stay with the people who share the same gender. The question is, will the grandsons in the small clan involve with Oedipus complex? The boy fails to have a sexually monopolized tendency to his mother naturally, for after all such emotion is absent even in the adults. In addition, the grandchildren gain their membership either belonging to the male part or the female one through undertaking necessary economic assignments. For example, in the Jiang Village, the little boy learns to cut grass to feed the sheep, and the little girl learns to look after silkworm chrysalis. This results in the less contact based on physical intimacy between the mother and the son. Last but not least, grandchildren prefer to stay with their grandparents to enjoy the warm affection between people across two generations. Compared with the elderly people, young parents usually lack of experiences of nurturing children. They easily lose temper, perform strictly to children or they are too busy for the work, so that they seem less approachable for the children than their grandparents. In my opinion, there exists *insufficient* factors that leads to the formation of the young boy's sexual affection for the mother, correspondingly less possibility for him to form hostile complex to the father in Chinese traditional family.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

As we mentioned above, the boy's hatred of the father is generated by jealousy. Additionally, this hostility is also derived from the suppression to the boy by the father's authority. To make a comparison in Chinese and western society, in Han Chinese society the father's authority is either censored by the collective power, or interfered by the mother's brother's one. In classical Indo-European society in contrast, the authority and legal rights are monopolized in patriarchal fathers (Zhang, 2020). The mother's brother, apart from the boy's mother and father,

also plays an important role in the boy's life. The existence of maternal uncle's authority exists probably because he stands for the matrilineal clan which also has authority in local society, with the right to interfere in their offspring's determination, although in a less significant way than the offspring's patriarchal clan. Thus, Chinese boys are brought up by a number of mutually compromised subjects with relatively balanced authorities, including the father and the grandfather, the mother and the grandmother, as well as the mother's brother (the maternal uncle). The boy receives not only corrections and teaching from his relatives, but also their help and care. Overall, the boy would allocate his resistance among these subjects rather than concentrating on his father alone. Besides, he knows that all his life he would need help from his father and other relatives, such as the fees for marriage and the land for reproduction, thus his occasional intense hostility would be offset by sustained gratefulness to the father.

In conclusion, two necessary factors that lead to the Oedipus complex—the sexual attraction to the mother and the father's suppression, are not found in Chinese family and kinship, and there is not a classical Oedipus complex in traditional Chinese family. Nevertheless, in Chinese rural society, there indeed exists a complex of love for the mother (only in a layer of symbolism). The image of mother represents the land, fertility, family, house and home, tightly connected with the agricultural mode of production of Han Chinese people. This affection for the image of the mother contributes to the composition of those "Fairy Maiden and the the Mortal" myths. To make a comparison, the mother in the oedipal theory is the image of Ancient goddess Aphrodite, while the mother in Chinese people's imagination is more like Nvwa.

There are two problems to be further considered. First, no matter the analysis of Chinese myths or those of Chinese family and kinship are both about collective mind, while Oedipus complex is originally from individual clinic cases and always used to analyze the psychological status of specific patients. Perhaps the absence of Oedipus complex from Chinese rural family is due to the fact that it is not appropriate to discuss the collective qualities of a nation through the lens of a theory for individuals. Second, the conclusion above is about traditional rural China, would it be different to study contemporary China in the process of modernization with the prominent family structure having transferred into the nuclear family?

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Fei Xiaotong. Peasant Life in China[M]. Beijing: Sanlian Bookstore, 2021b.  
Fei Xiaotong. Rural China, Reconstruction of Rural China[M]. Beijing: Sanlian Bookstore, 2021a.

***Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation***  
*Oedipus Complex in Traditional China: A Comparative Study towards Myths and Kinship*

- Jean-Pierre Vernant. Cao Shengchao, trans. *Zhongshenfeiyang: the Origins of Greek Gods*. Beijing: Zhongxin Publishing House. 2003.
- Ling Xinxia. From Cronos to Oedipus: Types of Politics of Killing-father Plots in Greek Myths. In *Anthropological Studies*, Vol. 14. Zhejiang University Press, 2021.
- Malinowski B. *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*. New York: Harcourt, Brace. 1927.
- Qi Lingyun. Fairy Archetype and Oedipus Psychology: A Criticism of the "Fairy - Ordinary" Archetypal Story. *Journal of Xiangtan University*, 2001(04):72-74.
- Spiro, M. E. 1982 *Oedipus in the Trobriands*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wang Di. The Myth of the Cowherd and the Girl Weaver and Its Evolution[J]. *Guizhou Literature and History Series*, 2006(01):25-30.
- Zhang Yahui. Two Theories of Community of Fei Xiaotong[J]. *Journal of Central Minzu University (Social Science)*, 2020, v.47, No.252(05):54-6.

---

© Copyright (2023): Author(s). The licensee is the publisher (B P International).

# Miao, Lineage and Community

Zhao Dandan <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH4

---

## ABSTRACT

*Miao*, that can be interpreted as *temple* in English, can be seen everywhere in China, particularly in Han habitations, which has existed for a long time to serve gods or ghosts that Chinese people worship. Furthermore, some identified as *culture heritage* are run by authorities, but more run by *lineage* (a group of people sharing one surname) or *community* (a flock of people living in a particular area) as well as individuals. What must be emphasized is, the *Miao* here is not only a place to demonstrate one's religion, but also an object created by humans as well as the object run by them as mentioned above, which means that there should be real relationships in it, for involving various aspects such as different persons or different things. And here we mainly pay attention to the relationships among the *Miao*, the *lineage* and the *community*. To be more specific, what we desire to explore is how Chinese people create *Miao* and how to run it? What roles the *Miao* play part in the real society rather in spiritual world? To discuss these questions, I will look for some cases from several researches or my own fieldwork, and more comparison will be necessary here.

*Keywords: Miao; temple; Chinese; lineage; community.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Miao* (庙) that can be interpreted as temple in English are very common in China today, except some with a certain long history are titled *culture heritage* and exactly run by authorities, the more of which usually dot around different towns or villages under control of local native civilians and are still on the increase. What will be focused on in this paper is the *Miao* that under control of civilians rather of authorities, and precisely referring to that in towns or villages.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH

On the whole, researches on *Miao* mainly consist of three parts: the first part is about the historical evolution of *Miao*, the second part hold *Miao* as a form of

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 1203864570@qq.com;

local organization, and the third part revolves the rebuilding of *Miao* in China nowadays.

### *Historical Evolution of Miao*

Ling Shuncheng, a senior Chinese ethnologist who collected and compared various ancient literature records, had found that *Miao* was originally a building with east and west wings and then become the construction only to hold ancestors' characterization of the nobility (Chunsheng Ling, 1959). That is, *Miao* was an physical object made by mankind at first but gradually got to be the mixed conception of life and status. Besides, Ling had studied the initial way of worshipping gods or ghosts, which was done outdoors by nearly all the people in which regarded as *holy place* with soil, grass, stones or trees, and in his opinion, the *holy place* was namely *She*(社) (Chunsheng Ling, 1964). David-Faure discussed the process of transferring of right to worship ancestors in *Miao* from the nobility to the ordinary people during Song and Ming dynasties (David-Faure, 2003). He attached great importance to the appearance and evolution of the particular constructions which were built by the common people living in Chu Chiang Delta to worship progenitor who settled here first or four or five generations before and were once named Zongci (lineage hall), Jiamiao (family temple) or Citang, but are usually called Citang nowadays. In addition, Zheng Zhenman and Chen Chunsheng both showed that *She* had been gradually substituted with *Miao* in Ming and Qing dynasties, to be more exactly, the place outdoors where worship gods or ghosts had been covered and sealed with roofs and walls, and the stones or trees etc. had been replaced with characterizations (Zhenman Zheng, 1995; Chunsheng Chen, 1999). With time going on, *Miao* hasn't been the place where worship ancestors of one's own any more but the place only to serve gods or ghosts belonging to the public.

### *Nature of Miao: A Form of Local Organization*

Generally speaking, it seems very common to study on *Miao* as well as community in academics. And *Miao* here are always the place to worship gods or ghosts only. Okada, a Japanese sociologist, put forward a conception *religious sphere* to describe the territory containing a group of people who worshipping same gods or ghosts in one temple in rural area in North Taiwan, and to which another scholar as well as a Taiwanese Lin Meirong paid attention and made the *religious sphere* as a main topic in her study. Through carrying out more fieldwork, she stressed that there were various types of *religious sphere* in Han Taiwanese society rather than the one that only associated with village temples as Okada and other Taiwanese scholars had talked about, and the *religious sphere* is essentially a *local organization* that consisting of people with communal temples as well as communal worship like participating in one ritual maybe without a specific temple (Meirong, Lin, 1987). Moreover, Zheng Zhenman, a historical anthropologist in mainland China, added that "the *local organization* that consisting of people with communal temples as well as communal worship" was also lineage at very first and then amounted to community. He also pointed out that the formation of *local organization* was actually influenced by authorities

rather than completely autonomous historically (Zhenman, Zheng, 1995). Chen Chunsheng gave more details to demonstrate that the historical progress and scenes and even social psychology should be taken into consideration when talked about the layout of village temples (Chunsheng, Chen, 1999). It's very clear that Lin inclined to synchronic research while Zheng and Chen emphasized diachronic perspective, but there exists one latent consensus among them that is temples run by civilians have close relations not only with religion groups but also with lineages or clans as well as communities that all can be regarded as local organizations, and the temples are always seen as forms of the local organizations, actually. In recent years, some scholars analyses the relations between *Miao* and settlement (Zhonghuai, Huang, 2006; Penghui, Wang, 2014), but many scholars focus on the functions of *Miao* in society: Zhou Daming thought *Miao* is not only able to integrate people but also differentiate people (Daming, Zhou, 2014), and Long Sheng considered that *Miao* is not only a religion spot but an office where is empowered to deal with affairs in real village life (Sheng, Long, 2020).

#### *Process of Building of Miao at Present*

Except ancient temples built in the past, that *Miao* built at present are coming into scholars' sights. Liu Dongxu compared two ways of building of *Miao* in rural Guizhou a province in Southwest China, and found which the group of witches instead of lineages or communities play a significant role in. Not only that but more new temples (*Miao*) are built by them to expand the range of their effects (Dongxu, Liu, 2015). Liang Yongjia explained that the rebuilding of temples (*Miao*) in rural areas now reflects what community villagers think it is. *Miao* here can be seen as a *gift* defined as Mauss Marcel, and by which different parts such as a village and another could be made a whole concretely (Yongjia, Liang, 2018). What should be pointed out is that some village temples that are being built today are always in the name of the past, but others are brand new. And the researches on *Miao* that are being built are mainly about the meticulous process as well as those persons who involve themselves in.

### **3. TWO LINEAGES AND THREE TEMPLES IN ONE VILLAGE: A CASE FROM NORTH CHINA PLAIN VILLAGE**

Wenliu is a village in Puyang county, Henan Province, locating in the central North China Plain. Seat of township government and a marketplace is near here. Oil field and rural industrial park bring villagers more chances to develop themselves, but occupy more resources and in turn restrict the village. Family farming, land-renting, part-time working or commodity trading are the main mode of production or livelihood here. The population of Wenliu is approximately 2800 in 2018, and there are nearly 800 families here until then. Zhang ( 张 ) and Ren ( 任 ) are the most popular surnames in this village, and the number of them is in largest portion of population as well. They all claim that their ancestors had

settled here since Ming dynasty. Others are Guo(郭), Mao(毛), Liu(刘), Li(李) etc, they settle here due to marriage or matrilineal residence.

The village is long from north to south, wide from east to west, and there had little space to expand itself in east-west direction other than that in south-north direction. But the village has only extended itself towards north. An oral legend is just like a local rule obeyed by natives to impact the spatial arrangements. That is, there is Jia's graveyard in south village, none facilities could be built there since ancient years. And their settlements are arranged orderly according to three blocks divided by themselves, the east and west blocks for Zhang and the north block for Ren, and the blocks are not only their locations but also their identities, for they always distinguish themselves by the blocks. And Zhang's houses are usually alongside the main roads while Ren's houses and others are located behind them.

Here are three village temples in Wenliu, one is called *Sanhuang Miao* (The Three Sovereigns) , another is named *Guanye Miao* (Kuan), and the last *Nainai Miao*, they are situated respectively in north block, east block and west block.

#### *The Oral Legend and Spatial Arrangement*

Wenliu is described as a settlement appearing in Ming Dynasty by natives. They share one oral legend to explain themselves, that is: there was a dignitary in Ming dynasty whose name was Jiayong, he had a steward whose name was Wenliu. Wenliu was in charge of guarding Jia's ancestors' tombs. Due to Wenliu's kind-hearted to the poor, many people came here to make a living and then settled down, and thus the place once a cemetery became a village. In memory of him, the village was named Wenliu. As the saying goes: there were Jia's graves before people of Wenliu. And a local custom of not occupying the space outside the south village was formed gradually by local people, for there was just the site of Jia's graves in their opinion. Additionally, in local chronicle<sup>[1]</sup> and oral account of old natives, Wenliu was once a fortress with walls and ditches around, and houses all located inside while farmlands surrounded it, and there were three gates joining the interior and the outside world: the east gate, the west gate and the north gate. Although there had no south gate, people here are actively willing to talk to you why it was, actually involving Jia's legend and other superstitions. The point is what facts emerge from the narrative of legend rather than whether the legend itself is true or not. Accurately the narrative of legend reflects a *local rule* obeyed by local people to arrange their settlements. And the *local rule* plays a role not only in the past but also at present, for the village has been mainly expanding eastward, westward and particularly northward instead of southward. Except three new villages had been independently established through the structural subdivision<sup>[2]</sup> with the increase in population, which were all located to the east of Wenliu, and three blocks as

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Chen Zhaolin. 1881. *Kaizhou Chronicle*. Cheng Wen Publishing Co., Ltd.

<sup>[2]</sup> Huang Zhonghuai. 2005. *The Subdivision and Concentration of Villages in Huabei Plain in the Ming and Qing Dynasties*. *Studies in Qing History* 2: 21-31.

well has formed to compose Wenliu itself, that is, *eastern block*, *western block* and *northern block*. But what needed more attention is that when people mention each other in Wenliu, they get accustomed to stating which blocks someone belongs to. It shows that the *eastern block*, *western block* and *northern block* are not only the names of their settlements but also the designations of their identities, for they almost displace surnames such as Zhang and Ren to be the demarcation drawn by the natives.

#### *Two Lineages and Three Blocks: A Special Compound Village*

What's more, the local pedigree is another way to explain themselves. Zhang and Ren both compiled their pedigrees many times, Ren even set up a stone monument inscribing their clansmen. According to their record and narrative, they both trace back to the ancestor who migrated to Wenliu at first. And just as other villagers living in North China Plain<sup>[3]</sup>, Zhang and Ren both declare their immigrant ancestor moved out of Hongtong in Ming dynasty, Hongtong is an area more than 400 kilometers far away from Wenliu to the west, and then straightly moved into Wenliu. Of course, the local pedigrees couldn't be used as exact historical data<sup>[4]</sup>, and obviously the information in their pedigrees is still vague and even paradoxical, but through these records it's not difficult to infer that Zhang and Ren ought to have been living in the same land for a long time. In other words, Wenliu has been a *compound* village with more than one big lineage from the very beginning until now, which is different from most Han habitations in rural area that consist of only one big lineage, and whose surname is usually used to call the habitation. But it's clear that the village name Wenliu is from an communal legend rather than surname of neither Zhang nor Ren. As for the true relations between Zhang and Ren, more materials should be gathered so as to describe accurately.

As mentioned in the first paragraph, *Sanhuang Miao*, *Guanye Miao* and *Nainai Miao* are prime village temples in Wenliu. *Sanhuang Miao* located in north village was constructed by Ren, while *Guanye Miao* and *Nainai Miao* distributed in east and west were both built by Zhang. Clearly, the village temples have close relations not only with lineages but also with communities, for they were actually built by three different blocks more than two lineages, although it couldn't be denied that all these actions fundamentally depended on their clansmen. Overall, there are three village temples, three blocks and two lineages in one village, all these factors are really typical in China, and they have been interacting with each other in one space steadily. Indeed, it's the interaction among them that make the village a society. And all these are worth more discussion. The following are more details about them.

---

<sup>[3]</sup> Zhao Shiyu. 2006. *Ancestral Memory, Homeland Symbol, and Ethnic Group History :Interpreting the Migrant Legend of the Big Pagoda Tree in Hongtong, Shanxi*. *Historical Research* 1:49-64.

<sup>[4]</sup> Liu Zhiwei. 2012. *Records of Ancient Lineage in Pedigree during Ming and Qing Dynasties*. *Academic Research* 1: 90-97.

### *Constructions or Celebrations of Three Village Temples*

In China, policies must be taken into consideration whenever talk about village temples, due to that policies can straightly impact the existence or nonexistence of village temples on the basis of political ideology. All Chinese temples had been viewed as cancer of feudalism and curbed by authorities for a long time, until later 20th century and early 21st century some destruction of village temples still could be seen in some area<sup>[5][6]</sup>. In recent years, with the whole development of China, authorities attach increasing importance to traditional culture, and traditional religion as a type of traditional culture to some extent also get opportunities to mushroom on account of the loose policies. That more and more temples have been built is the mirror.

The three village temples in Wenliu are all constructed in recent years under above circumstances. And the constructions of *Guanye Miao* and *Nainai Miao* are both commemorated by Zhang through setting up stone tablets. Just from the records of the two stone tablets, we can see that *Guanye Miao* was built in 2017, while *Nainai Miao* was built in 2011. As for another village temple *Sanhuang Miao* that regarded as the oldest temple by all villagers in Wenliu, was constructed no earlier than 1980's.

### *Individual Decision and Collective Action*

As the oldest temple in Wenliu, *Sanhuang Miao* has been run by three female managers successively. The first operator was also its founder. She was a believer and claimed to be chosen by gods to serve them and operate the temple, as some other temple founders in China<sup>[7]</sup>. In her period, *Sanhuang Miao* was a simple and crude shelter from rubble only to cover three concatenate idols. The second manager was also a believer and gave the same claim as her predecessor, so is the third manager, and they both expanded the temple, which was from a house out of bricks to three houses with two yards, and they renewed idols during their periods as well. It seems that the operation of *Sanhuang Miao* has been an individual business, for the ordinary affairs are handled by the manager and decisions are made on her own. But in reality, all managers would have failed to construct or run the village temple without the support of those who live in the same blocks or of the same surname, for both their money and their labor would be collected to betterment *Sanhuang Miao*, and even someone's homestead was yielded up to the temple.

Just from a red donation list posted upon the temple wall, it's easy to see that there are totally 94 pots of money amounting to 46100 yuan to hold religious

---

<sup>[5]</sup> Liu Chunjie. etc. 1998. *Declare War on God: On-the-Spot Report of Cleaning up Temples in Yuchi County, Henan Province*. *Zhong Guo Min Bing* 9: 28.

<sup>[6]</sup> Kong Zhaohui. etc. 2001. *Five Hundreds of Illegal Temples were Torn Down in Gaochun County, Jiangsu Province*. *Outlook Weekly* 32:31-32.

<sup>[7]</sup> Zheng Zhenman. 2010. *Meizhou Ancestral Mazu Temple and the Dragon Well Temple of Duwei: The Construction of the Cult of Mazu in the Xinghua Region. Taiwan, Ritual Theatre and Folklore* 167: 123-150.

celebration in *Sanhuang Miao* during a Chinese festival. Except 14 pots of money in total 8800 yuan are donated in the name of company, kindergarten or hospital, 80 pots of money are donated in the name of individual. Among these individual donations, 67 pots of them in total 32200 yuan are from Ren while the rest 13 pots of them amounting to 5100 yuan are from five other surnames like Zhang, Wang, An, Wu, Ma, Guo. Obviously, Ren as a lineage is the decisive power in running the business of *Sanhuang Miao*, while the temple manager is the only initiator.

#### *Negotiation and Sub-block Behavior*

In contrast to *Sanhuang Miao*, the construction of *Nainai Miao* or *Guanye Miao* was both an outcome of negotiation among different sponsors. As mentioned above, Zhang had set up two stone tablets to commemorate those who donated money to build the two village temples, for the contribution has been thought a considerable merit that not only deserve praise but also benefit their posterity, which can be seen clearly from the title of each stone tablet: *Juanzjianmiao* ( 捐资建庙 ), *Gongzeqianqiu* ( 功泽千秋 ). Except this, what should be paid more attention to is that here is a special list of sponsors apart from all donation members in each stone tablet, and both contain eight names. On the list of *Nainai Miao*, five sponsors' surname is Zhang and four of them are males, while three sponsors' surnames are Li or Tian and they are all females. On the list of *Guanye Miao*, three sponsors' surname is Zhang and two of them are males, while five sponsors' surnames are Li, Guo, Cui, Wang, and three of them are males. All these imply that the construction of either *Nainai Miao* or *Guanye Miao* was determined by collective consultation rather than individual decision.

Moreover, from the donation list of *Nainai Miao*, we can see that there are 94 pots of money collected to build the temple, which totally amount to 14030 yuan. Except the pot is donated in the name of local primary school, another 93 pots of money is donated in the name of individual. And among those individual donations, 68 pots of them in total 10310 yuan are donated by Zhang, and 25 pots of them amounting to 3420 yuan are from other fourteen surnames such as Wang, Ma, Hua, Ren, An, Yang, Li, Tian, Wu, Zhao, Qing, Shang, Qi and Gao. Meanwhile, on the donation list of *Guanye Miao*, 199 pots of money in total 32430 yuan are collected to build the temple, and they are all donated in the name of individual. 144 pots of them are from Zhang while 55 pots of them are from other eleven surnames such as Li, Ren, Guo, Ji, Liu, An, Mao, Wang, Wu, Shi and Hu, and the former amounts to 21600 yuan while the latter 10830 yuan. It's clear that Zhang as a lineage is the most powerful force in operating *Nainai Miao* or *Guanye Miao*, but it should be noted that whether sponsors or donors of the two temples are completely different. Furthermore, sponsors and donors of *Nainai Miao* mostly live in west block, while those of *Guanye Miao* mainly live in east block. In other words, either *Nainai Miao* or *Guanye Miao* is actually in charge of one community that living in one area rather than a lineage that of same descent.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The case study of relations between temple and people in Wenliu brings us more space to talk about this point. In this case, either initial construction or subsequent operation of each temple mainly depends on the support of lineage, a group of people with the same ancestor. However, it's not the whole truth. The group of people with the same ancestor can divide themselves into different parts in terms of their locations once again, and as well differentiate themselves in obvious way like building temple, which can be seen from two donation lists of *Guanye Miao* and *Nainai Miao* where one donor's name could hardly appear twice. And the divisions can be called sub-lineage or sub-block, to be more precisely, named as community. In other words, *Guanye Miao* and *Nainai Miao* rely more on community than lineage, although they are all managed by Zhang. That's different from another temple *Sanhuang Miao* in Wenliu, which all counts on lineage Ren.

In contrast to this case, some scholars also find that some village temples in mainland China depend upon other external forces like merchants from Taiwan or overseas<sup>[8][9]</sup> instead of local lineage or community in recent years (Zheng Zhenman, 2010; Zhang & Lin, 2015; Yang & Wu, 2019). Their case temples are largely from the southeast coastal areas in Fujian or Guangdong of China, where are the pools of crowds, merchandises, capitals over the world, and home of oversea-Chinese. It means that temples in the region own more possibilities and spaces to be seen by more people or get involved by more forces. In these cases, local lineage or community exit instead. Comparing to this, Wenliu is a more relative static and simple village with less interactions among people or things, like most areas in middle or western China. It means that less choices or less possibilities for people or other objects. Although several designations of additional collective forms like company even hospital could be seen from donation list of *Sanhuang Miao*, but it should be pointed out that nearly all the head of them are natives as well as members of Ren. Undoubtedly, it's local lineage or community that are still in charge of village temples here.

What's more, some temples in southeast China are managed as enterprises, and the profit is their ultimate and only goal (Yang & Wu, 2019). In order to make it come true, the temples will be improved again and again to cater to visitors' tastes. And competitions among temples appear. Some scholars have even explained this in religious economy model (Graeme Lang etc., 2005), a theory originally put forward by Stark etc. from researches on churches or sects in North America or Europe. But obviously it's much different from that in Wenliu. Actually, except the first day and fifteenth day in each lunar month, or three country fairs in March, June and September, the door of each temple in Wenliu is closed most of

---

<sup>[8]</sup> Zheng Zhenman. 2010. *Meizhou Ancestral Mazu Temple and the Dragon Well Temple of Duwei: The Construction of the Cult of Mazu in the Xinghua Region. Taiwan, Ritual Theatre and Folklore* 167: 123-150.

<sup>[9]</sup> Zhang Wenyu, Lin Weiping. 2015. *A Fairy-like Woman, Taiwanese Businessmen, and Temple Managers: A New Age Temple of Earth God in Xiamen. Taiwan, Journal of Archaeology and Anthropology* 82 : 27-60.

the time every year. No more visitors may be one reason, but the essential cause is that village temples here are neither run as enterprises nor regarded as enterprises, that is, profit is not its ultimate or only goal. In reality, they are more like charities, but where money or other items are collected usually due to persons' relations and generally used to expand the effect of people themselves like temple managers and lineages as well as communities in this village.

In a word, village temples here exist on the support of lineage or community, while the lineage or community make them a noticeable knot with practice on the temples.

### **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

### **REFERENCES**

- Ancestors Worship from late-Song Dynasty to mid-Ming Dynasty." *Journal of History and Anthropology* 1(2): 1-20.
- Chen Chunsheng. Belief Space and the Evolution of Community History——Taking Zhanglin Temple System as an Example[J]. *Qing History Studies*, 1999 (02).
- Chen Zhaolin. 1881. *Kaizhou Chronicle*. Cheng Wen Publishing Co., Ltd. (Qing) Compiled by Chen Zhaolin. *Kaizhou Zhi*[O]. Issued in the seventh year of Guangxu, published by Chengwen Publishing House Co., Ltd.
- Chen, Chunsheng. 1999. "The Evolution of Space of Belief and History of Community: A Case Study of System of Temple from Zhanglin." *Journal of Qing*
- David Ke. Ancestral halls and family temples: the evolution of clan etiquette from the end of the Song Dynasty to the middle of the Ming Dynasty[J]. *Journal of Historical Anthropology*, 2003 (02).
- Dynasties. *Academic Research* 1: 90-97.
- Faure, David. 2003. "Ancestral Hall and Family Temple: The Evolution of Rites of
- Graeme Lang, Selina Ching Chan, Lars Ragvald. 2005. *Temples and the Religious Economy. State, Market, and Religions in Chinese Societies. Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 1(1): 1-27.
- History* 2: 1-13.
- Huang Zhonghuai. 2005. The Subdivision and Concentration of Villages in Huabei Plain in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. *Studies in Qing History* 2: 21-31.
- Huang Zhonghuai. Fission, differentiation and densification process of villages in North China Plain in Ming and Qing Dynasties[J]. *Qing History Research* 2005(02).
- Huang Zhonghuai. Temples and the development of village communities in the Ming and Qing Dynasties in the North China Plain[C]. *Historical Geography*, 2006 (21).
- Huang, Zhonghuai. 2006. "Temples and Development of Rural Community in Ming and Qing Dynasties in North China Plain ." *Historical Geography* 21: 194-208.
- Institute of Ethnology of Academia Sinica in Taiwan* 7:141-184.

- Kong Zhaohui et al. More than 500 illegal temples were demolished in Gaochun, Jiangsu[N]. Outlook Weekly, 2001(32).
- Kong Zhaohui. etc. 2001. Five Hundreds of Illegal Temples were Torn Down in Gaochun County, Jiangsu Province. Outlook Weekly 32:31-32.
- Liang Yongjia. Temple Reconstruction and Community Morality—A Case Study of Spatial Differences in Dali Z Village[J]. Sociological Research, 2018(03).
- Liang, Yongjia. 2018. Temple Rebuilding and Communal Morality: Spatial Difference in the Z Village of Dali. Sociological Study 33(03): 92-114.
- Lin Meimei. The Local Organization of Caotun Town as Seen from the Worship Circle[C]. Journal of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1987(62).
- Lin, Meirong. 1987. The Religious Sphere as a Form of Local Organization: A Case Study from Tsaotun Township. Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology of Academia Sinica in Taiwan 62: 53-114.
- Ling Chunsheng. The Origin of Ancient Chinese Society[C]. Journal of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1964(17).
- Ling Chunsheng. The origin of Chinese ancestral temples[C]. Journal of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1959(07).
- Ling, Shunsheng. 1959. "Origin of the Ancestral Temple in China." Bulletin of the Ling, Shunsheng. 1964. "Origin of the She in Ancient China." Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology of Academia Sinica in Taiwan 17: 1-44.
- Liu Chunjie et al. Declare war on "God" and report on the management of 397 temples by more than ten thousand militiamen in Weishi County, Henan Province [N]. Chinese Militia 1998 (9).
- Liu Chunjie. etc. 1998. Declare War on God: On-the-Spot Report of Cleaning up Liu Dongxu. Folk Power and Rural Temple Reconstruction—Based on the Study of Two Temples in Northern Guizhou[J]. World Religious Culture, 2015(02).
- Liu Zhiwei. 2012. Records of Ancient Lineage in Pedigree during Ming and Qing Liu Zhiwei. The distant lineage in the genealogy of Ming and Qing Dynasties[J]. Academic Research, 2012 (01).
- Liu, Dongxu. 2015. Civilian Strength and Rebuilding of Village Temples: Two Cases from North Guizhou. The World Religious Cultures 2: 91-96.
- Long Sheng. Village Temple Organization, Village Governance Practice and Village Endogenous Order in Mianning in Qing Dynasty[J]. Folklore Research, 2020(05).
- Long, Sheng. 2020. Rural Temple Organization, Rural Governance Practice and Endogenous Order of Villages in Mianning in the Qing Dynasty. Folklore Studies 5: 42-54.
- Society from the Perspective of Boundary: Field Investigation of Sanhuangmiao in Wenliu Village of Puyang County. Dissertation from Lanzhou University.
- Temple Managers: A New Age Temple of Earth God in Xiamen. Taiwan, Journal of Archeology and Anthropology 82 : 27-60.
- Temples in Yuchi County, Henan Province. Zhong Guo Min Bing 9: 28. University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition) 46(03): 33-45.
- Wang Penghui. Temples and Folk Beliefs in Qitai County, Xinjiang from the Qing Dynasty to the Early Republic of China[J]. Journal of Yunnan Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 2014(03).

- Wang, Penghui. 2014. Temples and Folk Belief: A Case Study from QiTai County in XinJiang from Qing Dynasty to Republic of China. *Journal of Yunnan Normal*
- Yang Simin, Wu Chongqing. 2019. Temple Contracted Management, Magical Power Generation Dilemma and The Changes of Folk Religion Patterns: A Case Study of Xianniang- Longmu Temple in Beitou Village, Xinhui, Guangdong Province. *Folklore Studies* 5: 55-64.
- Yang Simin, Wu Chongqing. Temple contract management, plight of spiritual power production and changes in folk belief pattern—Guangzhou A case study of Xinhui Beitou Xianniang Temple [J]. *Folklore Research*, 2019 (05).
- Zhang Wenyu, Lin Weipin. Fairy Girls, Taiwanese Businessmen and Temple Managers: Xiamen Tudigong Temple in the New Era[J]. *Journal of Archeology*, 2015(82).
- Zhang Wenyu, Lin Weiping. 2015. A Fairy-like Woman, Taiwanese Businessmen, and
- Zhao Dandan. 2019. Spatial Interaction and Interpersonal Communication in Rural
- Zhao Dandan. Spatial Interaction and Interpersonal Communication in Rural Society from the Perspective of Boundary: About the Three Emperors of Wenliu Collection in Puyang County Fieldwork[D]. Master's Dissertation. Lanzhou: Lanzhou University, 2019.
- Zhao Shiyu. 2006. Ancestral Memory, Homeland Symbol, and Ethnic Group History: Interpreting the Migrant Legend of the Big Pagoda Tree in Hongtong, Shanxi. *Historical Research* 1:49-64.
- Zhao Shiyu. Ancestral Memory Homeland Symbols and Ethnic Group History: An Analysis of the Legend of the Big Sophora Tree in Hongdong, Shanxi[J]. *Historical Research* 2 (01).
- Zheng Zhenman. 2010. Meizhou Ancestral Mazu Temple and the Dragon Well Temple of Duwei: The Construction of the Cult of Mazu in the Xinghua Region. *Taiwan, Ritual Theater and Folklore* 167:123-150.
- Zheng Zhenman. Meizhou Ancestral Temple and Duwei Longjing Palace: The Construction of Folk Mazu Worship in Xinghua[J]. *Taiwan: Folk Arts*, 2010(167).
- Zheng Zhenman. Temple Rituals and Community Development Model—An Example of Putian Jiangkou Plain[J]. *Shi Lin*, 1995(01): P33-47.
- Zheng, Zhenman. 1995. "Ceremony in Temple and Model of Development of Community: A Case Study from the Estuary Plain in Putian." *Historical Review* 1:33-47.
- Zhou Daming. The combination of temples and society and the integration of Chinese rural society[J]. *Journal of Guizhou University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2014(06).
- Zhou, Daming. 2014. Combination of Temple and Clan and the Integration of China's Rural Society. *Journal of Guizhou Minzu University (Philosophy and Social Science)* 6: 19-25.

# An Anthropological Study of “Ethnic Culture into School”: Case Study from Longchuan County Ethnic Primary School

Li Kaiping <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH5

---

## ABSTRACT

This paper mainly focuses on the “subject” of “ethnic culture into school” from a cultural anthropology perspective, through fieldwork methods such as participant observation and interview. This paper examines how these subjects that have been “silent” in the mainstream research structure for a long time have constructed the social action structure of “ethnic culture into school” based on their respective action logic.

Based on the fieldwork at the Longchuan Ethnic Primary School, this paper shows that the main subjects/actors of “ethnic culture into school” mainly include principals, teachers, students, government management departments, social organizations, students’ parents and the inheritors of intangible cultural heritage. The action objectives and means of these subjects are different, but due to the corresponding power relationship between them and the guidance and regulations of the same cultural situation and value norms, the conflict can be resolved and negotiation becomes possible. On this basis, they jointly build a social action structure of “ethnic culture into school”. This dynamic structure is constantly reproduced in the process of interactive practice with actors, and this academic level “structure process” is the internal practical logic of the long-term, dynamic and process of “ethnic culture into school”.

*Keywords: Anthropology; ethnic culture into school; practical logic; school education.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Ethnic culture into school” is a social phenomenon worthy of attention, and it is also an academic topic with research value. On the one hand, “ethnic culture into school” is an important way to inherit ethnic culture, on the other hand, it is also an important support for school education to balance mainstream culture and local ethnic culture. For a long time, the research on “ethnic culture into school”

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 2455439230@qq.com;

has been in the aspect of general experience material collection and discussion, mostly focus on the discussion of causes, contents and problems, which is carried out at the static level, ignoring the dynamic and procedural ontological meaning of "ethnic culture into school". On the basis of anthropological fieldwork, taking the Longchuan County Ethnic Primary School as an example, this paper clarifies the micro practical logic of "ethnic culture into school". This paper consists of four parts. The first part introduces the research background and research question; The second part introduces the subjects of "ethnic culture into school" and their action logic; The third part introduces and analyses the social action structure of "ethnic culture into school". The fourth part, the conclusion, summarizes the contents of this article and responds to the research question.

## **2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH QUESTION**

### *Realistic background*

In the early 21st century, under the dual background of basic education curriculum reform and emphasizing the inheritance and protection of excellent ethnic and folk culture, most areas began to carry out the work of "ethnic culture into school". This social phenomenon has attracted the attention of researchers and produced many research results.

People seem to be familiar with the discourse of "ethnic culture into school", but it is difficult to give a concise definition. What exactly does "ethnic culture into school" mean? We can say that it is an educational policy, of course, from the national macro background, it is indeed a policy. We can also say that it is an educational practice, which is the practice of researchers to explore the inheritance of ethnic culture in the new field of "school", which is different from the traditional "family" and "community". Even we can say that it is a "brand strategy" for the characteristic development of schools. Many schools actively catch the free ride of "ethnic culture into school" in the construction of characteristic campus culture. Therefore, "ethnic culture into school" has become a social phenomenon that has been investigated and discussed.

### *Academic background*

There is a profound theoretical foundation behind the "ethnic culture into school", such as Mr. Fei Xiaotong's theory of "the Pattern of Diversity in Unity of the Chinese Nation"(Fei 1989), Professor James Banks's concept and related theories of "multicultural education" (James 2009), Professor Teng Xing's "multicultural integration education theory"(Teng 1997) of Minzu University of China, Professor Zhang Shiya's "symbiotic education theory" (Zhang 2009)of Southwest University, and Professor Qian Minhui's "Three views of ideology" (Qian 2013) theory of Peking University and so on, all of these can provide important theoretical support for "ethnic culture into school".

From the perspective of empirical research, the current research on "ethnic culture into school" deserves attention and vigilance for the extensive application

of multicultural education theory. From the current research situation, the application of multicultural education in the research of "ethnic culture into school" has fallen into the mud of circular demonstration of causes and results. In the long run, the contribution to academic theory will be minimal. In addition, "multicultural education" is the concept of introducing China from the west, and there are contextual and structural differences between it and the study of Chinese minority education, especially in political and cultural demands. (Wan 2008) Therefore, the application of multicultural education theory in the research on "ethnic culture into school" should be more cautious. It can be seen that the current empirical research on "ethnic culture into school" has a strong tendency of "structure-function", and is essentially in a static perspective, mainly seeking a value appeal of "harmonious coexistence" at a macro level, "ethnic culture into school" is directly used as a vague and general concept, ignoring the logic of the emergence and development of the discourse. "Ethnic culture into school" is regarded as static, which directly leads to the neglect of process research, and under the positivist research tradition, it also leads to the neglect of actors.

#### *Research questions*

This paper holds that the key to the understanding of "ethnic culture into school" is the understanding of the word "into". First, it is a dynamic process rather than a static one. Second, we should answer the questions of "what?", "why?" and "how?" instead of directly using "ethnic culture into school" as a vague and general concept. Moreover, anthropological researchers should further see the implicit logic behind "into": the ethnic culture that originally belongs to the local community needs to go through complex procedures to enter the local school. And this because the school has a strong ideology when first brought to the local community, and largely erases the value of local knowledge and ethnic cultural knowledge. It is also under this criticism that another meaning of "into" appears, that is, the reverse input of ethnic culture into the school, bring ethnic culture into the school, and create a living space for ethnic culture in the school field, so as to balance and alleviate the conflict between mainstream culture and ethnic culture. If school education is regarded as a point of dissociation and flow between the balance composed of mainstream culture and ethnic culture, the ultimate source of maintaining this balance is the actors, the practice of actors, and the interactive practice between actors and structure, and this dynamic process is the ontological meaning of "ethnic culture into school".

Generally speaking, this paper aims to answer the following questions: What are the main subjects/actors in the micro level "ethnic culture into school"? What kind of action logic do these subjects have? What kind of social action structure has been constructed? How is this social structure dynamic? That is to clarify the micro practical logic of "ethnic culture into school".

### **3. SUBJECTS AND THEIR PRACTICAL LOGIC**

Since the 1980s, the ideological trend of practice has spread inside and outside anthropology. "Action and structure are two sides of practical activities, and have

realized dynamic unity in human practical activities". On the relationship between action and structure, various forms of structuralism and functionalism emphasizing the basic decisive role of structure have been formed in modern western social theoretical circles, which are obviously opposite to various hermeneutic ideological traditions emphasizing individuals. Practical theory attempts to bridge the two views. Giddens' structural theory focuses on the formation process of social structure in people's daily life, believes that people are knowledgeable actors, emphasizes the interactive relationship between structure and action, and advocates analyzing the reproduction process of institutionalized practice through the study of daily life. In order to explore the micro practical logic of "ethnic culture into school", this paper needs to pay attention to the action and structure of "ethnic culture into school". The main content of this part is about the interpretation of subjects and their action logic.

*The content and form of "ethnic culture into school"*

From the existing research, although the ethnic cultural backgrounds are different, the "ethnic culture" of "into school" has high consistency in content and form. Longchuan County is subordinate to Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture of Yunnan Province. In addition to the five ancient ethnic minorities of Jingpo, Dai, Achang, Lisu and De'ang, there are 18 other ethnic minorities such as Yi, Bai, Hui and Hani. Longchuan County is rich in ethnic cultural resources. The main teaching contents of "ethnic culture into school" in Longchuan ethnic primary school include ethnic music, ethnic dance, ethnic sports, ethnic handicrafts, ethnic languages and words, and ethnic theoretical knowledge, which are presented in the form of courses and activities (see Table 5.1).

**Table 1. Contents and forms of "ethnic culture into school" in Longchuan County Ethnic Primary School**

	Contents
Ethnic music	Cover song of Chinese young pioneers in Chinese and multi-ethnic languages; 15 minutes of ethnic music during lunch break every day; Wenbeng band (Jingpo folk music band)
Ethnic dance	Break exercise (Munao vertical song of Jingpo and Gayang of Dai); Five ethnic minority dances (Jingpo dance, Dai dance, De'ang dance, Lisu dance and Achang dance)
Ethnic Sports	Top bar; Contempt slingshot; Turn the top; stilt walk skate shoes
Ethnic handicrafts	Dai paper cutting; Dai fruit carving
Ethnic language	Jingpo language (mainly including Zaiwa and Jingpo branches); Dai language; Achang language
Ethnic theoretical knowledge	National unity course; Basic knowledge of ethnic (population, distribution and customs)

### *Subjects*

The study found that the participants of "ethnic culture into school" at the micro level mainly include the principals, teachers and students inside the school, as well as the management departments, social organizations, students' parents and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage outside the school (see Fig. 5.1). The principal is the organizer inside the school and the negotiator outside the school. Teachers, especially teachers of ethnic culture, need to carry out teaching work, and also need strong personal self-persistence ability and conflict resolution ability; Students are the key to "ethnic culture into school", their "presence" and daily communication are important factors. The management departments outside the school mainly assume the role of demonstration, and emphasize "which cultures cannot enter the school" from the macro level; Social organizations mainly promote the inheritance of ethnic culture and the popularization of the discourse of "ethnic culture into school"; The positive attitude of students' parents towards "ethnic culture into school" has a positive feedback effect on students' ethnic culture learning and school work; "Teaching in school" of intangible cultural heritage inheritors is mainly subject to the arrangement of the management department, but there are also personal considerations on alleviating inheritance anxiety and rank promotion.

### *The practical logic of subjects*

The logic of action of all subjects is obviously not the same, and the power relationship is one of the factors that make it possible to negotiate with each other. For example, there is a power relationship between principals and teachers, teachers and students, management departments and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage. That is, under the power structure, it is a rational choice to participate in the corresponding actions and obtain a certain return. At the same time, the heterogeneity between the subjects and the existence of power relations will inevitably lead to contradictions and conflicts. For example, some ordinary teachers do not cooperate with professional ethnic culture teachers to carry out relevant courses and activities. The resolution of these contradictions and conflicts is mainly because these subjects are restricted and guided by the common cultural situation and value norms. Human action should be between rationality and emotion. In recent years, people more and more aware of cultural diversity and the value of ethnic culture. People's demands for traditional culture and education have become increasingly urgent and strong. Each subject's anxiety about the rupture of local ethnic culture inheritance and the sense of identity for their own ethnic culture occupy an important position. To a certain extent, emotional factors surpass rational factors, and effectively alleviate the conflicts and contradictions of each subject in the "ethnic culture into school". In short, based on the heterogeneity among subjects, they all have their own action choice and action logic, both emotional and rational choice factors, and contradictions and conflicts are also common. However, due to the existence of the power relationship between the subjects and the coexistence of the same cultural situation and the guidance of the same value orientation, the conflict can

be resolved, the negotiation becomes possible, and the social action structure of "ethnic culture into school" can be constructed.

#### **4. SOCIAL ACTION STRUCTURE**

The social action structure of "ethnic culture into school" has the characteristics of "responding to needs, achieving goals, constructing integration, structural maintenance" (Fig. 5.2). It is different from Parsons' emphasis on the pre-existence and stability of the structure. The generation of this social action structure is the product of the active construction of actors. At the same time, in this process, the subject is also guided by some existing social orders and norms.

##### *Responding to needs*

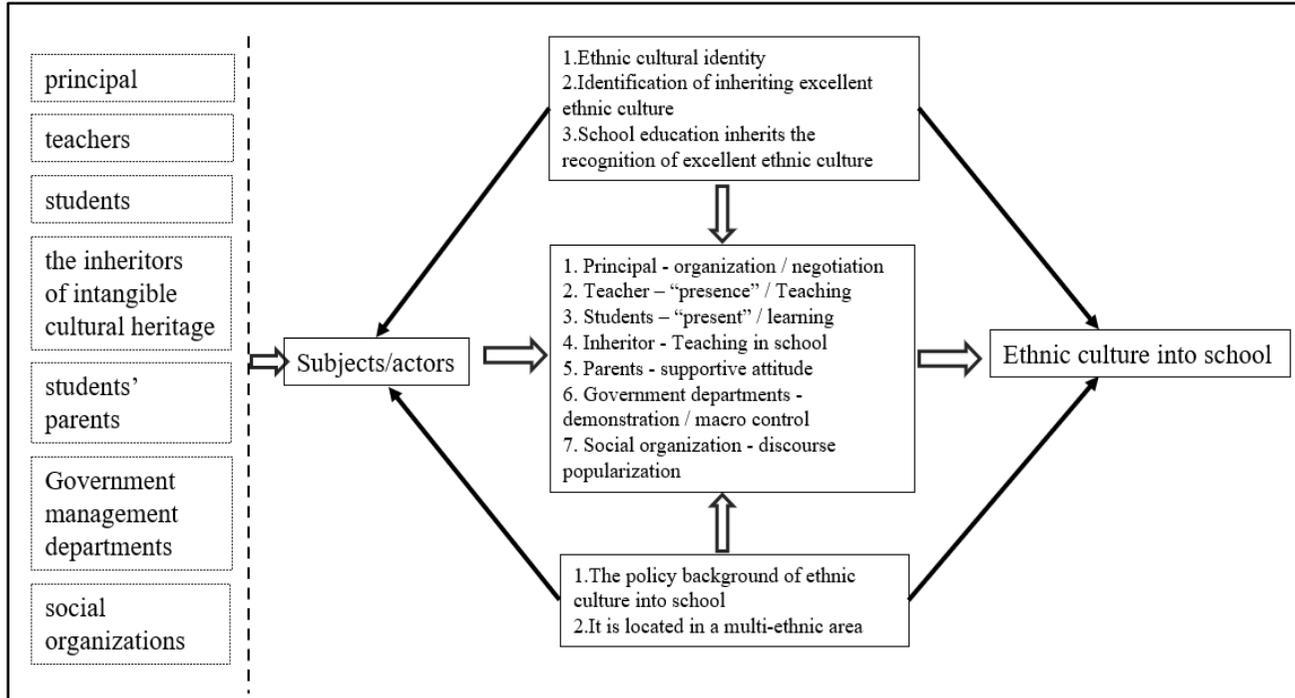
The first is to respond the policy of "ethnic culture into school" at the national level. "Ethnic culture into school" has a good policy environment atmosphere, some policy texts mentioned and emphasized it again and again begin 1980, trying to promote the connection between excellent ethnic traditional culture and school education. So schools carry out the work of "ethnic culture into school" to respond the government policy.

The second is to respond the realistic background of multi-ethnic culture in local community. Longchuan County is a typical multi-ethnic residential area, "ethnic culture into school" is in response to the local demand for minority knowledge. Like teacher J of Longchuan County Education Bureau said: "*in fact, in our border areas, the combination of ethnic culture and this kind of education and teaching is a trend in itself, in order to meet the local cultural needs. Our main body itself is dominated by ethnic minorities. For example, we must focus on the local reality.*" (Interviewee: JLS, teacher of Education Bureau; interview time: July 28, 2020; interview place: Office of ethnic unity leading group.)

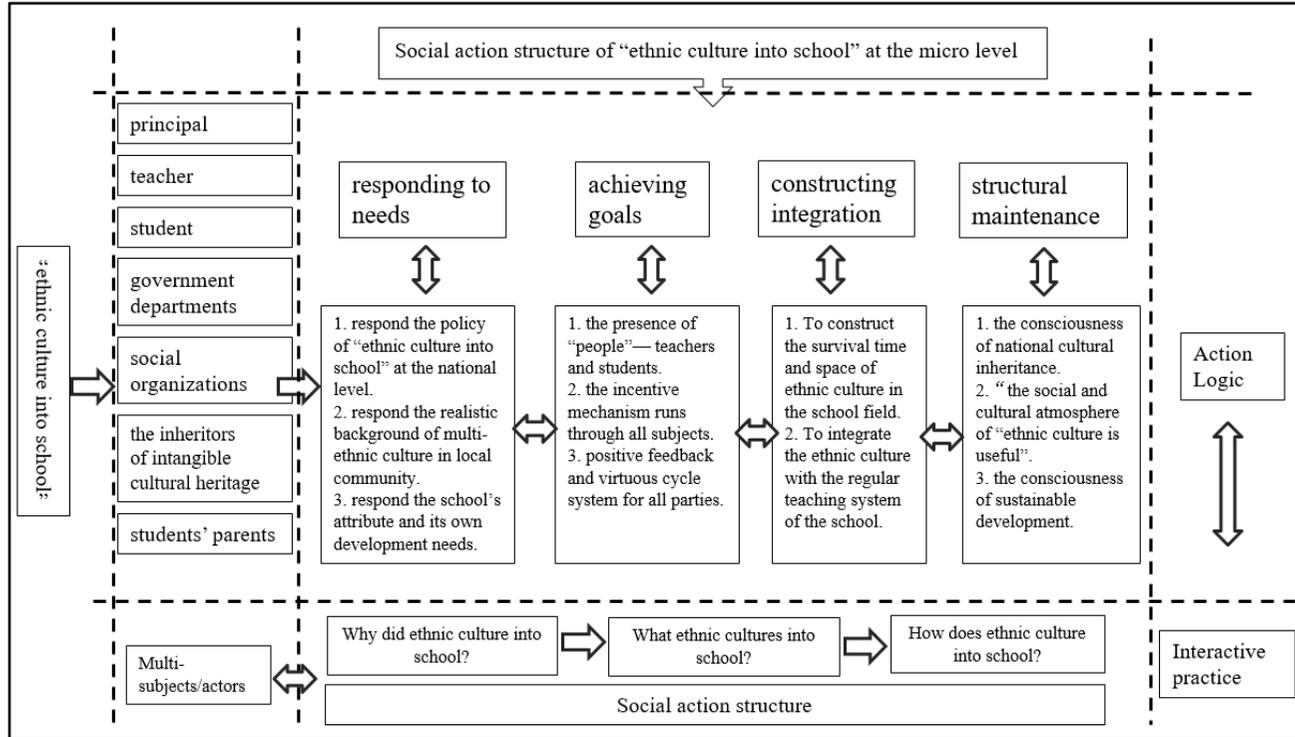
The third is to respond the school's attribute and its own development needs. Longchuan County Ethnic Primary School focuses on the school's ethnic attribute and effectively combines the development of ethnic culture education and teaching with the construction of campus culture brand, and finally promotes the all-round development and promotion of the school.

##### *Achieving goals*

The first is the presence of "people", that is, teachers and students. "Teachers" are mainly teachers who master ethnic culture and invited intangible cultural heritage inheritors. "Student" mainly refers to the students in the school. Compared with the expected "teacher-student" teaching approach, the communication between students are more important in the "ethnic culture into school", because there are no restrictions on the daily communication, cultural integration exists in the real situation of minority students' life, which is inevitable.



**Fig. 1. The subjects of "ethnic culture into school" and their action logic**



**Fig. 2. The social action structure of “ethnic culture into school”**

The second is the incentive mechanism runs through all subjects. For example, the principal's incentive to the teacher is mainly to try his best to maintain a good teaching environment, calm the voices of opponents, and mobilize all teachers and students to participate in the courses and activities related to ethnic culture. Teachers' motivation to students is mainly to tell them some examples of successful success due to learning ethnic cultural knowledge. From outside the school, the school has been affirmed by the outside world through these distinctive ethnic culture courses and teaching activities. These affirmation and honorary titles have become a great driving force for the development of the school to a certain extent, form a positive feedback and virtuous cycle system for all parties.

#### *Constructing integration*

The first is to construct the survival time and space of ethnic culture in the school field. From the perspective of time dimension, the school brings the teaching of national languages into the normal teaching time system of the school, and effectively uses a lot of "uncertain" time to carry out the teaching of other relevant courses and the development of interest activity groups. From the perspective of spatial dimension, the wall of an administrative office building on the campus is full of figures of 56 nationalities; On the information column of the exhibition board, there are detailed text introduction of ethnic minorities, etc. Symbol is the representation of culture and the direct product of reflecting cultural meaning. The cognition and identification of cultural symbols can promote the cognition and identification of ethnic culture.

The second is to integrate the ethnic culture with the regular teaching system of the school. Ethnic music, ethnic dance, ethnic sports and ethnic handicrafts can effectively integrate with the school's music, art, sports and other courses to a certain extent, and the students have a high degree of acceptance. Therefore, they have also become an important content of ethnic culture education and teaching activities in schools all over the country.

#### *Structural maintenance*

The first is the consciousness of ethnic cultural inheritance. "ethnic culture into school" came into being under the ethnic culture inheritance crisis, school education has become a new inheritance field because of its systematicness, organization and universality, and is juxtaposed with family inheritance and community inheritance.

The second is the social and cultural atmosphere of "ethnic culture is useful". It should construct a long-term mechanism that schools, families and society should make full use of the excellent traditional culture of ethnic minorities, and build a "psychological field conforming to the traditional culture of the Chinese nation". The basis of this long-term mechanism is "study ethnic culture is useful", so that all subjects can see the benefits of the study of ethnic culture in higher education and employment.

The third is the consciousness of sustainable development. From the starting point of the policy design of "ethnic culture into school", there is the expectation of "long-term and sustainability".

## **5. ANALYSIS OF STRUCTURE-PROCESS**

### *Constraint of structure*

At the micro level, the social action structure of "ethnic culture into school" has the characteristics of "responding to needs - achieving goals - constructing integration - maintaining structure". At the national level, the discourse guidance for the inheritance of ethnic culture and the realistic background of local multi-ethnic settlements all regulate the subject's value choice and action logic to a certain extent. For example, the subjects do not object to or even participate in the "ethnic culture into school", and choose the ethnic culture into school based on the local ethnic cultural resources. The power structure between the subjects is not easy to cross. Although the exertion of the subjectivity of the school is the key to "ethnic culture into school", it will be restricted by the management department. Some "untouchable" standards can veto the content and form of relevant activities of the school. The school needs to design relevant courses or activities under these standards. Further, this "structural statute" can be understood as "state presence". "Ethnic culture into school" is not to make an ethnic's culture unique, but to balance the current situation of the lack of local ethnic culture under the educational background of modern mainstream scientific knowledge, and enhance students' understanding of casting a strong sense of the Chinese national community and the pattern of pluralistic integration of the Chinese nation.

### *Construction of subjects*

Although it is regulated by some established social norms and order, it is undeniable that the social action structure of "ethnic culture into school" is the result of the participation of various subjects. For example, in the context of relatively lagging teaching development, the school gave play to the educational and teaching characteristic brand of ethnic culture, won positive feedback from all sectors of society, effectively stimulated the self-confidence of teachers and students in the school, and gradually improved teaching results. The construction of the survival time and space of ethnic culture in the school benefits from the effective use of "informal teaching time" and the creation of ethnic elements in the campus cultural environment. The most important thing is the integration of ethnic culture education and teaching with the traditional modern mainstream culture education and teaching system, found a way to integrate modern and traditional. "Ethnic culture into school" is not the only or direct goal of actors. For example, students' parents do not have a clear understanding of "ethnic culture into school", but they know that the identity of ethnic minorities can enjoy the bonus policy, and they can speak or write their own minority languages. It is easy to find a good job in the local area, so they "Ethnic culture into school" is not opposed. In any case, although each subject has its own goals and action choices, they jointly contribute to the rationalization of "ethnic culture into school" in the same cultural situation.

*"Process" including stability and conflict*

Actors show the duality of stakeholders and emotional ones. The structure of social action system has the duality of conflict and stability, and the "ethnic culture into school" in the "process" includes both conflict and stability. "Ethnic culture into school" involves the balance and integration of "state and place, tradition and modernity, commonness and individuality" at the macro level, from the local micro level, it is mainly faced with the contradiction of balancing "Instrumentalism" and "humanism". The current "ethnic culture into school" has a strong tendency of "Instrumentalism". As far as the school is concerned, "ethnic culture into school" is regarded as a means to maintain the school's attribute and development. Under the background of maintaining good teaching results, actively carrying out these ethnic culture courses and teaching activities has become the help of the school's development to a certain extent - winning the affirmation and praise of all sectors of society, and obtaining some special financial support. In the view of government departments, a large group of students can become the inheritors of ethnic culture, so they regard "ethnic culture into school" as a means to expand the scope of inheritance. The ideal state of "ethnic culture into school" should also take into account "ontology", that is, it is not for the pure inheritance of ethnic culture, the bonus of looking for a job and the brand construction of the school. Although the overlap of these factors makes "ethnic culture into school" possible to a certain extent, its "ontology" should mean that "ethnic culture into school" as a whole should be integrated with the school education system, so as to shape "complete people".

The social action structure is constantly reproduced in the interactive practice with actors. In this study, "ethnic culture into school" is regulated by the established structure of ethnic policy discourse guidance, local inherent ethnic cultural resources and "mainstream cultural tendency" of modern school education at the macro level. Its constructiveness is reflected in the choice of local ethnic culture, actively creating the space-time field for the inheritance of ethnic culture without affecting the school's transmission of modern culture, building the education and teaching activities of ethnic culture into the school's cultural brand, and realizing the subjective construction under the structure. For individual actors, such as Inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, the action of "teaching on campus" is not only regulated by their cultural management department, but also out of the human relationship with the school president or teachers. As for the consideration of action value, there are not only the rational interest choice of rank promotion, but also the anxiety about the fracture of ethnic cultural inheritance and the emotional choice of cultural identity. These words and action choices scattered in the process of daily life have also become an important factor in the continuous reproduction of the social action structure.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

"Ethnic culture into school" corresponds to the product of the development of modern school education to a certain stage. In the research of "ethnic culture into school", we need to get rid of the static cognition. "Human society itself is based

on practical activities. Practice is not only the survival mode of human actors, but also the basis of social system". Only starting from human social practical activities, can we make a reasonable exposition of social life itself.

This paper holds that "ethnic culture into school" is a dynamic process in which all subjects participate. The study found that the participants of "ethnic culture into school" at the micro level mainly include the principals, teachers and students inside the school, as well as the management departments, social organizations, students' parents and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage outside the school. Based on the heterogeneity among subjects, they all have their own action choice and action logic, both emotional factors and rational choice factors, and contradictions and conflicts are also common. However, due to the existence of the power relationship between the subjects and the coexistence of the same cultural situation and the guidance of the same value orientation, the conflict can be resolved, the negotiation becomes possible, and the social action structure of "ethnic culture into school" can be constructed. The social action structure of "ethnic culture into school" has the characteristics of "responding to needs, achieving goals, constructing integration and maintaining structure". The construction of social action by actors is not short-lived and one-time, but continues in the practice process of daily life. The social action structure is dynamic and process. This dynamic structure realizes continuous reproduction in the process of interactive practice with actors, and this "structure-process" is the long-term and long-term development of "ethnic culture into school" dynamic and procedural internal practice logic.

This paper analyses the micro level "ethnic culture into school" in the action logic of actors, the social action structure established on this basis and the process of their continuous interaction, so as to break the dichotomy between practice and structure, stability and conflict, and emphasize the permanent dialectical relationship between practice and structure. Process research does not have strong value judgment. On the one hand, the actors in the process are guided and regulated by some existing social order, on the other hand, they have strong action constructiveness. The existence of power relations, emotional factors and rational factors makes stability and contradiction coexist, which can better restore the ontology of "ethnic culture into school".

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Da Wanji. Theoretical Conception of Ethnic Education Practice under the Community Consciousness of the Chinese Nation [J]. *Journal of Research on Education for Ethnic Minorities*. 2019;1: 38-42.
- Ding Yueya. The space of actors: an educational anthropological study on the change of Jiazuo Village [M]. Gui Lin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2016:12.

- Fei Xiaotong. The Pattern of Diversity in Unity of the Chinese Nation[J]. Journal of Peking University (Philosophy and Social Sciences), 1989(4):3-21.
- James A. Banks. Cultural Diversity and Education [M]. Xun Yuan, trans. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press. 2009.
- Li Hongzhan. The practical turn of Contemporary Western Social Theory -- an in-depth examination of Giddens's structural theory [J]. Philosophical Trends. 2004(11):7-13.
- Lv Junbiao, Zhou Daming. Practice, Power and Multifarious Interpretation of Cultures: Rethinking of the Postmodernism Turning in Anthropology[J]. Journal of Guangxi University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Science Edition). 2009; 4:33-40.
- Qian Minhui. The "Perspective of Three Ideological States": New Horizon of Research on Ethnic Education [J]. Journal of Guangxi University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Science Edition), 2013; 3:80-83.
- Sherry B. Ortner, He Guoqiang. Theory in Anthropology since the 1960s [J]. Qinghai Journal of Ethnology. 2010; 2:19-37.
- Sun Jieyuan. Individual, culture, education and national identity: A Study on national identity and cultural integration of ethnic minority students [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press 2019:110.
- Teng Xin, Su Hong. Multicultural society and pluralistic integrated education[J]. Journal of Research on Education for Ethnic Minorities. 1997;(1):18—30.
- Wan Minggang, Bailiang. A comparison between western multicultural education and ethnic minority education in China [J]. Ethno-National Studies, 2008;6:32-108.
- Yang Maoqing, Su Tianyi. Mechanism and Path of Field Construction of Value Education for Ethnic Minority Children ——Based on the Theoretical Perspective of Social Learning [J]. Journal of Research on Education for Ethnic Minorities. 2021; 4:88-93.
- Zhang Shiya. Symbiosis Education Theory: New Approach on the Education Development in Western Rural Areas[J]. Contemporary Education and Culture. 2009(1):55-57.
- Zhong Haiqing, Lei Xiangzhu. The primary conflicts of ethnic education and their representation [J]. Guangxi Ethnic Studies, 2018(1):151-157.

# Toujia: A Possibility of Village Autonomy in Southern Fujian?

Yang Xueting <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH6

---

## ABSTRACT

In southern Fujian, Toujia refers to the person who is the organizer of some folk festivals in the village, different from village head and recognized by the grass-roots self-governance. Is the possibility of village autonomy through toujia a realistic option? That is the issue addressed in this paper divided into three parts: The first introduces the responsibilities of the toujia and explain how they work based on fieldwork data. The second interprets toujia as a informal system and grass-roots self-governance from an anthropological perspective. The third examines if the toujia system can work as village autonomy. To achieve these goals, my research plan is as follows. First, it is necessary to collect as much theme-related literature as possible from journals and monographs, especially the latest published authoritative literature, and understand the mainstream views, cutting-edge concerns and research trends in this field. The second step is to understand the basic characteristics and typical cultural characteristics of villages in southern Fujian, and to understand the application of grass-roots self-governance after reading literature. The third part will review the previous fieldwork materials and comb the relevant parts of the paper. Finally, the topic of this paper is discussed in combination with the theory.

*Keywords: Toujia; folk festivals; autonomy; traditional culture.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Those who are familiar with the modern and contemporary history of China know that China has gone through many institutional explorations in its quest for socialist development, including the people's commune movement and the system of grass-roots self-governance. These two have profoundly affected today's China, especially the rural area's social situation and the governance system. The biggest legacy of the people's commune movement is the division of the village into different groups, with each family belonging to a specific group and then elected or drawn by lot to select the group leader (known as the "toujia" in Southern Fujian) to coordinate and handle the internal affairs of the group. On the other hand, the grass-roots self-governance system, in the name of the

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 10620211153131@stu.xmu.edu.cn;

national constitution, confirms the legitimacy of the villagers' right to self-management, self-education and self-service, and returns the power of village governance to the villagers.

It is not uncommon for academic circles to discuss the two issues. Some scholars discuss the public participation in grass-roots self-governance system. Others discuss the role types and motivation mechanism of village cadres in the process of village autonomy. And others still discuss the supply of village public goods with the toujia system, cost sharing and negotiated governance. Of course, many scholars will combine the two system to discuss and analyze the theoretical differences between the two in the academic theory. Based on the distinction between the two system, this paper considers the possibility of transforming the informal institution of the toujia into a formal institution. According to a fieldwork I had conducted in the Zhangzhou area of Fujian Province during my undergraduate studies, this paper compares the operation of two different systems in the village, and I come to the negative conclusion that the system of toujia cannot become a possibility of village autonomy at least at present.

## **2. THE BASIC SITUATION OF THE TOUJIA SYSTEM**

"Toujia" is a commonly used word in Hokkien and retains the original meaning in ancient Chinese. It has three meanings in Hokkien: Boss. For example, Sung-Hsing Wang, a Taiwan scholar, recorded in his writings that seafarers called the man who hired him toujia. The other is the bookmaker in a game. There was a similar expression in a dream in red mansions. The third refers to the person who is the organizer of some folk festivals in the village. Toujia discussed in this article is the third meaning. The villagers take turns to be the toujia, responsible for the festival activities, so that the operation of the village was stable and peaceful.

### *The emergence of toujia*

I have done fieldwork in several villages in southern Fujian, and found three types of the emergence of toujia. One is based on economic power. Toujia of Fanyang Village, Zhangpu County adopts the election system, and toujia must have substantial capital. The second is based on coding and the code is conceptual, rather than substantive. In this type, it can be specifically divided into two modes. The first mode is random selection coding and the second mode is taking turns in the coding order. The former refers to the random extraction of a certain number of codes in the folk festivals. The latter refers to rotating according to a fixed code. Most importantly, the power of the toujia comes from the gods so that the emergence of the toujia must be recognized by gods. Usually, toujia takes turn every year and the number of toujia depends on the size of the village.

### *The responsibilities of the toujia*

The responsibilities of the toujia are closely related to folk beliefs. They are in charge of the village's annual festival, including the sacrifices of the spring,

activities on February 15, May 15 and October 15 of the lunar calendar. In addition, the construction and renovation of the village temple is also part of the work of the toujia. Specifically, the responsibilities of the toujia include the following parts.

A. Collecting the fee per villager

As spontaneous collective activities of the village, the government will not have any financial support. Instead, the cost of these activities shall be paid jointly by the villagers. Toujia need to collect the fee that each villager has to pay. Depending on the size of the activities, the fee ranges from 5 yuan to 100 yuan and toujia usually start collecting money half a month before the activities begin. At the same time, toujia register information, mark clearly the collection of funds in the process of collecting. The toujia ought to plan the funds wisely to buy pork, pastries, rice wine, tea, firecrackers , jinyin (jinyin: a sacrificial supply in southern Fujian) and so on, invite the troupe to perform. Interestingly, except the portion that should be paid, the toujia tend to contribute extra. Because they think it's blessing to be a toujia and pay more money. In recent years, some infrastructure construction led by countries, the cost collection is also done by the toujia.

B. Distribution of supplies and management of property

After the village festival, there will be plenty of sacrificial supplies that do not belong to the toujia, but to the villagers. So, pork, pastries and other food purchased by the toujia will be redistributed. Pigs are the most common source of livestock and meat in rural southern Fujian. Therefore, the purchase and distribution of pork is a key part of the festival. Pork is divided into raw pork and cooked pork, and the pigs are raised by villagers. Toujia buy the whole pig in the name of the village. After the sacrificial ceremony, the pork is given a new name as fufen pork, meaning the pork is blessed by gods. The distribution of pork is a random process. The toujia cut the pork according to the number of families in the village and put it in a bag. Then toujia draw by lot, call the villagers' name and give the pork to the corresponding villagers.

When the festival is over, the toujia should register and publish the income and expenditure of the activity in time. Since the village temple is equipped with a box that the believers sometimes will put money inside, the toujia must also pay attention to the management of the village temple property. How to manage and use the money in this box is a test for the toujia. The box in the village temple has been stolen before, and the toujia as the person in charge reported the case and traced thieves. Although it was later found out who the thief was, the toujia was eventually blamed for not managing the property properly. In addition to the purchase of sacrificial supplies, the funds can also be used to help people having a poor living and they can pay it back until their living conditions have improved.

C. Act as a ritual expert.

When the village holds festival activities, a specific person is required to preside over the activities. so the toujia often takes on the role of ritual expert. Before the

ritual begin, the toujia need to inform the villagers of the specific sacrificial time and be prepared. During the ceremony, the toujia should worship the gods on behalf of all the villagers and pray for good luck. The toujia needs to complete a series of prescribed actions, such as burning joss sticks, pouring the wine and throwing a slug. It should be noted in particular that the toujia are supposed to lift the statue of gods around the village during the Lantern Festival.

D. Organize leisure and entertainment activities.

The toujia will buy some daily necessities as a reward, and organize villagers to join in some entertainment and leisure activities. For example, square dance competition, tug-of-war competition, etc. However, these activities are often incidental to the festival activities and are rarely held exclusively.

To sum up, villagers take turns to be the toujia and the responsibilities of the toujia are closely related to folk beliefs.

### **3. THE CULTURAL CONNOTATION AND SOCIAL FUNCTION OF THE AUTONOMY SYSTEM**

In the first part, we have accounted for how the toujia emerged and the basic responsibilities. At the same time, we have also noticed that there is not only the toujia system in the little tradition sense, but also a great tradition sense of grass-roots self-governance system. Both systems exist in villages at the same time and go hand in hand, playing important roles in villagers' autonomy. From an anthropological point of view, What kind of cultural connotations do these two types of autonomy systems have and what kind of social functions do they play? This part is written in an attempt to answer those questions.

#### *Toujia, as an informal system*

The toujia is an informal system. The so-called informality, on the one hand, means that it is not recognized by the national legal system and therefore does not have a legitimate source of power and rights constraints. On the other hand, it operates on the customary concept of the villagers, without formal regulations and written documentation, which also means that it has considerable variability and flexibility in the course of operation. Informality, however, does not in any way mean ineffectiveness, and as I have written in part 1, from the emergency to the performance of their duties, the toujia, with an unobvious existence, coordinates the daily activities of the village and the self-management of the villagers. From the perspective of anthropology, I think the toujia system can be understood in several aspects.

First, the mechanical solidarity of the acquaintance community. Fei Xiaotong in his *From the Soil: The Foundation of the Chinese Society* reveals the basic humanistic features of Chinese farmers, that is, the rural color. Because of the immutability of the land, farmers are tied to the land for a long time. There is less contact between regions and life is isolated from each other. People in rural

society born and die in local areas. They are familiar with each other, and acquaintance community becomes a major feature of Chinese rural society. The toujia come from the village. For most villagers, the toujia is an acquaintance to them. They witness his growth or belong to the same age group with the toujia. Therefore, when the toujia collect head fees or organize village activities, the villagers usually tend to cooperate, because they have a sense of trust that is brought about by familiarity with the toujia. The concept of mechanical solidarity comes from French sociologist Émile Durkheim, who believes that mechanical solidarity is a social connection based on similarity or homogeneity among individuals in society, and people's religious beliefs and behavior patterns are highly consistent. Most of the villagers in the village are engaged in the same agricultural production, living a self-sufficient small-scale peasant life. The mobility between the villagers is small, the degree of social division of labor is limited, and the dependence on each other is relatively small. Folk religious beliefs sustain the unity of the village. The toujia is the spokesman of this folk religious belief, but also a strong link of the village mechanical unity.

The second is the supply of village public goods on the basis of cost-equalization. The cost of village festivals is generally largely split among the villagers (although some of the toujia will make additional contributions), collected by the toujia and used for subsequent payment. When the payment is completed, it means that the toujia also completes the supply of village public goods. We can sort out such a process: the members of the village are a community, and the folk belief of Chen Yuanguang is the village's religious power center. The members of the community pay "head fees" to the power center to realize the concentration of property. Then, the toujia provided the concentrated property to the members of the community in the form of pork, steamed cakes (material property) and opera performances (spiritual services). According to Shinichiro Kurimoto, the so-called 'redistribution' refers to a chain of 'payments' and 'returns', that is, the obligation of the members of the community to pay for goods and services to a political power center (or religious power center), and the return of property and services made by this power center to members of the Community. This process of centralizing and returning property and services can be said to the simplest redistribution. However, this kind of village public goods supply is relatively limited in intensity and coverage, and the redistribution is only on a small scale. It is almost impossible to improve the living conditions of all the villagers and narrow the gap between the rich and the poor.

#### *Grass-roots self-governance, as a formal system*

Democratic elections in a semi-acquaintance society. As the basic political system stipulated in the national constitution, the grass-roots self-governance system classifies the villages in the traditional sense of anthropology into a larger administrative village, and the radius of the original villages has increased sharply. Many strange people appear, they no longer know each other. Therefore, I name the latter village semi-acquaintance society. The electoral process of this system excludes randomness, and gives full play to the advantages of democracy. Villagers can vote for the village cadres according to their will,

instead of drawing random lots and then obeying the gods they believe in. But this also affected the villagers' trust and understanding of the village cadres to a certain extent, and put forward higher requirements for the village cadres to carry out their work.

Wider participation and more comprehensive protection of rights and interests. In toujia system, the toujia is only held by men in the village, and women do not have the right to be in the toujia. In the grass-roots self-governance system, equality between men and women has been achieved, and both men and women can participate in the election of village cadres, as well as the opportunity and ability to serve as village cadres (although in the rural areas of southern Fujian, village cadres are mostly held by men). As a formal political system, in terms of power guarantee, the grass-roots self-governance system has achieved the point where the autonomy of the toujia cannot be realized. It can mediate the gap between the rich and the poor to a greater extent, to convey the voice of the people upward, to strive for the rights of the people, and improve their living standards.

#### **4. THE GAP BETWEEN TOUJIA SYSTEM AND GRASS-ROOTS SELF-GOVERNANCE**

The system of grass-roots self-governance is not a sudden creation or invention and it has a very deep historical foundation. Under the feudal social system, the nation's institutional political power often only reached the county level. The Chinese peasants are directly faced with the gentry, patriarchs and chiefs. Squires are intellectuals in the traditional Chinese countryside and also a very important elite class. They deal with the daily life of the villagers and deliver the voice of the people. Fei Xiaotong called it the dual track. In modern times, China's rural areas have experienced land reform and the founding of New China, and farmers have obtained land rights. And China also began the people's commune movement that united the construction of political power organization and economic organization. At this time, the power of village governance was mainly controlled by the nation.

After the reform and opening up, China's rural areas have been greatly developed, and economic benefits have been greatly improved. Therefore, the minds of the people have also been liberated to a great extent. The previous people's communes gradually no longer adapt to the development of society. In rural areas, there has gradually emerged the system of fixed output quotas for individual households. And the power of village governance was quickly transferred from the people's communes under the control of the nation to the family organizations and the village itself. In 1982, the concept of village committee appeared in the Constitution of China for the first time, and it was constructed as one of the forms of national organization. In 1998, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress revised the law and implemented it nationwide. As a result, the system of grass-roots self-governance has

developed rapidly in China's rural areas, and the leading power of village governance has been transferred from the national cadres to the villagers.

In essence, the system of grass-roots self-governance is an effective form of realizing that the people are the masters of the country. According to Deng Dacai, such an effective governance model should be based on the following five dimensions: interest-related, geographical proximity, culture-related, moderate scale and villagers' voluntary.

Interest-relatedness is the economic foundation of effective realization of villager autonomy. Village settlement as a community, interests are a strong link to maintain community unity. The most important benefit is land. It is owned by the collective, and villagers have the right to use land. By planting it, villagers can harvest crops to meet the needs of their families. Regional proximity and moderate scale are the spatial and geographical basis for the effective realization of villager autonomy. As we said in part 2, geographical proximity means mutual familiarity and trust. Moderate scale also guarantees the applicability and effectiveness of autonomous methods. One of the manifestations of cultural connection is to have a common cultural identity and cultural psychology. In my opinion, villagers' voluntary participation is one of the most important dimensions of grass-roots self-governance system. Villagers should be willing to participate in the village governance, obey the village governance.

However, in addition to these five dimensions, grass-roots self-governance system also puts forward corresponding requirements on the quality and ability of the villagers. In terms of the actual situation in the villages of Southern Fujian, the gap between the toujia system and the grass-roots self-governance system is mainly reflected in the following aspects.

The first is that the quality of the population is not high enough. Hokkiens have been advocating that only those who love to fight can win. They often go out to make a living, including well-educated intellectuals and entrepreneurs who have made a career. There are many middle-aged and elderly groups in the village, whose education level are low and their horizons are relatively narrow, so the overall quality level of the population is relatively limited. They may be familiar with the whole process of village festivals, but have difficulty adapting to the modern office procedures.

The second is the lack of institutionalization and legal concepts. The core of the toujia system lies in the folk religious belief that has a very strong color of idealism and randomness in village. This makes it difficult to form a standardized and institutionalized process in the disposal of things. Emphasis on standardization and institutionalization is actually the pursuit of fairness. For the same type of events should be handled in the same way and never be subject to any random results and idealism. More importantly, as a nation under the rule of law, China stresses the rule of law. But the law is essentially materialism, and it has a natural antithesis to idealism. Accordingly, thinking from certain respect,

toujia system and system of grass-roots self-governance run counter to each other.

Again, voluntary. The importance of villagers' voluntariness for grass-roots self-governance system has been emphasized above. Obviously, the toujia system in the form of coding rotation is not voluntary, but the "compulsion" brought about by folk religious belief, which is not accompanied by tangible benefits. And it greatly discounts the voluntary enthusiasm of villagers.

Finally, fairness. Fairness is the key point for the system of grass-roots self-governance to realize the position of the people as masters of the country. By fairness, I mean two things: coverage and capability. The grass-roots self-governance system covers men, women. As long as you are 18 years old, you can run for election without any gender restrictions. The results of the election are determined by the democratic vote of the villagers, and what you have to do, is to use your personal charm and ability to win the votes of the villagers.

It should be pointed out that although there is still a big gap between the toujia system and the grass-roots self-governance system, it is not completely devoid of redeeming features. For example, it disperses and restricts power, preventing power from being held in a certain person or group for a long time and avoiding the phenomenon of village hegemony. For its understanding, we should start from the holistic view of anthropology and adhere to the comprehensive and objective view.

## **5. CONCLUSION: CONCURRENT DISCUSSION ON GREAT AND LITTLE TRADITION**

The great tradition and the little tradition were proposed by the Robert Redfield. The great tradition refers to the culture represented by a few upper-class people and intellectuals in the city, while the little tradition refers to the culture represented by the majority of peasants in the countryside. Redfield focused on the differences between the two, putting them in opposition, arguing that small traditions are in a passive position, and that in the development of civilization, the countryside is inevitably assimilated by the city.

In the discipline of the Political anthropology and the Development anthropology, the great tradition and the little tradition are constantly interacting. In my opinion, toujia system is not an obstacle to the process of modernization and democratization. On the contrary, it depends on the implementation of the grass-roots self-governance system, and the two complement each other. As Wen Yingying quoted Nourse as saying, "It is ineffective or even counterproductive to rigidly transplant the formal system while ignoring informal institutions such as traditions and customs." To some extent, what really determines institutional performance is the informal institutional arrangements based on personalized knowledge."

At the same time, in the dialogue between Huang Xiangchun and professor Zheng Zhenman, "Culture, history and nation", also addresses "civilian's creative adaptation to the system". It is emphasized that the system of the nation will change when put into folk practice, and should be combined with the local conditions at that time. This also reflects the interaction between the great tradition and the little tradition. On this basis, we can make the following understanding about the interaction between the great tradition and the little tradition: in the process of interaction between the great tradition and the little tradition, the little tradition has not disappeared because of the involvement of the great tradition. It is even more open and culturally flexible, and grass-roots people use the cultural flexibility actively to create culture, which is a process of institution popularizing, but also the process of carrying forward the local culture. This kind of cultural creation and the Chinese folk village's political ecology and the traditional custom are close to each other, and has formed a self-consistent cultural system. In the folk so-called cultural identity, it is more to identify the regional culture created by the little tradition than the regional culture created by the national and great tradition.

In recent years, the grass-roots self-governance system has been constantly improved, and the operation and management of the village has become more and more standardized, while the role of the toujia in the village has gradually weakened. I have also seen significant changes in the formation of toujia in some villages in Zhangzhou and Xiamen, moving towards a formal system in which villagers vote for them and their salaries are paid by the government. Through an anthropological observation of the formation and duties of toujia and a comparison with the grass-roots self-governance system, I think that the toujia system has been and will be an informal system of villagers' self-governance in a long period of time, and there is still a big gap compared with the grass-roots people's self-governance system, although it is becoming more formal. All in all, the toujia system cannot be regarded as a possibility of villagers' autonomy right now.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Chen Baifeng 2011 On the Acquaintance Community: An Ideal-Type Exploration of the Mechanism in the Village Order. *Chinese Journal of Sociology* 31(01):223-241
- Cheng Weiming 2005 Some Thoughts on the Subjectivity of Villagers' Autonomy. *Social Sciences in China* (03):126-133+208.
- Fei Xiaotong 2012 *From the Soil: the Foundations of Chinese Society*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- He Xuefeng and Liu Rui 2009 Governance in Acquaintance Society——A Survey in Juhe Village, Meitan County, Guizhou Province as an Example. *Journal of China Agricultural University Social Sciences* 26; 75(02):111-117.

- Lu Fuying 2004. On the public participation in the operation of villagers' autonomy. *CASS Journal of Political Science* (01):17-23.
- Sung-Hsing Wang, Kwei-Shan Tao 1967 A study of a Chinese fishing community in Formosa. Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica.
- Wang Xiangyang 2018 Taking turns to govern the village cost-sharing, collective exclusion and consultation and governance——field research on Yao Village in F County of northern Guangxi. *Journal of Shanxi Agricultural University (Social Science Edition)*, 17(06).
- Wen Yingying 2013 Informal Institution and Public Goods Provision in Rural China: A case study of T village. *Sociological Studies*, 28; No.163(01):113-133+243.
- Wen Yingying 2013 Informal Institution and Public Goods Provision in Rural China: A case study of T village. *Sociological Studies* 28(01)
- Xu Jieshun 2013 Farmers in the Anthropological Perspective: Fei Xiaotong's Idea on the Humanistic Character of Chinese Farmers. *Journal of Yunnan Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 45;242(03):57-62.
- Ye Fuchun 2003 The Course, Significance and Problems of Villagers' Self-governance. *Journal of Harbin University* (05):28-35.
- Zhang Jing 2009 How Can village's Sub-autonomic Organizations Be Cultivated? A political anthropology study of Liu village's Old People Association in Zhejiang. *Sociological Studies* 24(03).

# A Custom of Southern Fujian from the Perspective of Anthropology -- Buddha's Birthday

Huang Cuimei <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH7

---

## ABSTRACT

Religious syncretism is a very prominent feature of Southern Fujian culture. It also generates a variety of festival customs in that part of the province. "Buddha's birthday" is a very important traditional festival in rural areas of Southern Fujian, with a great impact on rural interpersonal relations, culture, spirit, and so on. Through the methods of participation observation and in-depth interview, based on the detailed description of the custom of "Buddha's birthday", including food procurement, sacrificial ceremony, guest banquet, drama performance, etc, this paper attempts to analyze the social function and cultural implication of the festival with the anthropology theories, such as the social function theory of Émile Durkheim and the reciprocity theory of Marcel Mauss. In recent years, due to the prevalence of drunk driving, fighting and comparison, the government has asked people to simplify this custom, which has gradually been weakened. Therefore, at the end of the paper, through the questionnaire, we try to learn about the attitudes of people towards the official simplification of this custom, analyze the significance and value of this custom to local people, and reflect on the way out of the traditional customs in the process of modernization.

*Keywords: Buddha's birthday; Southern Fujian culture; festival customs; anthropology.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The diversity of folk beliefs and traditional customs is a very prominent regional feature of Southern Fujian culture. The predecessors of anthropology have done considerable research in this field and achieved fruitful results, such as *the Encyclopedia of Southern Fujian culture*, *the study of Southern Fujian culture* and *the festival customs of Fujian and Taiwan*. All these books involve the recording and research on folk beliefs and traditional customs in Southern Fujian.

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 1125362307@qq.com;

However, there are many mountains and hills in Southern Fujian. Such geographical characteristics divide Southern Fujian into many smaller geographical spaces that are relatively closed to each other, resulting in the situation of "different winds in ten miles and different customs in thousands of miles". Taking the "Buddha birthday" described in this paper as an example, even if it is the same Township, the "Buddha" sacrificed in different villages is also different. This makes the original diversity of folk beliefs and traditional customs more complex. Most previous explorations have studied and recorded the main beliefs and customs in various large regions, while there are few research records similar to "village gods" in smaller localities. When we want to make a more complete and comprehensive record and preservation of the folk beliefs and traditional customs in Southern Fujian, we have to pay attention to such smaller local beliefs and customs. Building on that perspective, this paper records the village God "adult male" in the author's village, and analyzes its cultural function and changes through times.

## **2. WHAT IS "BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY"?**

In his article "a preliminary exploration of the custom at the age of Houtian village, Tong'an county" Shi Yilong (1991), Shi Yilong divided the custom of "Buddha's birthday" into three categories: first, the general "filial piety Buddha" day (孝佛) used to worship all the Buddhas in the community; second, festivals dedicated to sacrificing a Buddha; and third, the village Buddha's birthday. The "Buddha's birthday" described in this paper is the custom of Jiudu Town, Nan'an, Quanzhou, the author's hometown. It worships the village Buddha, which belongs to the third category.

There are two Buddha birthdays every year in Jiudu Town, one big and one small. The small Buddha birthdays are concentrated in May and June, and the big Buddha birthdays are concentrated in August and September. The specific time of Buddha's birthday is different in each village, but the form is consistent. It is mainly composed of three parts: sacrifice, banquet and Gaojia opera performance. This paper takes Xinfeng village as an example.

### **(1) Sacrifice**

In Xinfeng village, the Buddha's birthday is dedicated to "adult Buddha" (大人公). According to the old man's dictation, "adult Buddha" (大人公) changed from the family God of a family in the village to the village god. When a woman from three generations back in the family was grinding rice and making ginkgo to worship God, she complained about the hard work of Buddhism and said, "it's better to have more fields than respect more Buddha". As soon as she finished, her mouth tilted. Then a God appeared and said, "how can you talk more?" The woman immediately admitted her mistake and her mouth returned to normal. Since then, the family began to worship this God. The villagers heard that it was supernatural and competed to worship it, so it evolved into a village god respected by the whole village.

There are mainly two places for Buddha's birthday sacrifice. First, in the morning, people went to the village temple to offer sacrifices to "adults Buddha" ( 大人公 ). On the Buddha's birthday, there will be a "edge table" ( 缘桌 ) in front of the Buddha statue in the temple to place the fruits and dishes offered. The dishes required by the "edge table" ( 缘桌 ) will be drafted and arranged by the village's "leader" ( 头人 ), and each family will choose and prepare them by themselves. The "Leader" ( 头人 ) is determined by those who want to pass the "divination Cup" ( 卜杯 ) during the Spring Festival. Second, in the evening, before the banquet, people "reward the gods" ( a ceremony to reward the gods ) in front of their own door. When offering sacrifices, we need to light incense ( 点香 ), burn gold paper ( 烧金纸 ), set off firecrackers or fireworks.

### (2) Banquet guests

The banquet on Buddha's birthday is held in the evening. Its schedule is not fixed, but it is concentrated from 6:00 to 7:00 pm. The guests at the banquet were mainly relatives and friends of various families, most of whom were friends of the host and brothers and sisters of the hostess and their families. The way of invitation was conveyed was through home visit in the early years, but now it is mainly invitation by telephone. Invitation also pays attention to etiquette. Older and closer elders generally have to invite face-to-face. Other relatives and friends, if the time for the banquet is still not up, should also call and urge again and again to show their sincerity. Different families have different numbers of guests, ranging from one to five or six tables.

The dishes for banquet guests are generally more than 12, and the dishes are not fixed. There are three main categories: first, the characteristic dishes of Southern Fujian, such as "five spice rolls" ( 五香卷 ), the first course for each family to hold a banquet, which has almost become a tradition; Second, poultry dishes, such as native duck soup; Third, the more expensive dishes at present, such as mandarin fish and fresh shrimp in the early years, abalone, sea cucumber, crab at now. Dishes are usually cooked by each host. Therefore, Buddha's birthday is a very busy day for the host family. They must go out early in the morning to buy the required ingredients, and then spend most of their time cooking. In recent years, there has been a phenomenon of hiring chefs to cook. Often, several families cooperate to hire a chef to cook together. There are beers and drinks at the banquet. There are usually 8 or 10 people at a table. The dishes are on the ground one by one. The guests talk and laugh while eating.

### (3) Gaojia opera performance

The performance of Gaojia opera is arranged after the banquet. It starts at 8 p.m. and ends at 11 p.m. with cannon signals which can be heard almost in the whole village at the beginning and end of the opera. The stage is directly set in front of

the temple. The original purpose of the Gaojia opera performance is to entertain the gods or reward the gods. It is divided into two types: one is to raise funds from the whole village, and the other is to repay the gods with individual funds. Gaojia opera uses Nanyin, which has the characteristics of Southern Fujian culture, and attracts most of the elderly to watch the performance. The audience is not limited to the village. People from the next village often watch it together, and some guests go straight to the theatre after attending the banquet. In addition to the elderly, children are also a lively group of people under the stage. Although they can't understand Nanyin and drama words, the unique makeup, costumes and dignified props of drama actors are enough to stimulate their curiosity and imitation, not to mention the temptation of cotton candy, sugar gourd and other stalls in the performance venue. Therefore, for children, Buddha's birthday is a day worth looking forward to.

### **3. THE FUNCTION AND IMPLICATION OF "BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY**

In Radcliffe Brown's theory of structural function, "function" refers to "the contribution of part behavior to the whole behavior". He believes that "the function of a specific social convention refers to its role in the operation of the whole social system and in all social life." Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (2011 ) As a sacrificial custom twice a year, the "functions" of "Buddha's birthday" are diverse, and have a significant impact on all aspects of people's life.

#### **(1) Religion**

First of all, "Buddha birthday" is the spiritual belief of the older generation. When old people talk about the origin of "adult male", their words are full of reverence, and their eyes are still shining with piety and faith. Year after year, the fixed time worship ceremony has already made people put their teen fingers together, burn incense and engrave the ritual of bowing repeatedly into their blood. When people have trouble or want something, they must think of going to the temple to worship. No matter whether the Buddha answers his request or not, worshiping is peace of mind and more hope. We can't quantify how many believers' hopes are placed in the furnace full of gold paper ashes, and how many prayers' fears are released by clusters of burnt red incense stumps, but we are sure that it is already an essential part of people's spirit.

In addition to spiritual sustenance, "Buddha birthday" also has the entertainment function of religious activities. In rural areas where the economy is poor, the level of culture and education is very low. There are basically no cultural facilities, and people's cultural and recreational activities are almost impossible to talk about. The Gaojia opera performance of "Buddha's birthday" twice a year has naturally become a "entertainment feast" that has attracted much attention and expectation. The old people are not afraid of the heat of the day or the cold of the night. They are also not afraid of too far away from the temple road. They carry chairs, swing fans or long clothes and go to see the Gaojia opera performance, which shows their eagerness. After the feast, the next day, if you observe

carefully, the topic of the old people's group chat must be the repertoire and plot of last night's Gaojia opera.

## (2) Society

Durkheim mentioned in the basic forms and life of religion, "Any society will feel that it is necessary to strengthen and confirm the collective emotion and collective consciousness on time and regularly. Only this emotion and consciousness can enable the society to obtain its unity and personality. The recasting of this spirit can be realized only by means of aggregation, gathering and meeting. On these occasions, individuals are closely connected, and then deepen their common feelings. Emile Durkheim (2009) "Buddha's birthday", as a collective activity, really plays a role in consolidating the collective emotion and consciousness. This is reflected in many small details. On the eve of the festival, the head has to collect public expenses from door to door and distribute the dishes required for the edge table ( 缘桌 ), so there are individuals and the whole community, and cooperation between individuals. On "Buddha's birthday", everyone in every household would rush to the grocery store to buy food materials. Familiar people would come and go, greeting and talking about the dishes to be prepared, in the festival atmosphere, everyone was enthusiastic and excited. After the dishes were prepared, the neighboring families would invite each other to worship in the temple together. When they went to the temple, they would also meet people they were all familiar, in the whole process, filled with warm conversation, it virtually promotes emotional communication. This "enthusiasm" and "excitement" should be what Durkheim calls the "invisible force" from the collective society, which consolidates people's collective emotion and collective consciousness.

In terms of social relations, "Buddha birthday" not only consolidated the collective emotion and collective consciousness of the village as a "whole", but also consolidated social relations at all aspects. First, it promotes relationship by marriage. The object of the "Buddha birthday" banquet is the closest relatives of the hostess's mother's family. On ordinary days, there are few opportunities for relatives by marriage to get together, and the "Buddha birthday" banquet is the most important occasion for in laws and relatives to get together. Secondly, promote inter village relations. The date of "Buddha's birthday" is different in different villages. People in different villages entertain each other, which promotes inter village exchanges. Third, the "banquet" of "Buddha's birthday" is an important occasion for the construction of personal social relations. The wealthier families in the village often invite the most important people (most of them are village officials) in the village. When drinking and talking, they get familiar with each other, and so that they can cooperate and help each other in the future if they need.

In addition, Buddha's birthday deeply constructs people's collective memory. The desire to eat, drink and have fun on the "Buddha's birthday" and the expectation of buzzing with excitement banquets, bending their fingers and counting down the coming of this grand day are childhood memories that many people can't

erase. The costumes and performances of the actors and actresses on the Gaojia opera performance stage have become the objects of imitation when they play at home in childhood. They regard their own bed as a drama stage, mosquito nets as a curtain, girls' small bodies wrapped in long sheets as nvdan's(女旦) water sleeves and cloak, and boys learn wusheng's(武生) steps and gestures. They enjoy it. This is also the childhood memory that many people can't erase. Halbwachs put forward the concept of "collective memory" and said that "collective memory is the process and result of group members in a specific society sharing the past." Maurice Halbwachs (2002) <sup>[4]</sup> if there is any collective memory in every generation in this rural area, the memory of "Buddha's birthday" must be the right one.

### (3) Culture

From a cultural point of view, the last thing of "Buddha's birthday"--the performance of drama has well promoted the spread and inheritance of Gaojia opera. Nanyin is a unique cultural heritage of Southern Fujian. However, the richness and diversity of modern electronic entertainment products basically make people have no time to pay attention to traditional culture, and the new generation of young people can hardly understand Nanyin. The performance of drama basically disappeared in rural areas, with one exception --the ceremony of paying God on Buddha's birthday. The impression of the new generation in rural areas on drama often stems from this custom. At the same time, the existence of the Buddha's birthday custom in Southern Fujian has generated the demand for performing dramas, made it necessary for all kinds of troupes and drama actors to exist, and promoted the inheritance of Gaojia opera.

### (4) Economy

Referring to the economic perspective, we have to the reciprocity of "obligation" involved in Mauss's *Gifts* Marcel Mauss (2002) <sup>[5]</sup>. "Buddha's birthday" is actually a kind of reciprocity. In rural areas, most people are not well-off. It takes a lot of money to prepare a banquet with more than a dozen dishes, but no one has ever canceled the banquet. Different villages hold "Buddha's birthday" on different dates. If one hold it in their own village, they will invite people in other villages. If people in other villages hold it, they will participate in other people's banquets. In fact, "invite or not" and "attend or not" are not determined by the subjective will of individuals. If others invited you, but you don't attend, it implies that you are alienated and indifferent to them; Similarly, when it's your turn to host a banquet for others, you should also send a banquet to him, otherwise it is also contempt and impolite to others. Therefore, "invite or not" and "attend or not" actually hide a "moral" obligation, which makes the "Buddha's birthday" banquet always maintain the communication between people in the village.

## **4. A QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY ON THE OFFICIAL SIMPLIFICATION**

As mentioned above, as a traditional custom, "Buddha's birthday" plays an important role in all aspects of villagers' life. However, the wheel of history rolls forward, and even a long tradition cannot escape the changes of the times.

With the improvement of economic level, the banquet of "Buddha's birthday" has also achieved a particular turn. People have long been dissatisfied with the ordinary dishes that let the guests eat well. The "chicken and duck fed by themselves" originally regarded as precious have to retreat to the second line. The abalone, lobster and crab on the banquet table are the delicacies that can meet the "host's face" and can be praised by the "guests". A wind of comparison unconsciously permeates this originally simple Festival. On the other hand, with the improvement of living standards, people's means of transportation have changed from simple small motorcycles to grand cars. At the Buddha's birthday banquet node, the rural roads that were never congested will also be crowded. In addition, due to the drinking of banquet guests, traffic accidents caused by drunk driving also occur from time to time. To this end, the government has proposed a measure to simplify Buddha's birthday - only offering sacrifices to gods without banqueting guests. Banquet is the most lively and ceremonial part of "Buddha's birthday". Buddha's birthday without banquet is like having no soul. There are different understandings and opinions on this measure of the government. Therefore, the author conducted a questionnaire survey (<https://www.wjx.cn/report/142126077.aspx>).

The object of this questionnaire survey is the villagers of Xinfeng village. The content of the survey mainly involves three parts: first, the understanding and attitude towards the government's simplification measures; Second, the views and attitudes towards the traditional custom of "Buddha's birthday"; Third, the villagers' suggestions. The author has received a total of 157 answers. The following will analyze the three parts one by one according to the answers.

(1) The understanding and attitude towards the government's simplification measures

When asked "do you agree with the government's simplification", 48.41% chose "very agree" and 22.29% chose "more agree". It can be seen that most people hold a positive attitude towards the government's simplification measures. Among the reasons for the government's simplification measures, two: "traffic congestion, drunk driving accidents and so on" and "waste and comparison social atmosphere" won higher votes, 77.07% and 70.7% respectively. It can be seen that most people have a better understanding of the original intention of the government's simplification measures.

This attitude and understanding are more like a rational behavior. When asked whether there is a difference between the traditional Buddha's birthday and the simplified Buddha's birthday, the emotion revealed, and 74.52% thought there was a difference between the two. To sum up, these differences mainly include two aspects: on the one hand, there are the benefits brought by the measures of simplifying Buddha's birthday, such as reduce waste, saving resources, reducing traffic accidents and promote safe driving. On the other hand, there are shortcomings brought by the simplification of Buddha's birthday. Without banquets, there are fewer opportunities for relatives and friends to communicate, and the emotions between them become lighter. The Buddha's birthday also loses the sense of ceremony and atmosphere, and the Festival becomes

deserted. This is also the biggest reason why the simplified measures cannot be unanimously accepted by all people. When referring to the "significance of holding Buddha's birthday", the option of "gathering relatives and friends to promote emotion" was recognized by 71.34%, which also shows the great impact of canceling banquets on the emotional communication between relatives and friends.

### (2) Views and attitudes towards "Buddha's birthday"

When asked about "the significance of holding Buddha's birthday", the highest choice to win the vote is not "gathering relatives and friends to promote emotion", not "Celebrating Festivals in the same village to promote unity", nor "offering sacrifices to gods for protection" or others, but "inheriting traditional culture and passing on fuel and fire from generation to generation". It can be seen that the weight of "Buddha's birthday" in people's hearts is not brought by its practical function, but its weight as a traditional custom. At present, the younger generation is not familiar with the sacrificial ceremony and process of Buddha's birthday. When asked whether it is necessary to inherit, 38.22% think it is "very necessary" and 33.76% think it is "more necessary". It can be seen that most people attach great importance to the inheritance of traditional customs. Through the cross analysis of the data, we also found that the age range of people who think it is necessary to inherit is very wide, including 25, 35, 45 and 55. It can be seen that agreeing to inherit the tradition is not only the concern of the older generation, but the concern of most people.

### (3) Villagers' suggestions

Villagers are full of affection for the custom of Buddha's birthday. When asked whether they will miss the Buddha's birthday if it disappears, 70.06% chose "yes" and 15.92% chose "possible". People are affectionate about "Buddha's birthday" and have made a rational simplification of "no banquet". Then how can we find the emotional communication between relatives and friends weakened by rational simplification, as well as the sense of ceremony and atmosphere that disappeared with "no banquet"? The villagers put forward new suggestions: some people believe that the banquet link can still exist and need not be canceled. The problem of waste and comparison can be solved by formulating village rules and regulations and jointly limiting banquet and vegetable funds; Traffic jams can be handled by encouraging some close guests to walk to dinner. Traffic safety can reduce drunk driving and accidents through on-the-job inspection and supervision of traffic police. It was also suggested that we could jointly agree to hold a Grand Buddha birthday every few years, allowing grand banquets, and simplifying no banquets in ordinary years... The villagers put forward many suggestions, all flashing the light of the wisdom of workers and showing their deep feelings for the "Buddha birthday".

## **5. CONCLUSION**

As a traditional custom, Buddha's birthday has a great impact on people's life, involving religion, society, culture, economy and so on. In the process of

historical development, it has become a part of people's spiritual sustenance and cultural belonging, which is highlighted in people's deep recognition of this custom and their expectation of inheriting the tradition.

With the continuous development of society, the essence and dregs of traditional culture are also experiencing the scouring and filtering in the torrents of the times. Everything seems to be changing: It is forbidden to set off fireworks and firecrackers during the Spring Festival. The Pure Brightness Festival advocates online worship and sweeping. On Buddha's birthday, we only worship gods and do not entertain guests, and so on. We have heard a lot of sighs in the face of the changes of traditional culture. But maybe we do not have to worry so much: These are actually changes in form. What we long for behind those forms — the sense of festival atmosphere, the sense of life ceremony, spiritual sustenance, emotional resonance, moral advocacy, etc. have not disappeared. What we want to look forward to the inheritance of "Buddha's birthday" is not to see a group of young people with scientific education holding red incense bowing and praying repeatedly in front of the statue, but to maintain our expectations and yearning for a better life. It is not to see the intoxication of people drinking and having fun at the banquet, but the understanding of the emotions between relatives and friends and the pursuit and affirmation of physical and mental relaxation and pleasure. The preservation and inheritance of traditional customs lies in the continuation of connotation, rather than the intact preservation of a specific form.

With the desire to inherit these beautiful connotations, maybe we will invent more new "traditional customs" with new forms in line with modern life. Maybe one day we can invent fireworks and firecrackers that will not cause air pollution, alcohol that will not lead to "drunk driving", and abundant material conditions that will make people no longer have any vanity of comparison. We hope that until that day, we will still remember our original intention of inheriting the "Buddha's birthday".

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Alfred Radcliffe-Brown 2011 On the connotation of function in Social Science ,In Structure and function of primitive society [C] : Commercial Press, Ding Guoyong.
- Emile Durkheim 2009 Basic forms of religious life [M]: Beijing, China Social Sciences Press.  
<https://www.wjx.cn/report/142126077.aspx>
- Marcel Mauss. 2002.Gifts [M]: Shanghai, Shanghai People's publishing house.
- Maurice Halbwachs 2002. On collective memory [M]: Shanghai, Shanghai People's publishing house.

***Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation***  
*A Custom of Southern Fujian from the Perspective of Anthropology -- Buddha's Birthday*

Shi Yilong.1991:11. Preliminary study on festival customs at the age of Houtian village, Tong'an County [a]. In Festival Customs at the age of Fujian and Taiwan -- Proceedings of the second academic seminar of Fujian Folklore Society [C]:Fujian Folklore Society, Fujian folklore society.

---

© Copyright (2023): Author(s). The licensee is the publisher (B P International).

# When Tradition Encounters Time: A Study on the Identity Definition of Hui Ethnic Group's "Ta Jiao" (Stepping Feet)

Kong Deyin <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH8

---

## ABSTRACT

'Stepping Feet' is a traditional national sport that the Hui ethnic people like. It is originated from Jingyuan County of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Whether 'Stepping Feet' is martial art or dance is a question worth discussing. So clarifying the cultural identity of 'stepping feet' can avoid the disappearance caused by identity crisis.

Using the methods of literature, interview and logical analysis, this paper explores the evolution of the 'Stepping Feet' from its 'bouncing leg' origins in Hui martial arts. At first, stepping was well known as a martial art. But in recent years, due to the change of living environment and the expansion of people's spiritual needs, 'Stepping Feet' became a hybrid of the martial art and dance cultures and was well known by people. Under the background of social development, the government emphasis on cultural prosperity and protection need of culture's survival crisis, the form of Hui Ethnic group's 'Stepping Feet' needs to be integrated. So, the ultimate identity of 'Stepping Feet' on the cultural identity should be considered as intangible culture. This cultural identity can not only make stepping better integrate into modern society, but also promote the inheritance and development of 'Stepping Feet'.

*Keywords: Hui ethnic group's 'Ta jiao'; stepping Feet dance; the intangible culture; traditional sport.*

## 1. FROM MARTIAL ARTS TO DANCE: 'STEPPING FEET' ON THE EVOLUTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

Many scholars have studied the origin of Hui nationality's 'Stepping Feet'. Qin Wenzhong mentioned it in *Hui Folk Sports -- Stepping Feet*, Yuan Guowei in *The Origin of The Hui Stepping Feet*, Ma Zhanke in *Research on the Folk Sports of Stepping Feet in Ningxia*, Zhang Zongmin in *Research on the Development*

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 46984156@qq.com;

*dilemma and Countermeasures of The Stepping Feet.* There are three theories about the origin of Stepping Feet in these works.

The first theory is that the Hui nationality's 'Stepping Feet' originated from Huihu people's dance. From the existing ancient documents about the Huihu dance, these dance movements are mainly head, shoulder and feet movements, and there is no feet stepping or bouncing. Through referring to relevant literature such as Sports Annals of Shaanxi province and Sports Annals of Ningxia, there is no record of the Uygur martial arts similar to 'Stepping Feet'. So the view of 'Stepping Feet' originated from dance lacks evidence and needs further research.

As for the second origin, it is believed that the 'Stepping Feet' originated from the *stepping* of livestock by the merchants in Jingyuan County, Ningxia in Qing Dynasty. This argument is also unconvincing. On the one hand, it is inconsistent with the history and business facts of hui nationality in Jingyuan County of Ningxia. According to historical records, Jingyuan County in Ningxia was called Hua ping chuan before the tenth year of Tongzhi of Qing Dynasty (1871). At that time, there were no Hui people living in Jingyuan County, and only a small number of Han people lived scattered. Later, the Hui people living in Shaanxi migrated westward from their original residence and came to Jingyuan County. Since then, the local government settled the migrating Hui people, guiding them to take root in the local development of production. However, the Qing government did not encourage spontaneous business activities for the sake of management, so the view that 'Stepping Feet' originated from merchant driving cattle with their feet is inconsistent with local history. On the other hand, production and life style for sports gestation and birth to conform to the common situation. For example, people hit their livestock with stones and sticks, which gave birth to the sports culture shot-put and javelin throwing. From this point of view, the way of 'Stepping Feet' is not consistent with the common situation of livestock handling and the possible sports culture related to animals, So this view is not consistent with reality.

As for the third point, it is believed that the 'Stepping Feet' originated from the martial arts *snap kick*, which is the view accepted by most scholars. This origin view is recognized by most scholars mainly for the following two reasons. First, explicit records from historical materials. According to *Ningxia Sports Annals*, *snap kick* is one of the Hui martial arts, because it is quick, strong and brittle, like a bullet shot, so named. It was introduced to Ningxia in the mid-Qing Dynasty, settled in Jingyuan first, and then gradually spread in the form of *stepping feet*. Qiu Shusen also clearly recorded in *The History of Chinese Islam that stepping feet* was mainly popular among Hui people in Jingyuan, Ningxia. Second, the Hui nationality has the characteristics of advocating and practicing martial arts, and the traditional martial arts of the Hui nationality are rich in content. The hypothesis that 'Stepping Feet' originated in Hui martial arts is credible.

According to the investigation, the origin of 'Stepping Feet Dance' mainly occurred in the mid-1980s. In 1985, under the policy influence of the Ministry of Culture, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and other departments, Jingyuan

County government also carried out the collection and collation of relevant folk proverbs, ballads and stories. In 1986, Li Guanghui, a staff member of the Jingyuan County Cultural Center, and his colleagues saw local people practicing their 'Stepping Feet' in Yuanzi village, Jingyuan County. He thought that 'Stepping Feet' has a strong aggressivity and performance, can be stage performance. So he collected and sorted out the practice methods of 'Stepping Feet'. In 1989, Li added the music of Huaer to the practice and created a dance called 'Stepping Feet Dance'. In the 4th Traditional Ethnic Minority Sports meeting of Ningxia, the 'Stepping Feet Dance' won the gold medal of performance item. From then on, the foot dance became familiar with people. Later, it gained fame and spread widely through national traditional ethnic sports games and TV media.

From the perspective of its development process, 'Stepping Feet Dance' was innovated by Li Guanghui and other dance staff on the basis of martial arts form. The relevant literature and research also confirm this point. It is recorded in the *Data book of Jingyuan County- A Collection of Chinese Ethnic and Folk Dances: The stepping feet dance originated from stepping feet, a Hui martial art with highly difficult movements*. In the *Annals of Chinese Dance · Ningxia Volume*, it is also written that *the widely popular stepping feet in Hui nationality provides the source of stepping feet dance*. Ma Xizhen, Wang Bo, Yan Xuefeng, Wang Yingmei and other scholars also believe that the 'Stepping Feet Dance' comes from the Hui martial art 'Stepping Feet'.

Dance, like other art forms, comes from life. The 'Stepping Feet' provided the foundation for the emergence of 'Stepping Feet Dance'. Based on the analysis of the origin of 'Stepping Feet Dance', the author found that it originated from the folk martial art 'Stepping Feet' of Hui nationality. After adaptation and innovation, 'Stepping Feet' began to be performed on stage as a dance form. Then through the competition and performance in the Ningxia minority traditional sports games and the National minority traditional sports games, the dancing form of 'Stepping Feet' was gradually recognized and widely spread. When 'Stepping Feet' was on the stage in the form of dance and became a dance with national characteristics, it completed the transformation from martial arts to dance, and 'Stepping Feet' acquired the cultural identity of dance.

## **2. THE REASONS FOR THE EVOLUTION FROM MARTIAL ARTS TO DANCE**

The change of living social environment is the external condition of the evolution of the 'Stepping Feet'. The purpose of culture is to meet the needs of people's production and life style, and the survival of culture cannot be separated from the corresponding living environment. China's social development has undergone different changes since ancient times. The political and economic changes that have taken place have affected the changes in people's way of production and life, as well as changed the social environment for cultural survival, as an external factor in the evolution of cultural identity. Shifting back to the development of the 'Stepping Feet', it originated from the martial arts 'Snap Kick'.

In the long history, it was changed by the external living environment, and gradually evolved from the martial arts trampoline to the 'Stepping Feet' dance. Martial arts 'Snap Kick' has the technical attack, can play the role of defense. There is a direct relationship between the 'Stepping Feet' with the characteristics of martial arts and the social environment at that time. The 'Snap Kick' emerged in the period of Chinese ancient agricultural culture, the social material resources were not developed, and wars or conflicts occurred frequently. In the countryside, the public security cannot be satisfied, the bandits often harm the villagers' personal and property safety. The local people often practice 'Snap Kick', so that they can defend their homes and property, and when there is a war, they can also defend the country. During the Qing Dynasty, Hui people moved from Shaanxi to Jingyuan County in Ningxia, their production, living environment has changed, the social environment is also different from before. Social stability and personal safety have been guaranteed. Although the local people continue to practice martial arts customs, the living environment has changed, they do not have to harness their skills to fight against the bandits and enemies. With the change of the external living environment, the martial arts 'Snap Kick' with offensive and defensive skills has evolved into national sports with fitness and entertainment as its main function. In modern times, especially after the founding ceremony of the People's Republic of China, the country political situation was stable, the society was prosperous, the public security environment was well, and people no longer had to worry about war, threats to their personal safety and financial losses. In this social environment, the 'Stepping Feet' also by the cultural protection workers excavation, creation, from the martial arts evolved into a the 'Stepping Feet dance'.

With the further development of society, the increase in productivity has promoted the enrichment of material resources. After satisfying the material needs of life, people's spiritual needs have increased. The expansion of people's spiritual needs is the internal cause of the evolution of the 'Stepping Feet'. In order to meet people's needs, as the role of 'Snap Kick' from self-defense to fitness, as a means to promote people's health. People living in Jingyuan County, because of the lack of cultural and entertainment activities, life is boring. To cope with this problem, 'Snap Kick' shifted from the simple body-building, individual practice of martial arts with competition, many people to participate in watching the national sports activities, and gradually became a 'Stepping Feet'. With the change of people's spiritual life, 'Stepping Feet' has changed from martial arts into a kind of fitness sports, and then gradually evolved into a recreational function on the basis of its original fitness function. With the passage of time, people's aesthetic demand for 'Stepping Feet' also expanded, 'Stepping Feet' has also evolved from entertaining martial arts to entertaining and aesthetic dance forms. The combination of 'Stepping Feet dance' and local folk traditional music enhances the appreciation of 'Stepping Feet dance' and meets the spiritual aesthetic needs of people in modern society. The 'Stepping Feet dance' is accepted by the local people and is widely spread. In short, the expansion of people's spiritual needs to promote the 'Stepping Feet' function of the evolution, and eventually become a 'Stepping Feet dance'.

The homologous integration of "martial arts" and "dance" is the contact channel of the evolution of the 'stepping feet'. In terms of homology, Chinese culture has a long history. Many scholars have studied the history of martial arts and dance, which shows that they have the same origin. They all originated from the production and life of people in ancient Society. The homology of martial arts and dance shows that they have the same foundation. From the relationship between martial arts-'Stepping Feet' and 'Stepping Feet dance', the homology of martial arts and dance provides a theoretical basis for their mutual learning and development. From the perspective of blending, martial arts and dance, as different cultures, are shown by the body as a carrier, which provides innate advantages for their blending. On the one hand, the performance of dance on the absorption of martial arts, the origin of 'Stepping Feet dance' is the most typical example of dance absorption of martial arts. The previous analysis has shown that the 'Stepping Feet dance' comes from the martial arts 'Stepping Feet', which is adapted and created by literary and artistic workers. On the other hand, martial arts also absorb a lot of dance movements. Martial arts absorb the dance of the body to fly, limbs swing, foot changes and so on, can increase the aggressiveness of the attack and the stability of defense. Connection is the basic condition for the existence of things, it is also the cause of movement, change, and development. The same origin of martial arts and dance provides the basis for the connection between 'Stepping Feet' and 'Stepping Feet dance'. They absorb and blend with each other, giving each other the advantage of being flexible in both directions. Under the joint action of these factors, 'Stepping Feet' into 'Stepping Feet dance' has become a reality.

### **3. INTANGIBLE CULTURE: THE REALISTIC IDENTITY OF 'STEPPING FEET'**

The morphological connotation of 'Stepping Feet' accords with the conceptual characteristics of 'intangible culture'. From the origin of 'Stepping Feet', derived from 'Snap Kick', which is a kind of martial arts, but in the development history, it has evolved into 'Stepping Feet Dance' with the identity of dance. It is not appropriate to classify 'Stepping Feet' as martial arts or dance according to its cultural identity. If stepping is classified as martial arts, it loses its original characteristics of attack and defense, and it can't achieve its role of defeating the enemy in the real world. From the real scene of stepping in Jingyuan County, these participants adhere to the following rules: First, only stepping, not kicking. Second, all actions that intentionally hurt the opponent's vital parts are dangerous and are not allowed. Third, when the opponent is knocked down, the game can only continue until he stands up again. If 'Stepping Feet' is defined as dance, then it should have the characteristics of dance. But what people usually talk about 'Stepping Feet' is not to define it as dance, but to define it as a traditional national sport. As Li Guanghui said, in the process of tapping and sorting out 'Stepping Feet', 'Stepping Feet's identity clearly points to the sports domain, not to dance. If it is expressed as 'Stepping Feet Dance', then it is a dance form with stepping as the main action. Therefore, from the analysis of these two reasons, considering the origin and evolution process of 'Stepping Feet', it is inaccurate to

determine the cultural identity of 'Stepping Feet' as martial arts or dance. How to understand the cultural identity of 'Stepping Feet'? From the current realistic background, the state pays more attention to the prosperity of national culture, and intangible culture is the identity to 'Stepping Feet' on. On the one hand, the form of 'Stepping Feet' accords with the conceptual category of intangible culture. Intangible culture refers to various cultural forms that can reflect the humanistic and spiritual features of groups and individuals in which they live, which are mostly presented by traditional skills, festivals and ceremonies. Intangible culture is not the opposite of material, but an expression of many intangible cultural forms. Intangible culture pays more attention to the spiritual level of culture and the intangible level closely related to people's daily life. Oral traditions and forms of expression, i.e. language; Performing arts; Social practice, ceremony and festival activities; Knowledge and practice of nature and the universe; Traditional handicrafts. These are all intangible cultural heritages. Whether it is the identity of martial arts derived from the 'Snap Kick', or the identity of national sports reflected in the historical evolution, or the 'Stepping Feet Dance' adapted and innovated, the forms of the 'Stepping Feet' are in line with the concept and category system of intangible culture. On the other hand, from the intangible characteristics of intangible culture, treading also has the intangible characteristics in connotation. The intangibility emphasizes people-centered memory, experience or spirit. It emphasizes the quality that does not depend on the material form. Since its birth, 'Stepping Feet' has shown the intangible characteristics of unfitness and looseness. There is no tradition of family inheritance, and there is no form of mentoring inheritance in 'Stepping Feet'. It is an action skill that people gradually master by learning from each other and competing with each other through their eyes, ears and messages in long-term life. With the death of some highly skilled inheritors, there is a dilemma of no heir. From this point of view, 'Stepping Feet' is intangible cultural heritage. 'Stepping Feet' was recognized as the first batch of intangible cultural heritage in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in 2007. This fact also confirms the intangible culture identity of 'Stepping Feet'.

The survival crisis of 'Stepping Feet' requires the protection of the identity of intangible culture. With the acceleration of China's modernization process, people's living environment and living standards change and improve, the living environment of 'Stepping Feet' has also changed. Because of these reasons, Jingyuan county's people concept has also changed, they pay more attention to the economic construction and material level, and the inner spiritual culture of 'Stepping Feet' is ignored. According to the survey data, there were few scenes of 'Stepping Feet' in the countryside of Jingyuan County, Ningxia in 2019, and fewer people had the skills of 'Stepping Feet'. According to the old people's recall, everyone in garden village almost can foot in the birthplace of 'Stepping Feet' in the 1970s and 1980s. There were also some folk's 'Stepping Feet' competitions, and a lot of people involved in it. In 2006, more than 800 people, mostly young and middle-aged men, took part in 'Stepping Feet' in Jingyuan County. But more than a decade later, only more than 30 people participated in the activity, and these people are trained to participate in the national Ethnic Minority Games. Due to the change of social environment, the expansion of people's spiritual

needs, the abundance of modern entertainment activities and other reasons, the 'Stepping Feet' has changed. In the past, there were many people who participated in 'Stepping Feet', but now few people did participate, and fewer and fewer people have mastered 'Stepping Feet' skills. 'Stepping Feet' disappears from daily life and meets an existential crisis. The decline of traditional folk culture is an inevitable phenomenon in the process of social development and cultural exchange and integration, as well as an objective law that is difficult to reverse. The decline of traditional culture is also the inevitable result of the current social transformation. Therefore, we need to strengthen the construction of traditional culture. The government has also made many policies on the protection of traditional culture. These policies need to be implemented in the protection of 'Stepping Feet'. In order to solve the survival crisis of treading, it is necessary to regard 'Stepping Feet' as an intangible culture and protect it. Only by doing these, can we promote the development of 'Stepping Feet'.

#### **4. THE REVIVAL OF NATIONAL TRADITIONAL CULTURE IS CONDUCTIVE TO THE PROMOTION OF THE IDENTITY OF 'INTANGIBLE CULTURE'**

Revival is to rise again after decline. Many traditional national sports in China are forced to withdraw from People's daily life under the impact of modern western sports. At the same time, with the changes of society, the traditional national sports culture has lost its original living environment and is facing a survival crisis. After 2010, China became the second largest economy in the world and continued to grow at a relatively high rate every year. With the strong support of economy, the country's desire for the revival of national traditional culture is growing day by day. Starting in 2017, the country has formulated a series of policies on the revival of excellent traditional culture. The implementation of these policies has played a more important role in people's daily life. As intangible cultural heritage, 'Stepping Feet' has become a symbol of the festival to awaken memories. The festival is the concentrated embodiment of folk culture. The collective ritual of festivals can achieve the reconstruction of memories and experiences. The 'Stepping Feet dance' is an indispensable part of Jingyuan County festival activities. The national cultural costumes and graceful and vigorous dancing on the stage awakened people's collective memory of culture in 'Stepping Feet'. People seem to go back to the old moonlit scene of wheat fields stepping on each other. The festive atmosphere reached its climax. National culture needs communication, communication needs platform, breakthrough needs window. In order to inherit and develop the intangible cultural heritage, the local government regularly holds Tourism Festivals and Cultural Festivals every year. The performance of 'Stepping Feet dance' in tourist attractions and folk villages not only adds cultural atmosphere to tourist attractions, but also enables people of different nationalities to get together in the same field. On this platform, the various national cultures have realized the exchange, the communication, the fusion.

On the one hand, cultural identity is related to ethnic groups, but also to the political life of the country, and at the same time, it is related to the new

cosmopolitanism formed by globalization. Because of the joint efforts of the State and society, the national traditional culture contained in the 'Stepping Feet' can be continued, and the people's identification with the state has been promoted. Since 1987, when the Jingyuan County government began to excavate 'Stepping Feet', the local government has formulated the policy of 'Stepping Feet' inheritance. Under the guidance of the government, villagers regularly hold 'Stepping Feet' culture festivals to integrate traditional culture into tourism. This form attracts a large number of tourists. The activities related to 'Stepping Feet' bring people from different regions and nationalities together. 'Stepping Feet' is more widely spread among different ethnic groups. The protection of 'Stepping Feet' from the local culture level to the intangible cultural heritage at the national level, its dissemination scope and object are also gradually expanded, and the public's recognition of the country is strengthened.

'Stepping Feet' has become an educational symbol for inheriting national culture. Schools are important places for cultural inheritance. When it was martial arts, there was no fixed way of 'Stepping Feet' s inheritance. But there was a fixed form of inheritance - Teaching in the school when 'Stepping Feet' became intangible cultural heritage. The participants have changed from villagers to students, and all school students can participate in practice. In 2006, Jingyuan County Bureau of Education launched the 'Stepping Feet' into the campus project. After nearly ten years of efforts, 'Stepping Feet' has been gradually promoted from schools in Jingyuan County to schools in surrounding counties and districts. The school inheritance mode of 'Stepping Feet' has got rid of the limitations of region, nationality and gender of the original folk inheritance, and promoted the cross-cultural communication of 'Stepping Feet' among students of all nationalities. The national spirit and sports spirit contained in 'Stepping Feet' play an important role in the all-round development of students' body and psychology. 'Stepping Feet' can also enhance students' national pride and self-confidence.

At present, the innovative inheritance and creative transformation of excellent traditional culture has become the focus of local cultural work. The traditional culture contained in 'Stepping Feet' is an important part of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation. 'Stepping Feet' has many values, such as fitness, entertainment, aesthetics and so on. Under the background of vigorously carrying forward the excellent traditional culture, we can't limit 'Stepping Feet' to one cultural identity. Whether it is regarded as martial arts or dance, it is difficult to adapt to the current social background. From the perspective of social needs, the state attaches importance to cultural prosperity and tries to build cultural self-confidence. The external form and cultural connotation of 'Stepping Feet' are in line with the characteristics of intangible culture. When 'Stepping Feet' becomes a provincial intangible cultural heritage, its cultural identity has been significantly improved. Taking the cultural identity of 'Stepping Feet' as the medium can inherit the traditional culture contained in 'Stepping Feet'. At the same time, the survival crisis of 'Stepping Feet' has also been alleviated. For example, in some counties and districts, 'Stepping Feet' has become the teaching content of school physical education courses, and a three-

level 'Stepping Feet' inheritor system at the provincial, municipal and county levels has been established, combine 'Stepping Feet' and tourism to jointly develop national traditional sports tourism resources.

'Stepping Feet' in Jingyuan County is an image of the life scenes of local residents in different historical stages. 'Stepping Feet' originated from martial arts, rooted in life, developed into dance, and finally became an intangible cultural heritage. Every change of cultural identity is an adaptation to social development. This adaptation leads to different cultural meanings. The development process of 'Stepping Feet' provides experience for the inheritance and development of sports intangible cultural heritage. In the context of the country's continuous promotion of the revival of traditional culture, as the intangible cultural heritage, 'Stepping Feet' will have better development prospects.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## REFERENCES

- Bai, Jinxiang, Yang, Bin, Peng, Jinsong. 2001. Cross-binding, Differentiation, Absorption and Symbiosis -- On the historical origin of Chinese traditional Sports and folk dance. *Journal of Beijing Sport University*, 24 (2):146.
- Chen, Xiaorong, Ma, Zhaoming, Zeng, Hongfa 2019. Intangible cultural heritage of Chinese sports: NingXia Volume. Lanzhou: Gansu Education Press (15-22).
- Liu Jian. 2006. Mind and body objects. Yinchuan: Ningxia People's Press (27).
- Liu, Naibao, Fan, Kai, Yang, Han. 2016. Homologous Isomerism and Interpenetrating Convergence: Evolution Logic of Martial Arts and Dance. *Journal of Sport science*, 37 (1):82.
- Ma, Jie. 2014. A study on the origin and formation of The Treadle of Hui nationality in Jingyuan, Ningxia. *Hundred Schools in Arts*, S1 (21):342-343.
- Ma, Ping. 2005. On the Pluralistic Developmental Trend of the National Culture under the Structure of Globalization. *Nationalities Research in Qinghai*, 16 (1):36.
- Pang, bao. 2020. The Intangible Culture in the Perspective of Anthropology of Heritage. *Folklore Studies*, 150(2):101.
- Qin, wenzhong, Zhang yimin. 1992. A traditional Sport of Hui ethnic: Stepping Feet. *Sport Culture and History* (4):49.
- Tan Hua. 2009. *History of Sports*. Beijing: Higher Education Press.
- Wu, Zhendong. 2016. Memory, Experience and Community -- Ethnic Art and Festival Aesthetics from the Perspective of Aesthetic Habitat. *Journal of south-central university for nationalities*, 36 (4):24-26.
- Xu, Linhai. 2014. A Study on The Hui martial arts 'Stepping Feet' of Ningxia Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Traditional martial arts research*, 3 (11):77-81.

***Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation***  
*When Tradition Encounters Time: A Study on the Identity Definition of Hui Ethnic Group's "Ta Jiao"*  
*(Stepping Feet)*

- Yuuan, guowei, Zhang, yanping.2008. The origin of Hui ethnic's stepping Feet. Heilongjiang History (14):61.
- Zhang, Jinsong. 2105. The connotation and elements of cultural identity. Social science of Tianjing (5):51-53.
- Zhang, zongmin. 2011. Research on the development dilemma and countermeasures of Hui nationality stepping feet. Journal of Chifeng, 27(8):122.

---

© Copyright (2023): Author(s). The licensee is the publisher (B P International).

# The Cultural Significance of Nanyin in the Society of Fujian Region

Zhang Xingyue <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH9

---

## ABSTRACT

Nanyin is one of the ancient music genres existing in China. In 2009, Nanyin was included in the "List of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity" by UNESCO. In ancient Chinese history, immigrants who moved to the south brought the music culture of the Central Plains into today's Fujian region, blending with the local folk music, the music of Nanyin was able to take root in the local area. Sense then, Nanyin has been intertwined with the lives of Minnan people, the audience has gradually expanded, Nanyin has formed its unique influence. Nanyin comes from the Central Plains and has absorbed a variety of cultural elements during its development. This article first introduces the diverse cultural elements Nanyin contained. In the second part of the article, the author analyzes how Nanyin connected with the daily life of Minnan people and major events in their lives. Then, this article analyzes the unique inheritance form of Nanyin's "oral teaching". And this unique form has led to the formation of some associations. The associations gathered with Nanyin as the core have built communities in southern Fujian and overseas. The cultural significance of Nanyin is described from the above aspects.

*Keywords: Nanyin; cultural identity; rites of passage; community.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

After thousands of years of development, Nanyin has evolved from the culture of the Central Plains to the distinctive features of the southern Fujian dialect circle. With Quanzhou as the core, it radiates to the entire southern Fujian dialect circle, forming a wide-reaching Nanyin cultural circle. The cultural significance of Nanyin is reflected in people's practice since ancient times, and it is a typical case where music goes with others. In the existing research, most emphasize the significance of Nanyin in cultural space. This article starts with the geographical evolution of Nanyin, analyzes how Nanyin is intertwined with people's lives, completes its secularization and localization, and takes root in the Southeast. It analyzes the important value and significance of Nanyin from two angles: at

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 1216809414@qq.com;

home and abroad, and its symbolic roles, that is the meaning including the realistic demands and spiritual sustenance of people in practice. Associations and communication objects are the key to Nanyin's role as a bridge to build a community. The article describes the process of cohesion from individuals to groups, introduces the aggregation of the common patriarch worship to the Nanyin cultural circle, and how to arouse the identification of overseas Chinese and become a spiritual bond.

## **2. THE GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD AND CLASS MOBILITY OF NANYIN**

Nanyin, also known as Quanzhou Xuanguan, is one of the few types of ancient music that exist in China. Nanyin is mainly popular in Fujian, Taiwan, and Nanyang. During the Han Dynasty, there was a trend of southward migration in China. The population of the Central Plains continued to move to the southeast, and the music culture of the Central Plains also came to Jinjiang, Fujian.

According to the archaeological research of Nanyin, Ruan and Nanyin pipa in the Jin Dynasty have an important relationship. Ruan Xian from the Central Plains was introduced into Quanzhou, and its shape and playing style became a pear-shaped horizontal hug, and eventually became the Nanyin pipa in Quanzhou Nanyin. (Wang qing,2021) During the Tang Dynasty, the Central Plains music represented by Daqu merged with local folk music, and gradually formed the embryonic form of Nanyin in the Song Dynasty. During the Yuan Dynasty, Nanyin blended part of the content and style of Yuanqu. In the middle and late Ming Dynasty, Nanyin absorbed the elements of Kunshan and Geyang accents in Jiangsu and Zhejiang. During the Qing Dynasty, Nanyin had formed a mature system and took root in Fujian. (Shui Xing, 2020)

As one of the representatives of traditional music in southern Fujian, Nanyin is not only an art that gives people a pleasant enjoyment, it is integrated with the lives of the people in Fujian, and even becomes a core element connecting overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. The evolution and dissemination of Nanyin reflects cultural changes, and means communication and flow between people. In the existing research, the communication of Nanyin is mainly divided into two types: spatial communication and class mobility. In terms of space, it spreads mainly along the migration routes of immigrants, and the second is that the communication center of Nanyin changes along with the economic changes of the port and the canal. The flow of social class is from top to bottom.

On this shore of the mainland, many immigrants moved to Zhangzhou due to reservoir construction after the 1960s, which preserved the local Nanyin culture and affected the later distribution of Nanyin Pavilions in Zhangzhou. Zhangzhou's plain terrain brought into play its advantages in agricultural economy and attracted a group of immigrants to make a living. The need for steel development in Sanming also attracted a large number of workers from Quanzhou, which laid the foundation for the later Sanming Nanyin Society. In Taiwan, a large number of people from Zhangzhou, Quanzhou and other places went to Taiwan to

cultivate in the Qing Dynasty. At the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China, the people of Nanyin on both sides of the strait exchanged frequently. In 1945, many Nanyin people went to Taiwan and stayed in Taiwan for quite a while after 1949. (Zeng Xianlin, 2017) However, it has also been suggested that music flows with people. Musical instruments such as pipa and clappers that were popular in the Tang and Song dynasties may have moved to all parts of the country with the migration of the population, but similar types of Nanyin are not found in other places. (Lin Lice, 2018) Chen Yanting believes that Nanyin's value lies in its conservativeness. Music in other places has been replaced by the times, and many historical relics have disappeared. However, Nanyin retains many things passed down from generation to generation, which makes it more historical. (Chen Yanting, 2020) Nanyin was conceived in Quanzhou. During the Song and Yuan dynasties. Quanzhou was a starting point of the Maritime Silk Road. The development of the city affected the lives of citizens and entertainment venues enriched the music life. In the Ming Dynasty, Zhangzhou Yuegang replaced Quanzhou as a major international trade port. During the Qing Dynasty, Zhangzhou Moon Harbor fell and Xiamen Harbor rose. The three main communication centers of Nanyin changed in this order. (Zeng Xianlin, 2017)

In the historical evolution of Nanyin, there was a process from the scholar-official class to the ordinary citizen class, which included factors such as the promotion of women's status and the secularization and popularization of Nanyin. Nanyin people usually hold their own high-class. In ancient times, Nanyin people thought that they were the upper class and did not associate with the inferior people. In an era when life was highly dependent on labor, people who took a lot of time to study and play Nanyin had considerable material wealth. Therefore, playing Nanyin in ancient times was a luxury and a way of reflecting social status Activity. (Lin Lice, 2018) On the other hand, the singing of Nanyin has always been in the female society, but it is not recognized, but the circulation in the female society has a profound impact on the spread and inheritance of Nanyin. The first generation of female Nanyin people in mainland China was the first batch of female members recruited by the Quanzhou Folk Orchestra established in 1960. The Taiwan region has developed along with a series of events such as the popularization of education and the liberation of women's status. In 1945, many geishas left Xiamen and returned to Taiwan. The profession of geishas was banned, and their status was transformed into good-family women. This change was gradually recognized. They broke the original rule of prohibiting women from entering the museum, and even did better than man in Nanyin singing.

As a historical and cultural heritage, Nanyin has gone through generations. The content not only contains the cultural elements of the Central Plains, but also deeply integrates with the characteristics of southern Fujian. The evolution and inheritance of Nanyin is deeply related to people. It not only reflects the spatial flow of people, but can also indicate changes in social class. The most important thing is that it is deeply connected with people's emotions and values.

### **3. LOCALIZATION AND SECULARIZATION OF NANYIN**

The spread of Nanyin is not only reflected in space, but also in social classes. As Nanyin flows from the scholar-official class to the common people, it is intertwined with the daily life of Minnan people and becomes an important part of the life of Minnan people. The localization and secularization of Nanyin is reflected in its connection with Minnan people.

#### **3.1 Traditional forms and Characteristics of Nanyin Performances**

Although Nanyin has experienced a top-down class movement, the people of Nanyin still have a unique arrogance in their hearts. They regard Nanyin as a noble ambition to cultivate sentiment and do not use it as a way to earn a living. Nanyin people do not take performance as the goal of learning Nanyin. Nanyin performance is an activity of skill exchange and emotional expression, and it must abide by specific traditional rules, habits and taboos.

The most formal traditional performance of Nanyin is called "Pai Mentou". "Mentou" is a proprietary concept in Nanyin. For more than two "mentou", the main part of the performance is sung one after the other, and the transition between "mentou" ends is to perform "over-the-head tunes", so "Pai Mentou" is also called "pass-over-singing". Nanyin is composed of "zhi", "pu" and "qu". The performance of "Pai Mentou" must take these three parts into consideration, and it is very systematic and standardized. The "Pai Mentou" performance is an exhibition space for Nanyin people, where both beginners and highly skilled performers can get the opportunity to show. There are many "mentou" in Nanyin, but the popular ones are limited. Beginners usually learn from popular tunes. These tunes that most Nanyin people know are called "front tunes". Usually, it takes many highly skilled performers to support a "Pai Mentou" performance, otherwise there will be no song to sing after a few "front songs" are sung. For more than half a century, the traditional "Pan Mentou" performance has almost disappeared. (Chen Yanting, 2019)

"Visiting Hall" is an activity where Nanyin Halls and Pavilions visit each other, exchange, and learn. The pavilion is a place where Nanyin people study and communicate daily, and it is now called the Nanyin Club. This kind of music group is spontaneously established by citizen, and it is based on the needs and initiative of the people. "Visiting Hall" originally occurred between two pavilions, and later the number of pavilions involved increased. After many years of evolution, a pattern that spans pavilions and regions has developed, that is, "Nanyin Conference Sings". (Wang Dandan, 2018) Nanyin Convention Singing is an official performance of folk Nanyin groups, a contemporary variant and scale expansion of traditional Nanyin activities. Nanyin singing is mainly held when there are important events, and it is still a skill and emotional exchange activity within the Nanyin people. Since the Lantern Festival Nanyin Singing was held in Quanzhou in 1981, Nanyin Singing has become a new folklore in Southern Fujian and a highlight of contemporary Southern Fujian culture.

### **3.2 Nanyin in the Life Rituals of Minnan People**

The connection between Nanyin and Minnan people arises when the child hears the mother's humming while infant. Nanyin participated in the life etiquette of Minnan people and entered their life course. Nanyin played an indispensable and important role in the important life rituals of Minnan people, especially musicians. On certain important occasions, there are corresponding Nanyin repertoires and singing styles. When the couple has a good peace for a hundred years, familiar festive repertoires will sound at the wedding. In some places, Nanyin music is also played at the funeral. If the deceased is a Nanyin person, a traditional Nanyin "Xuanguan Festival" is also held. (Peng Zhaorong, Ge Rongling, 2007)

People who are highly associated with Nanyin, such as Nanyin musicians, major contributors, and their families, will go to sing for free when they get married or pass away. The music for weddings or funerals is relatively fixed, and the music played at weddings is festive. The funeral music is sad. In the early days, the Nanyin people only attended the important ceremonies of these people. In this case, it is a mutually beneficial act for the Nanyin people to perform on important occasions with each other (Lin Lice, 2018). Let those who participate in the inheritance and construction of Nanyin enjoy the uniqueness of Nanyin. This is also the most direct and effective way of motivating, because even if outsiders have money, it is difficult to invite Nanyin people to sing. It also shows the extraordinary status of Nanyin people. Nowadays, as long as you pay some money, you can also invite Nanyin people to perform.

Although Nanyin people do not easily attend performances for others, they still actively participate in some public social activities, such as the birthday of a Bodhisattva. On this day, people from Nanyin will set up a stage to sing. It is not only a public performance, but also an opportunity for musicians to compete on the same stage.

"Jilangjun Ceremony" is a ceremony for Nanyin people to pay homage to their ancestors. It covers many aspects such as "opening of the hall", "worshipping", "begging for children", and "accepting disciples". Some scholars once inspected a "pray for children and sacrifice to ancestors" ceremony in Tumen Nanyin Club in Quanzhou. At the ceremony, several Nanyin people slowly sang and the host sang a song "Huatangjiecai" to create an auspicious atmosphere for the audience. While singing the song "Plum Blossom", the couple burned incense and prayed for their son. When singing "Five Lakes Tour", the husband and wife offered tea, bowed, and inserted incense into the incense burner. The host sang another song "Huatangjiecai" to conclude the ceremony. (Li Jiping, Wu Qihong, 2007)

The "three libations" ceremony is a ceremony held by the Nanyin people for the funeral of respected musicians or their families. If ordinary people who liked Nanyin repeatedly asked for a "three liberation" ceremony for them during their lifetime, the Nanyin musicians would also agree if they couldn't get rid of it, but the process would be different. ( Gao Tingting,2016 )

#### **4. NANYIN COMMUNITY AMONG OVERSEAS CHINESE**

An important reason why Nanyin is irreplaceable in southern Fujian is that it creates a connection between people. Not only in Fujian, Nanyin also spread to Southeast Asia with the pace of people, acting as a bridge among the dialect Chinese communities in southern Fujian. The regions and countries where Nanyin are spread outside the mainland are mainly Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and other southern Fujian dialect Chinese communities. Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia rely on Nanyin to send their nostalgia. It even maintains a community with Nanyin as the core.

With the help of the Maritime Silk Road, Nanyin took root in overseas Chinese communities and even the local society, and became an important part of their cultural life. Wang Zhou believes that the spread of Nanyin in Southeast Asia is a rooted transmission path. After Chinese groups migrate to Southeast Asian countries, they often live in a certain area of the same country for several consecutive generations, or several generations in the same country. The area moved to other areas again after living in the area for a longer period. (Wang Zhou, 2016) Nanyin's meaning to the southern Fujian dialect circle overseas and the circle in Fujian is not the same. The feelings of overseas Chinese expressed by Nanyin add a layer of nostalgia and patriotism, and Nanyin also provides a sense of belonging for wanderers away from home. The factors for the construction of the Nanyin community in Southeast Asia include persistent associations, common industry god worship, traditional ceremonies, and public Nanyin performance activities.

Associations are the main way for overseas Chinese to establish Nanyin communities. Nanyin enthusiasts mainly use the carrier of Nanyin associations to connect with their hometowns and nostalgia. The Nanyin community is rooted in overseas Chinese and local residential areas around the world. They are active in various local folklore and festive occasions with their Nanyin performances and become an important part of the mass cultural life. They also cultivate the inheritors of Nanyin through these associations. The Nanyin associations overseas and the associations in Fujian are in common. They share the rules, customs, and taboos in this cultural circle. Jilangjun Ceremony is one of the important customs. Some people overseas call Nanyin Langjun music, and the Nanyin Society is also named Langjun association, and strictly abide by the rules of the time node and ritual procedures of Jilangjun Ceremony. This ritual event became an opportunity for overseas Chinese to get to know each other. Worshiping a common industry god has shortened the spiritual distance between each other and has become a source of identity in the Nanyin cultural circle of the Chinese community. In the annual Autumn Jilangjun Ceremony, many Nanyin associations from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia will go to Quanzhou to participate in activities. Through a common ancestor worship, Nanyin connects people together. Jilangjun Ceremony is the key to maintaining this bond. The Nanyin associations also held a series of other activities to deepen the friendship of the Chinese. Hengyun Pavilion is the most prestigious

Nanyin society in Singapore and Malaysia in the early twentieth century. It holds regular activities every year, making Nanyin a carrier for overseas Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia to commemorate the motherland and homeland festivals, and to commemorate the Avalokitesvara who believed in their hometown.

The public Nanyin performance is an important way to communicate with the Chinese community, and the Nanyin conference singing is an important formal performance form in the Nanyin cultural circle. In 1977, the Xiangling Music Society of Singapore organized the "Asian Nanyin Concert", which set a precedent for a large gathering of overseas Nanyin fans. In 1981, Quanzhou hosted the first "China Quanzhou Nanyin International Conference Singing" in 1981, and various Nanyin associations at home and abroad were invited. Since then, "Nanyin Conference Singing" has become one of the big events in Nanyin cultural circles. Chen Zhenmei compared the activity organized by the Indonesian Oriental Music Foundation with the one in Quanzhou. One of the differences is that the Indonesian Oriental Music Foundation has arranged a local brass band in the street-walking team and has also joined other local Indonesians art. This approach can not only increase the sense of intimacy to increase the number of onlookers in the ceremony, but also tell everyone that they are Chinese in Indonesia. This is a kind of protection for the Chinese as foreign cultural "invaders" in Indonesia. It is a highlight of the Chinese and Chinese culture. Chen Zhenmei came to the conclusion from the research on the three Nanyin conventions sponsored by the Indonesian Oriental Music Foundation that the way of singing and stepping on the streets through the Nanyin convention to attract more people can not only meet everyone's aesthetic needs, but also be a way of being far away from the mother's culture. Others in a foreign land create opportunities to get close to the traditional culture of their hometown. Taking this opportunity, the integration of the Chinese culture and the local Indonesian culture has gradually eliminated the barrier between the two different cultural groups. For the foundation itself, it can obtain the support of the Chinese community and become a channel to enhance the sense of belonging of the Chinese culture, maintain and enhance the cohesion of the Chinese in Indonesia, and avoid being the "invaders" of foreign cultures by themselves or their descendants by the surrounding environment Assimilate, avoid forgetting where you came from, and let the next generation have the opportunity to get close to and feel the cultural charm from their hometown, and to express their homesickness. (Chen Zhenmei, 2017)

In overseas areas, Nanyin uses long-lived, regular activities, more persistent associations as the carrier, and uses closely related people as the target of communication, creating a tangled network of relationships in the overseas residences, and then build a community with Nanyin as the core.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The formation and dissemination of Nanyin is a typical manifestation of music going with people. In ancient times, the music culture of the Central Plains came to Fujian with the immigrants who moved to the south, combined with the local

cultural elements, and integrated different music styles in the development. Until the Qing Dynasty, a complete Nanyin took root in Quanzhou. The spread of Nanyin is reflected in two levels: geographic space and social class. Geographical communication is related to the population migration in southern Fujian, and the change of Nanyin's communication center can also reflect the city's economic prosperity and decline. The upper Nanyin of the social class has experienced a top-down flow, from the elegant culture of the scholar-official class to the mass culture of the citizen class. However, it is worth mentioning that people who play Nanyin still think that they have extraordinary elegance and disdain to communicate with the public. As a team, perhaps this is related to the luxury of playing Nanyin in ancient times, so it has become an activity that can reflect social status. The flow of social space also includes the process of improving the status of women and breaking down barriers to enter the Nanyin cultural circle. Nanyin completed its secularization and localization in the two dimensions of geographic and social stratification, intertwined with the lives of Minnan people, and became an important cultural activity.

The secularization and localization of Nanyin is reflected in its connection with the Minnan people. On the one hand, it is manifested in the traditional activities of Nanyin, and on the other hand, the connection between Nanyin and the life rituals of the Minnan people. Nanyin's traditional activities attach great importance to etiquette, and have fixed requirements from the external environment and personnel arrangements to the performance of the repertoire. Nanyin will appear in people's funerals, ceremonies and other occasions, and these matters will also be related to Nanyin's internal customs, such as rituals to worship the common industry god. But it is worth mentioning that not everyone can enjoy Nanyin's support for the ceremony.

A major contribution of Nanyin is that it serves as a bridge to bring people together, which is especially reflected in the overseas Chinese community. Nanyin spreads to Southeast Asia with the footsteps of overseas Chinese with a rooted path of transmission, integrates into the local society and builds a Nanyin community. The construction factors of this community include persistent associations, common industry God worship, traditional ceremonies, public Nanyin performances, etc. In the long-term interaction, a communication network with kinship, personal relationship and geographic relationship is formed.

In the unique historical geography and cultural ecology of southern Fujian, the value of Nanyin is irreplaceable. As a masterpiece of intangible cultural heritage, it is the crystallization of multiple cultures and contains the practice of people's communication in history. The cultural significance of Nanyin is reflected in its relationship with people. The cultural circle formed around Nanyin interacts with the Minnan dialect cultural circle, which has become the cultural embodiment of the life forms of Minnan people and the cultural basis for their identity. Therefore, the cultural significance of Nanyin is also reflected in its symbolic function. Nanyin has accompanied the people in the southern Fujian dialect circle for thousands of years, deeply integrated into people's collective unconsciousness, and has become the spiritual sustenance of the Minnan people, who have heard

their mother humming Nanyin since their infancy, and they also look forward to the appearance of Nanyin in important life ceremonies. Nanyin's activities have formed a complete social communication space, which has developed from the teaching of skills between individuals to group communication, gradually forming spontaneous associations, and providing people with an elegant spiritual space. Associations are also occasions for people to expand the scope of communication, especially among overseas Chinese groups. Nanyin associations, especially overseas, tend to expand the social communication space to the entire Minnan cultural circle outside of Nanyin fans. They accept and help Chinese wandering in foreign countries by means of mutual assistance from the same hometowns, so that they feel the warmth of the local music and nostalgia, and build it A unique social community different from "blood ties" and "geographical" identities. The symbolic role of Nanyin makes people share an identity symbol, that is, the common worship of the gods of the industry, also known as the Ji Langjun ceremony. This has become the spiritual bond for the spiritual connection of Chinese at home and abroad, especially in Southeast Asia.

In short, the cultural significance of Nanyin is reflected in the aspects of historical origin, geographical space, population migration, and social life.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Chen Yanting, 2020, My Thoughts on the Examination and Explanation of Nanyin Historical Source Inspired by the Relationship Between Nanyin and Dunhuang's Historical Documents[J], *People's Music*, 4, 50-54.
- Chen Yanting, 2019, My Reflections on the Dilemma of the Inheritance of Nanyin Music[J], *People's Music*, 2, 50-53
- Chen Zhenmei, 2017, The Inheritance and Evolution of Nanyin Culture in Indonesian—A Case Study of the Indonesian Oriental Music Foundation General Assembly[J], *Journal of Qujing Normal University*, 5, 117-121.
- Gao Tingting, 2016, Xiamen, Zhangzhou, Quanzhou Folk Nanyin Activities and Their Culture Heritage Effects---Taking Jilangjun Ceremony as an Example[J], *Journal of Quanzhou Normal University*, 3, 1-7
- Huang Nianxu, Gong Jiayang, Lin Zhijie, Ye Yaying, 2013, *Nanyin*[M], Xiamen, Lujiang Publishing House
- Li Jiping, Wu Qihong, 2013, Nan Yin "Jilangjun Ceremony" and its spread at home and abroad[J], *Fujian Forum (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 12, 76-78
- Lin Lice, 2018, My Opinions on Nanyin's Cultural Ecology[J], *Chinese Music*, 3, 136-143.
- Peng zhaorong, Ge Rongling, 2007, Nanyin and Cultural Space[J], *Ethnic Arts Quarterly*, 4, 64-69
- Shui Xing, 2020, Nanyin[J], *Cultural Geography*, 1, 117.

***Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation***  
*The Cultural Significance of Nanyin in the Society of Fujian Region*

- Wang Dandan, 2018, A Study of the Inheritance of Nanyin Culture[J], People's Music, 10, 50-52
- Wang Qing, 2020, An Overview of Nanyin Archaeology[J], Journal of Quanzhou Normal University, 1, 72-77.
- Wang Zhou, 2016, Research on Quanzhou Nanyin's International Communication Mode in the Maritime Silk Road Traffic[J], Music Research, 4, 40-52
- Zeng Xianlin, The comparison and the thought of inheritance of Nanyin Quchang in cultural ecology on both sides of Taiwan Straits—taking the art of Quchang of Ma Xiangduan and that of Cai Xiaoyue for example[D].Fujian Normal University, 2017.

---

© Copyright (2023): Author(s). The licensee is the publisher (B P International).

# The Ritual Process of the Canoe Dragon Boat in the Qingshui River Basin

Zhang Zhonghai <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH10

---

## ABSTRACT

The dragon boat culture of the ethnic groups in southern China has a long history. Every year during the Dragon Boat Festival, many ethnic groups will row a dragon boat to commemorate a great poet-Qu Yuan. However, in the Qingshui River Basin, the descendants of Chi You (a tribal leader defeated by the Yellow Emperor, who is a legendary ruler, in ancient times), the Miao people would row a dragon boat to commemorate a legend-the story of a brave father killing a dragon. The dragon boat in the Qingshui River Basin is different from the traditional Chinese dragon boat, but a "canoe dragon boat" with a whole stick of wood as the hull. The dragon boat culture of the Miao people is also quite special, in that there are not only the ritual process of killing dragons and eating dragon meat, but also the belief in worshiping and respecting dragons, the two are harmoniously combined in the Miao culture. Therefore, this writing assignment based on my fieldwork will discuss the various symbols in the Miao dragon boat ritual by combing through the ritual process of the Miao dragon boat, and how the Miao people construct their collective memory through rituals.

*Keywords: Canoe dragon boat; Miao nationality; ceremony; symbol; collective memory; traditional culture.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Every year in the middle of May of the lunar calendar, the Miao people along the Qingshui River at the junction of the Taijiang and Shibing counties in the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture of Guizhou will hold the canoe dragon boat races that have been passed down from generation to generation. And then formed a unique regional cultural phenomenon-canoe dragon boat culture.

The Miao people are an ancient people with a long history in China. They originated from the "Jiu Li" in the Yellow Emperor period and lived in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River more than 5,000 years ago. After losing

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: zhangzhonghai0623@163.com;

the war with the Yellow Emperor tribe, they retreated into the Yangtze Plain, the “San Miao” tribes formed during the period of Yao and Shun. After a war with the northern Chinese tribes, and after failure continue to move into the present-day Guizhou, Hunan, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Sichuan, Hubei, Henan provinces adjacent to the mountains. During the Tang and Song dynasties, the number of Miao people who moved to Guizhou increased and gradually became the center of the distribution of Miao people in China. Due to the late establishment of Guizhou province and its distance from the culturally developed Central Plain area, the development of the Miao Society in southeast Guizhou is slower and more independent than that in other areas. Qiandongnan has been a popular place for dragon boat racing since ancient times. The dragon boat in the surrounding Han area has successfully been transformed into a modern sports activity, fits with Taylor’s cultural “Survival” theory. But the Qingshuijiang canoe has kept its original state, and though the international dragon boat races have been held just 30 kilometers from it in Zhenyuan, it still holds on to its spiritual home, showing that there must be profound cultural reasons for the tenacious vitality.

Starting from the unique intangible cultural heritage of the Miao nationality, the Canoe Dragon Boat Festival, this paper explores the cultural pattern of the Miao nationality through the canoe dragon boat ceremony. It focuses on the origin and ritual process of the Miao canoe and Dragon Boat Festival, and analyzes and discusses the symbols in the ritual process according to the expressions of local people. Finally, this paper will discuss the cultural significance of canoe dragon boat culture among the Miao nationality.

## **2. THE ORIGIN OF THE CANOE DRAGON BOAT**

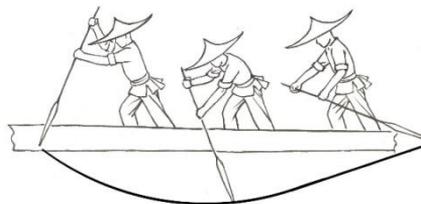
Dragon boat culture has a very long history in China, and especially popular in the south. Every year around the Dragon Boat Festival, ceremonies or competitions are held to commemorate a great patriotic poet-Qu Yuan. According to legend, in ancient times, Chu people couldn't stand Qu Yuan's death, many people rowed boats to chase and rescue him. But did not see his trace when chasing to Dongting Lake. After that, on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar every year, people rowed dragon boats to commemorate Qu Yuan. The dragon boats (Fig. 1) were used to drive away the fish in the river to prevent the fish from eating Qu Yuan's body.

However, in the Qingshui River basin, as the descendants of Chi You (a tribal leader in ancient times who was defeated by the Yellow Emperor), the Miao people rowed a special dragon boat to commemorate a local legend. According to the legend, a long time ago, there lived an old man named Bao Gong at the mouth of Xiaojiang River. One day, he took his only son Jiu Bao down to the river to fish. Suddenly, the sky was covered with haze, the wind was violent, and the huge waves of the river hit the sky. A dragon jumped out of the deep pool and dragged his son into the dragon cave. The old man was terrified and immediately dived into the water to rescue him. But it was too late. The dragon killed the child long ago and used it as a pillow, and was sleeping soundly. The old man was

very angry and determined to avenge his son. He swam back to the shore, took the sickle and fireweed, dived into the dragon cave again, set fire to the dragon and burned it to death. But the smoke from the burning cave filled the sky over the Qingshui River. It rained heavily for nine days and nights. The sky was dim, chickens couldn't eat rice, cows couldn't eat grass, and people couldn't work. Everyone could not do anything, they were very worried. At that time, a woman brought her child to the riverside to wash clothes in the dark. The child swiped a cloth's stick on the water to play, and inadvertently shouted: "Boom! Boom!" Strangely, after he shouted, the clouds suddenly disappeared from the sky, a thousand rays of sunshine rose in the east, and a bright red sun rose slowly, and everyone was so happy that they blew up and cheered.

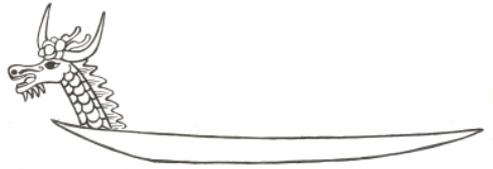
Before long, there was a colorful monster floating on the surface of the river, with a body almost 60 feet long, as thick as a bucket, and its eyes closed. Everyone ran over and saw that it was a dragon that was burned to death. The bold one cut the meat and ate it. It was very delicious. As soon as it spread, everyone wanted to taste it. So, they flocked to grab the dragon meat. Squeezed around and robbed the whole dragon. Shengbingzhai (now part of Shibing County) discovered the dragon first, so they got the dragon's head. Pingzhai (now part of Shibing County) was awarded the dragon neck. Tanglongzhai (Taijiang County, all below belongs to Taijiang County) got the body. Rongshanzhai got the dragon's waist. The people at Shidongkou went a little late, and only got the dragon's tail. And Yangjiazhai, the last to go only got some intestines. Therefore, the dragon boat in Yangjiazhai is now painted dark green (the legendary dragon's intestines are dark green), and it is called the *green dragon*.

When people picked the dragon meat, the evil dragon gave everyone a dream and said that night: "I hurt the only child of the old man and lost my life. I hope you young and old do something good and imitate my body with the cedar tree. Paddling on the Qingshui River and the Xiaojiang River for a few days, let me be like when I was alive, and I will make you happy, so that you will have a good harvest. People listened to it and believed it to be true. Just as the dragon said, made a small boat to row, and it really worked. It began to rain heavily. Everyone was happier and made dragon boats one after another to row. Everyone agreed to row according to the order of dividing the dragon meat. This rule has been the same until today<sup>1</sup>.



**Fig. 1. Boat Paddling Method (source: Zhang Zhonghai)**

<sup>1</sup> Huang Pingbo, Li Yong, *Research on the Origin and Cultural Inheritance of Miao Dragon Boats in Qingshui River*[J]. *Neijiang Science and Technology*, 2018, Volume 39 (6): 117-118



**Fig. 2. Miao's Canoe Dragon Boat (source: Zhang Zhonghai)**

Therefore, there are many differences between the Miao's canoe Dragon boat and traditional dragon boat. The dragon boats are made in different styles and shapes: the Miao's canoe Dragon boat is made of three complete trees, while the traditional dragon boat is made of multiple wooden boards. The Miao's canoe dragon boat has horns on the dragon's head, traditional dragon boat does not (Fig. 2). The boating methods are different: the Miao canoe dragon boat is rowed while standing, and the traditional dragon boat is rowed in a sitting position. From the perspective of cultural connotation, the traditional dragon boat extols Chinese culture and reflects the respect and love for dragon. It is to entertain the gods so that the dragon can bless the people to live and work in peace and prosperity. Even though the Miao people expressed their respect for the dragon and prayed for blessings to the dragon, the canoe dragon boat is to commemorate the story of brave humans resisting the dragon<sup>2</sup>. The following parts of the paper will address different aspects of the Miao ritual process connected to the canoe dragon boat.

### **3. THE RITUAL PROCESS**

In any case, the legend has become a distant past. With the development of life in the times, today's Dragon Boat Festival has become a new content that unites the masses, connects and friendships, and facilitates young men and women to love each other<sup>3</sup>. Let's talk about the specific ritual process.

First, each village will elect a dragon lord (Fig. 3), based on a village or a clan, that is, a dragon lord is elected every year. In the Miao language, it is called "Ganu", which means the master of the drum, and is commonly called "drum master".

People who become "drum master" will buy sweets and snacks, go out to inform relatives, new and old friends, called "disclosure<sup>4</sup>." The implication is that next year I will be the "drum master", and I hope to have your help so that I can row the dragon boat decently. Recipients (the relatives and friends who have not

---

<sup>2</sup> Zhang Xiao. *Legends, Rituals and Metaphors—A Discussion Based on the Miao "Dragon Boat Festival"* [J]. *Guizhou Ethnic Studies*, 2018, Volume 39 (8): 135-139

<sup>3</sup> Wei Xin. *Metaphorical Expression of the Canoe Dragon Boat Festival—Taking Qingshuijiang Miao Nationality Canoe Dragon Boat Festival in Guizhou as an Example*[J]. *Mudan*, 2019(21):82-84.

<sup>4</sup> Wu Ping. *National Intangible Cultural Heritage: Miao Nationality Canoe Dragon Boat Festival*[J]. *Original Ecological Ethnic Culture Journal*, 2017, 9(02): 2.

notified, know through other channels that their relative will be the "drum master" next year) also begin to prepare gifts for the next year. By then, relatives and friends will send the prepared gifts directly to the riverside to wait. Called "Meet the Dragon". The gifts given were mainly livestock or poultry, followed by firecrackers and a strip of red silk about three meters long. The gift from the son-in-law is at least a pig, and for the son-in-law's immediate family or family members, the gift can't be less than a sheep, usually a goose or a duck. In the past, when a person in power in the Miao Village became a "drum master," his relatives and friends also gave oxen and horses as gifts.



**Fig. 3. Dragon Head (source: Zhang Zhonghai)**

The opening ceremony of the dragon boat is solemn and prosperous. Push the boat into the water on May 18. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the village can tie the mother and child ships together with strips, and then place the dragon head on the mother ship. When the opening ceremony is held on the 24th, the "drum master" have to prepare a white rooster and a pot of white wine. Set up a table on the bank of the river, and place the dragon god's tablet on it. Along the foot of the table is tied a stick that picks branches, leaves and peels off the bark, leaves a branch, tied an umbrella, tied a section of red cloth, cut a string of white paper, and a handful of thatch. There is a white rooster and a can of rice wine on the table.

After the gods are invited, the white rooster is killed, the blood is dripped on the stick, and a few skins of wings are pulled off and clamped on the small branches of the tree stick. The chicken is cooked, place in a large bowl, and then lit the incense stick, burn paper money, spill wine on the ground, and offer cooked food to the gods. Then, suddenly the gongs and drums are sounded, and the dragon boat is drawn in a circle on the water near the stockade before leaving and heading to the competition site. In modern times, some stockades don't offer sacrifices when they set off their boats. They only stand on the riverside for the moment when they board a dragon boat. The palmer yell three times: "Brothers! Go on the dragon boat!" Everyone says in unison, "Ah", so, three times, we set off. The sacrificial objects should not be moved until the dragon boat returns from the competition field. People on board. There are one "drum master", one gong

player, one supporter, one director, and one old man. They stand or sit on the mother ship, and each son ship has 16 rowers.



**Fig. 4. Drum Master (source: Zhang Zhonghai)**

The official competition is held on the 24th of the fifth month of the lunar calendar. Dragon boats from all villages all rush to Pingzhai. At this time, the relatives and friends of the "Drum Master" (fig. 4) along the river all come to the river, set off firecrackers, and greet them with a song. This process is called "welcoming the dragon".

After all the dragon boats have arrived, the race will begin immediately. The method is to take the method of drawing lots against each other to eliminate the losers, each batch of three, and the distance of the game is about 500 meters. All orders are signaled by the release of guns. The first, second, and third winners will be rewarded with items on board after the competition, and some award flags or silver medals will be issued. On the same day, ball games, horse racing, bullfighting, cockfighting and other activities are also held on the beach near the river surface where the dragon boat races are held. Various theatrical performances are also performed. The activities with the richest ethnic characteristics include the "walking party" of boys and girls<sup>5</sup>, that is, chatting about love. And the trade in the bazaar is also going on.

When the dragon boat race is about to end, only the dragon boat load with gifts slowly leaves, and the people on the shore wave goodbye to their relatives and friends on the boat. At this time, the rowers on the dragon boat let go of their feelings and sing to the people that the festival is about to pass, let us meet again in the next year. At this time, the whole ceremony is over, and people return to their homes and return to their daily routines.

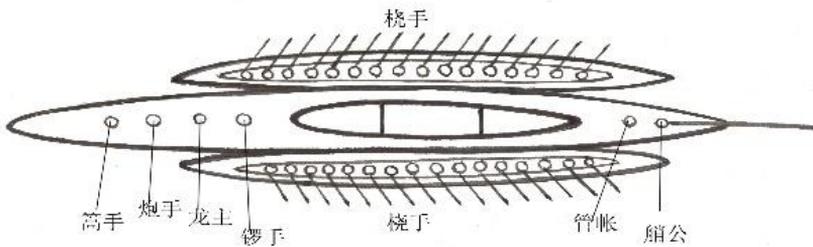
---

<sup>5</sup> Liu Qing. *Inheritance and Change: Research on the Cultural Communication of Qingshui River Miao Canoe Dragon Boat [D]*. Beijing Sport University, 2017.

#### 4. ANALYSIS OF SYMBOLS

After the dragon boat is made, the dragon wood is transported back to the priest to choose an auspicious day, and the dragon festival is also held, generally with pigs, ducks, chickens, fish, meat, incense and paper money to ancestors, and the whole village eats meat and drinks wine, sings wine songs, and celebrates by blowing the sheng and stepping on drums. Before paddling, a white rooster and a pot of wine are prepared at the home of the drum master, and a dragon position is set up at the riverside to offer a prayer. Likewise, in order to ensure smooth and safe navigation, each dragon boat has its own strict taboos<sup>6</sup>. The whole process has a strong religious color, and it can be said that the deepest part of the original culture of the Miao's canoe dragon boat is religious faith. The protection of the village is the protection of the local people.

Here, we take the "taking out of the dragon to fetch water" as an example, to get a glimpse of the symbols in the process of the ceremony.



**Fig. 5. Seating Order (source: Zhang Zhonghai)**

Before the dragon takes the water, the boat supporter, the gunner, the drum master, the gong player, the account manager, the boatman and 30 to 40 coppers all get into position on the boat and keep quiet in the order shown in figure 10.5. It should be noted that women cannot get on the boat, and a man who has a child in his family or his wife is in confinement is not allowed on board. The river is prepared with a ritual table, put a liter of white rice on the case, the rice is usually put 120 yuan, rice and money to the priest, the reason why 120 yuan is put because "12" in the Miao's view is an auspicious, complete number, the Miao believe that everything has a spirit, they believe that the Miao people were born by the mother butterfly<sup>7</sup>. The butterfly got pregnant while playing with the water bubbles at the water's edge and laid 12 eggs, but the mother butterfly could not hatch the eggs, so the pied yu bird hatched the eggs and gave birth to all things. There is usually a pot of wine on the table to honor the gods, a handful

<sup>6</sup> Peng Xuefang. *Analysis of the Cultural Connotation and Function of the Miao Canoe Dragon Boat Festival*[J]. *Religious Belief and National Culture*, 2021(01):249-260.

<sup>7</sup> Long Minglian, Luo Guoliang. *Investigation and Inheritance Model of Canoe Dragon Boat Culture in Changtan Village, a Traditional Miao Nationality Village* [J]. *Martial Arts Research*, 2020,5(11):98-101.

of reeds to symbolize the sword used to kill evil spirits and dragons, a white paper figure and a handful of white paper strips to represent the god of peace "Geihe" (local protector) and his clothes, and a branch tied to the side of the table for the god of peace to rest and hide. After that, the priest arrives and his attendants bring a white rooster (usually prepared by the drum master).

Then the priest lit the paper, inserted it into the white rice, recited the sacrificial words, and then killed the white rooster and threw it aside. Its blood was the key to summoning the blessings of the god of peace. At this time, the villagers must seize the chicken immediately, do not let the chicken jump into the water, if the rooster into the water, the day of the dragon boat activities must be cancelled. The man who caught the rooster threw it into the sky and shouted, "Yo Ho!" Everyone on the boat and on the shore shouted, "Yo Ho!" All at once, there was the sound of firecrackers on the shore, the sound of gunfire from the boat, and the noise of the crowd, the men at the stern handed out balsa grass to the men on board, and then rowed toward the water collection point. When they reached the water point, they threw the reeds into the water in the order from bow to stern, because then the boat had a divinity, and the sword represented by the reeds would hurt the dragon on the boat, so he threw his sword in homage and prayer. At this point, the water intake process is all over, the crowd singing dragon boat row to the starting point, ready to race.



**Fig. 6. Coppers (source: Zhang Zhonghai)**

Unlike the dragon boat race, the Miao's canoe dragon boat is not judged by speed, but by what local residents call "momentum"<sup>8</sup>. Generally, each village will send out a boat, and everyone on board is required to wear a ponytail hat, traditional Miao costume and a silver waist. When rowing the boat, all the coppers (Fig. 6) are required to move neatly and uniformly, the handsome and

<sup>8</sup> Wu Mingdong, Zhang Ping, *Retrospect and Prospect of Research on Dragon Boat Culture of Minorities in my country*[J], *Sports World (Academic Edition)*, 2020(02):215-216.

strong boat supporter standing at the front, the drum master drives the momentum of the whole boat, and the dragon boat tune is loud and strong, all the above are the criteria for judging the winners and losers.

When rowing along the river, the aunts of the people on board will send chicken, duck, fish and meat to hang on the boat for their nephews, in the view of the Miao people, "auntie" is a very important role, including the clothes they wear and the silver waist, etc. are prepared by the auntie for them. In this process we can see the flow of gifts, the more and more generous the gifts are, the higher the social status of the person will appear. After the whole rowing, traditionally, the boys who got off the boat will go out with the girls of the village to "walking party" (i.e., date), and the young men and women will go to look for their desired partners.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

To locals, the Miao People's Canoe Dragon Boat Festival is a men's festival, a display of male power that sustains primitive reproductive worship and sexual selection. Like many folk activities, the villages in the canoe dragon boat cultural circle have established rules and regulations. No matter how far they go, they have to go home to reunite with their parents during the festival, and participate in village celebrations and social activities. Some villages also impose fines ranging from hundreds to thousands of yuan if migrant workers cannot return to their hometowns to row dragon boats. Therefore, in the village where usually one rarely sees young people, they will come in droves for the dragon boat festival. There are many Miao boys and girls here to convey love, acquaintance, and finally married. In addition, whether the symbol of the horn of the Miao, or the symbol of the reed sword, all express the Miao People's national identity. The canoe dragon boat is a cultural heritage of unity and co-operation, so it is the canoe dragon boat that brings the whole Miao people together so that they can constantly construct and rebuild their collective memory in practice. Canoe dragon boat is also closely linked to village governance. Village chiefs and leaders organize dragon boat races to bring many young people home so that they can complete many administrative tasks.

Miao people treat dragon vaguely. The origin myth of Canoe Dragon Festival seems to show their hatred for Dragon, but in their daily life, they are full of awe and love for Dragon, what the Miao people really show is their respect for the dragon. Because in their opinion, the dragon killed by Bao Gong always protects them, makes their life happier, their crops more abundant, and their people healthy and safe. In the eyes of the Miao people, many animals can be regarded as dragons. Buffalo, centipede, frog and loach can all be dragons because they believe that everything has a spirit, a mind, so they treat animals and plants in a gentle and humble way. This sense of kinship and partnership between humans and nature is not only an organic part but the cornerstone of their existence ethics system.

Qingshui River Dragon boat and its festival has gained more and more attention at home and abroad. It not only has the unique son-mother canoe configuration, but also the specific dragon boat culture phenomenon. Authorities in Guizhou province have decided to set up dragon boat museums in Taijiang County and Shibing County, the country's first. And on the dragon culture of a variety of folk handicrafts, paper-cutting, carving, silver ornaments are among the outstanding representatives. Qingshui River Canoe Dragon Boat Festival and the national situation, there are busy times, but also cannot be carried out in years. Over the past decade, it has become as active as the dragon boat festival across the country. We believe that the Miao people and their canoe dragon boat culture will become a bright new star in both intangible cultural heritage and academic discussions.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Huang Pingbo, Li Yong. Research on the Origin and Cultural Inheritance of Miao Dragon Boats in Qingshui River [J]. *Neijiang Science and Technology*, 2018, Volume 39 (6): 117-118
- Liu Qing. Inheritance and Change: Research on the Cultural Communication of Qingshui River Miao Canoe Dragon Boat [D]. Beijing Sport University, 2017.
- Long Minglian, Luo Guoliang. Research on the Cultural Investigation and Inheritance Model of Canoe Dragon Boat in Changtan Village, a Traditional Miao Nationality Village [J]. *Martial Arts Research*, 2020,5(11):98-101.
- Peng Xuefang. Cultural Connotation and Functional Analysis of the Miao Canoe Dragon Boat Festival [J]. *Religious Belief and National Culture*, 2021(01):249-260.
- Wei Xin. The metaphorical expression of the Canoe Dragon Boat Festival——Taking Qingshuijiang Miao Nationality Canoe Dragon Boat Festival in Guizhou as an example [J]. *Mudan*, 2019(21): 82-84.
- Wu Mingdong, Zhang Ping. Review and Prospect of Research on Dragon Boat Culture of Ethnic Minorities in my country [J]. *Sports World (Academic Edition)*, 2020(02):215-216.
- Wu Ping. National Intangible Cultural Heritage: Miao Canoe Dragon Boat Festival [J]. *Original Ecological Ethnic Culture Journal*, 2017, 9(02): 2.
- Zhang Xiao. Legends, Rituals and Metaphors——Based on the discussion of the Miao "Dragon Boat Festival" [J]. *Guizhou Ethnic Studies*, 2018, Volume 39 (8): 135-139

## **PART II: OF CULTURAL HERITAGE**

# **The Evolution and Transformation of Shaman's Roles in China**

**Shan Duolan** <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH11

---

## **ABSTRACT**

Shamanism was usually treated as a primitive and uncultured beliefs system in comparison with those religions of Axial-Age Civilization. There are even some doubts on the very existence of shamanism. However, the culture and customs with shamanism characteristics do exist and prevail all over the world, especially in Northeast Asia. Therefore, Shamanism once prevailed in some ethnic groups living in the northeast and north of China, including Mongolian, Manchu, Hezhen, Ewenki, etc, and has affected their production and daily life to this day. Besides those descriptions about initiation rituals, costumes and ornaments, functions and roles, the relationships among shaman, chief and priest in myth and folklore are still essential for us to analyze the society, kinship and cosmology. On this basis, it is important to differentiate 2 aspects: "shaman in the court", and "shaman in the wild", which reflects the evolution and needs of social function and kingship structure. The great shaman as the original leader, shaman as a medium between whole society and heaven, shaman limited and controlled by the royalty in the court as a branch of religious function of kingship, were three totally different situations that should be carefully distinguished.

*Keywords: Shamanism; kingship; myth and folklore; shaman in the court; Mongol.*

## **1. THE STUDY OF SHAMANISM AND THE CHANGE OF SHAMANISM**

Before we make a detailed explanation and analysis of shamanism, including shaman and the transformation of the shamanism, we need to make a brief description of the progress and discussion of shamanism research in the world and in China.

In fact, many scholars have already done relevant discussions. Including the origin of the name of Shamanism, the essence of Shamanism, Shaman and their view of universe, the identity and role of the shaman, Influence of Shamanism on

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 13304773757@163.com;

clan and tribal life, the development and change of shamanism, and the process of shamanism exploration. Based on the reading of the above-mentioned materials, we have formed some basic understanding of Shamanism research:

1. Shamanism, was initially recognized in the Man-Tungusic groups, and first labeled as "deception", "devil's religion", and "psychiatric patients' fantasy". It is in the late 19th century that Shamanism began to be researched from the perspective of psychology and religious studies. With the efforts of anthropologists and ethnologists, it has gradually turned to the professional analysis of its sociocultural and psychological function. S. M. Shirokogorov firstly discussed shamanism in the context of ethnological research. He believes that the Tungusic people are full of fear when they surviving and struggling with the outside world, so the existence of shaman is actually like a kind of "safety valve", which plays an active and key role in eliminating individual and collective psychological crises, curing diseases and maintaining clan unity. Therefore, even if he believes that shamanism is not a religion in the strict definition, it still plays a religious role.
2. Mircea Eliade has broadened the research scope of shamanism, both in terms of time and space. He neither believes that shamanism in North Asia and Siberia is the original form of shamanism, nor does he think it is the only form. He compared the shamanism in this region with similar phenomena in other parts of the world, including the Americas and Oceania, and then he pointed out that the phenomenon of shamanism exists widely in the world, and it can exist in combination with other religions, beyond history and time. In the discussion of Shamanism in Siberia, corresponding to Shirokogorov's thought that "Buddhism promotes the formation of Shamanism", Eliade believes that shaman's ecstatic experience and the celestial ascent of shaman, are faith on the belief of a celestial supreme being, and those are the deep-rooted in emotion and consciousness of human beings. Therefore, shamanism in Siberia still just the form has changed because of historical development and has been influenced by southern religions.
3. The first record of shamanism in China is probably done by Ling Chunsheng. He agreed with Shirokogorov that "Although Shamanism cannot be said to be a religion, its function is like a religion, and its ideological system is philosophy and art of healing". The most precious material in his book is the nineteen folk stories of the Hezhen he recorded. These stories tell how the tribe's ancestors and heroes conquered the surrounding tribes step by step and made contributions. Those heroic ancestors, usually are men who must experience shaman's inspiration and education in the process of growing and conquering, and there will be one or several female shamans as their spouses who will exert their supernatural powers in battle. From these stories we can see that the shaman is not a marginalized individual suffering from mental illness. He may be the leader of the tribe, the teacher of the chief, the protector even the fighter of war. Besides, in the clan of the Ewenki, the shaman not only has to pray for the hunting and other production activities of the clan in

public, but there are many prestigious older shamans serving as clan chiefs. It means that shaman is not only the wizard, but also can be the governor of the clan as well as the interpreter and defender of the clan's customary law. Also, in the study of shamans in Mongolia, we can realize that Mongolian always relies on shaman to pray for production and decide the best time to organize military operations according to Celestial phenomena. Even during the period of Genghis Khan, Shaman "the roles of Tengri Kuokuochu" used as the national highest priest to prophesy the military operations, and even had a competition between this shaman and Genghis Khan for authority and prestige. And there still had a shaman called Huoerchi been conferred as a noble because his dream predicted Genghis Khan was going to get the throne, and it becomes one of the basis for the divine kingship which is "throne granted by Tengri". In the later period, Mongolian Khan supported activities to promote Buddhism and to eliminate Shamanism based on political considerations. Shamanism in Manchu also changed due to development of society and politics, especially after the establishment of the Qing Dynasty, shamanism integrated many Buddhist and Taoist concepts and been sacrifices in the Royal palace together. At the same time, government also imposed strict restrictions and regulations on shaman sacrifices, especially those held in countryside, in order to control the ideology and consolidate political unity. This shows that shamanism is not the irrational imagination and crazy actions of some insignificant mental patients, but is enough to influence the politics of the country and balance mentality of the masses. Shamanism involves the interpretation and performance of concepts such as the division of the universe, the cognition of the soul, the belief in the Supreme beings, etc.

Therefore, when we discuss shamanism, more attention should be paid to observe the development of shamanism in these ethnic groups. These northern fishing, hunting, and nomadic people had passed the stage of matrilineal society, patrilineal society, and Centralized state. Political organization and social structure had been considerably changed, so did the shamanism. Shamanism also provided the interpretation of the universe and spirits to cooperate the ideology of the regime. Distinctions have also appeared within the shamans, part of them gradually become professional and official, and even been kept in the palace to preside over some royal sacrifices.

## **2. COURT SACRIFICES AND FOLK BELIEFS: AN ANALYSIS OF MANCHU**

In this section, I will analyze the Shaman sacrifices of the Manchus, and focus the discussion on the shamanism sacrifices in the palaces of Qing Dynasty.

The Shamanism of the Manchu did not appear after the establishment of the Manchu regime, but was formed during the long process of inheriting rituals and customs, and experienced historical changes in northern fishing and hunting as well as nomadic societies and ethnic groups. The ancestors of Manchus were

Sushen people more than 2,000 years ago, and after Yilou, Heishui Mohe, and the Jurchen, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the leader Nurhachi completed the unification of the Jurchen tribes and established the "Hou Jin" regime, and his son Huang Taiji abolished the old name "Jurchen", and established a nation named "Manchuria". Meanwhile, Shamanism as the traditional belief of Manchuria, also related to the beliefs of those various ethnic groups we mentioned, has been inherited and developed much as well. The term "Shaman" was originally found in the "Shanman" of the Jurchen's records. It was defined as "witch" and has the ability to "transform as a god and show great power". Shanman as an intermediary between spirits and people, can help to heal disease and eliminate disaster, survive children, preside some major ceremonies (mainly sacrifice to ancestors and spirits). Of course, they also have the ability to attack others by "black magic". From this point of view, in fact, there is not much difference from shamanism in later generations. By the time of the continuous conquest of Nurhachi and the rise of Manchuria, shamanism always played a key role in military operation, help to unite people's mind, to shape the authority of the king and the legitimacy of kingship.

There are three places for shaman sacrifices in the Qing Palace: Kunning Palace, Tangzi, and Horse Sacrifice Room. I would like to make a simple description:

Some scholars believe that the term "Tangzi" evolved from the Manchu language "Dangse", which means "file". It was set up by Manchu family and was located in the sacred place of the family. The genealogy, as well as images and oracles of the ancestor and patron saints are displayed respectfully. As the chiefs of the Aisin Gioro Clan continued to conquer and unify, the Tangzi Sacrifices were not only held in army, but also firmly controlled, monopolized and upgraded by the royal family. When Emperor Nurhachi was stationing his army in City Hetuala, he has "set up a hall as the place of ritual in about three kilometers" away from his residence. Whenever there is any conquest, Nurhachi personally led the generals to sacrifice Tangzi. In the process of moving the capital, they also set up Tangzi locally. Tangzi Sacrifices and related shamanism belief provided the basis for the concept of the Qing emperor and the Qing army that they were ordered to conquer others by highest spirit --"Tengeri". "Tengeri" granted emperor the right to govern and to fight, and blessed their victory. In the process of conquering, Nurhachi abolished the Tangzi Sacrifices of other tribes and replaced them with the Tangzi Sacrifices held and hosted by the "Aisin Gioro Clan", ensuring its supremacy. The Emperor Huang Taiji carried out severe reforms of shamanism, strictly prohibited shamanism sacrifices held in wild, and stipulated a system of "worshiping the Tengeri" at the Tangzi on New Year's Day. The emperor led many princes and officials to sacrifice the Tangzi, with the three kowtow and nine prostrations. During this period, Tangzi Sacrifice has become the National Shamanism Sacrifice.

With the strengthening of the centralization, the qualification of people was allowed to participate Tangzi Sacrifice has been continuously tightened and strictly controlled. It has been developed as only the sacrifice of the Aisin Gioro Clan and even just allowed to be sacrifices by member of the Aisin Gioro Family.

Besides, other shamanism sacrifice in family of those princes also be strictly required to follow the rules of Tangzi Sacrifices, and to make sure those sacrifices not be too grand and too frequent. Moreover, at that time, before all major military operations, emperor had to led generals to worship the Tangzi, set up the ensigns of banner system outside of the Tangzi to sacrifice. After the Qing army entered Beijing, Emperor Shunzhi also set up a hall as Tangzi, and Kunning Palace was built too. Kunning Palace was the place where the emperor's wedding bridal chamber was, and three days after the wedding, it was simply used as a place for shamanism worship. Tangzi Sacrifices are the same as the Kunning Palace Sacrifices. The most important sacrifices are held in Spring and in Autumn as well as in the New Year's Day. The main ritual performer in sacrifices is shaman.

According to research, the whole process of Tangzi Sacrifice is an imitation and performance of the Manchu's creation myth, and Tangzi is a contrast of the heaven. Therefore, those restrictions on "qualification and identity of people to sacrifice", those prohibitions and bans of "Tangzi sacrifices held in the folk", were also the way to monopolize the right to have communication with the heaven-- "the kingdom governed by spirits". The sacrificial ritual not only maintains the characteristic of traditional Manchu shamanism, but also incorporates some instruments, rituals, even spirits of the northern ethnic groups such as Mongolia and the Han people lives in the Central Plains. (for example, Buddha, Guanyin and Guandi, are also worshiped in Kunning Palace). Until the 17<sup>th</sup> year of Emperor Qianlong, these rituals were integrated, recorded and formed the "Management Regulations of Manchuria Sacrifice Ceremony". So that a complete set of Qing palace rituals and other ritual activities in the whole empire became ordered and fixed, with all sacrifices required to follow its guidelines.

The main intention of the whole shamanism sacrifices in Qing Palace was that the Emperor tried to rethink and adjust the position of the Aisin Gioro Family, as well as the relationship between them and The Heaven when the Qing dynasty became the most powerful regime in China. Only the Emperor builds these belief systems well, to provide the basis for the legitimacy of domination, and the consolidation of Manchu national spirit.

### **3. MONGOLIAN SHAMANISM EVOLUTION AND MAUSOLEUM'S SACRIFICE**

As a nomadic group in the Northern China, Mongolian has a strong perception and dependence on nature due to their seasonal migration habits and production methods of grazing cattle and sheep. The belief of the highest deity "Tengri" in the shamanism we mentioned before and the "worship of nature based on animism" are widely existed in Mongolian society. So we can still see Mongolian people use milk to worship the "Tengri" and Genghis Khan as well as some mountains and rivers in their pastoral area.

Like the Manchus, Great Mongol Nation was also the saint ancestor Genghis Khan who gradually conquered and unified all tribes on Mongolian Plateau from

the end of the 12th century to the beginning of the 13th century. He announced the establishment of the Great Mongol Nation in 1206 and known as "Genghis Khan". The politic shifted from relatively loose tribal alliance to the initial construction phase of the patrimonial state, and social state is that original lineage is constantly divided and freely combined based on the needs of war and defense, and obvious class distinctions have appeared: noble lords, free warriors, free civilians and slaves. Then, all people were coding into Military organization by Khan. However, the original beliefs and customs have been retained. Even though Shamanism is closely connected with clan society, In the process of the rise and development of Mongolian, the shamanism also played an important role. Two famous shamans represented the black god--"role of Tengri" (Kuokuochu) and the white gods--"Astrologer Beki" (Horchi) respectively. When Genghis Khan had just rejuvenated his tribe "Qiyán" and his career is vulnerable, Horchi predicted that he had dreamed that "Tengri ordered Temugin (true name of Khan) to be a king", which promoted other nobles to elect Temugin as the leader of the tribe. When the Great Mongol Nation was established, Kuokuochu, with ability which is "fly to the sky and communicate with the Tengri", declared that "the Tengri ordered Temugin as a universal monarch" and said that "the Tengri granted Temugin the title 'Genghis Khan'.". Moreover, during military operation, shamans have also carried out activities such as celestial prediction and blessing for victory.

Shamanism is also very influential among the folk Mongolians. In the daily life of the Mongolians at that time, the pure shamanism was developed on the basis of ancestor worship. People worshiped the spirits of their ancestors and then they could get protection from their souls. And the excitement, convulsion and crazy dance of shaman in the ceremony are considered to be signs of the process that ancestor's spirit enter shaman's body. The "family spirit" of Mongolian actually was some idols made of felt in the shape of human beings are the "simulated images of Wengun" in shamanism. People would sacrifice these Wengun idols by fresh milk to show their respect and worship. It should be noted that this Wengun idol is an anthropomorphic image of the ancestral spirit, and this kind of Wengun worship is form of primitive shamanism. According to research, "Genghis Khan's Mausoleum" in Inner Mongolia, is expressed in Mongolian as "Wengun of Genghis Khan", shows that this is not the so-called mausoleum or cenotaph, but refers to the "spirit or soul of Genghis Khan". A legend said that people stored Genghis Khan's last breath with white camel hair before he died, and this behavior symbolized they preserved the spirit of Khan so that people can commemorate him. Therefore, sacrifice in "Genghis Khan's Mausoleum" is a form of Wengun worship of Khan whom was the ancestor of the Mongolian.

The formation of Genghis Khan's sacrifices was result of a process that kingship of Khan restrained and surpassed the sacred power of shaman and gradually monopolized the power to communicate with the Tengri, and finally reconstructed shamans to be the priests of sacrifices held for royal family's divine ancestor. And in the 16th century, Mongolian Khan also supported Tibetan Buddhism and destructed shamanism in the folk. The sacrifices of the Genghis Khan Mausoleum are in charge of a especial tribe "Darhut" and hereditary priest team

named "Yamutde". The sacrifices held in well-built palace and follow fixed regulation of rituals, which were composed of sacred song, custom-designed instruments and consecrate offerings, also strict taboo of sacredness and cleanliness about the spiritual palace and surrounding land. Some studies believe that Yamutde are official shamans in the court and serve the royal family and benefit to shape the divine kingship due to needs of the legitimacy and continuity of the rule. And it is obviously different from those shamans in the folk, such as: the difference between offering sacrifices with fresh milk or with blood, shamans in the court can communicate with the spirit of Genghis Khan and Tengri through the sacred rituals only depend on their sacred identity as a priest, rather than experience process of trance, cramping, crazy dancing, possessed by spirits, etc.

Above all, we can roughly observe: (1) In the process of Mongolians' rise and development, Shamanism as its traditional folk beliefs has vital influence that cannot be ignored; (2) Due to demands of consolidating the Mongolian monarchy, kingship restrained and surpassed shaman, then monopolized the divine power in royal family(the family of Genghis Khan called "Golden Family"). (3) The sacrifice of Genghis Khan today is not an act of paying homage to his tomb, but a form of worship to the spirit of Genghis Khan. The Mausoleum of Genghis Khan is actually the "Wengun" (spirit idol) of his soul. (4) The sacrifices and priests in Genghis Khan Mausoleum today are manifestation of those shamans who had been shaped and transformed and then entered the court to be high-level official priests that serve the divine kingship and national ideology.

#### **4. CONCLUSION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICS AND "SHAMANISM IN THE COURT"**

In summary, we can actually see shamanism widely as the traditional beliefs of the peoples in Northern China, related to their perceptions and thoughts about nature, heaven, and ancestors, as well as the worship and sacrifices formed on this basis. The Shaman is also compatible with the form of clan and tribal society. Sometimes they may be a marginal group but it is also possible to become an authority figure in society, taking on the responsibilities of curing diseases, extraditing souls, and communicating with spirits and people. With the expansion of tribal alliances and merger wars between tribes, war leader will inevitably appear with great personal charisma, political power will gradually be concentrated, and the state of a family property system governed by the dominant lineage would be eventually consolidated. In this process, the kingship needs to constantly re-assert the legitimacy of its rule and war. Then the first thing that comes to mind is to rely on the original, traditional beliefs of the tribe, they could through direct performance of miracles, or rely on the clergy as a medium to link up the spirit, to deduce the source of divine power-- "the sacred ancestors and the spirits of the world", and then preach it. As the degree of power concentration continues to increase, the divine power and sacred concepts corresponding to the form of monarchy will also change, that is, the belief in "the supreme god" appears. Especially the belief in the Tengri, and the form of worship for the sacred ancestors and sacred lineages of the king. The

theocracy will also be restricted and suppressed. On the one hand, the king will be wary of the sacred authority of the shaman in the folk, especially the "big shaman". If they raised a power and prestige competition with king, they would be strictly prohibited or even killed. After then, the monarch who has established the ideology that his power granted by supreme god and declared himself as the representative of the gods in the world incorporated the divine power into his own jurisdiction. However, he would not perform as a "shaman", because there were many conflicts with the character of the king, just like: the kingship is solemn, rational, inherited among royal lineage, on the contrary the shaman is full of character like dramatic and accidental because of his special mechanism--"dance in a trance". Therefore, kingship will create or transform another form of shaman-- the "shaman in the court", and the appearance of this kind of shaman has become ritualized, standardized, and privatized in accordance with the royal regulations, which means they are official and professional priesthood of king in the inner place of palace, and understand the roles to perform sacrificial ceremonies held by king and his royal family. The content of the sacrificial ritual was mainly to justify the king's exclusive and legal right to sacrifice the supreme gods and ancestors. The essential of those sacrifices was used to help the king and his lineage to affirm and renew the monopolization of power to sacrifice supreme celestial spirit and create the legitimacy and sacredness of the sovereignty and inheritance mechanism, and assist the king to carry out and complete the sacrificial activities. The entire process and the transition from tribal society to a centralized state, the competition between political power and divine right, the attempt to shape divine kingship, finally caused the existence of "shaman in the court" I discussed.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Composed by Jilin Province Ethnic Research Institute, 1988, Shamanism Culture Research (First series) [M], Jilin People's Press, Changchun.
- Fu Yuguang, A Textual Research on the Sacrifice of Tangse in the Palace of Qing Dynasty[J], Social Science Front, 1988(04):204-211.
- Guo Shuyun, An Analysis of "Manchuria Sacrifice to God and Sacrifice Ceremony"[J], Social Science Journal, 1992(05):79-85.
- Giuseppe Tucci//Walther Heissig, Religion in Tibet and Mongolia [M],Tianjin Ancient Book Company,Tianjin.
- Jiang Xiangshun, The Shaman Sacrifice and Its Historical Evolution in the Qing Palace[J], The Qing History Journal, 1994(01):71-78
- Ling Chunsheng, 2021, Hezhen in the downstream of Songhua River [M], The Ethnic Publish House. Beijing.
- Mircea Eliade//translated by Willard R. Trask, 1964, SHAMANISM: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy [M], Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
- Qiu Pu,1962, The Primitive Social Forms of the Ewenki [M], Zhonghua Book Company, Beijing.

- QI Siqin, Genghis Khan's Eight White Palaces in Qing Dynasty and the Symbol of Major God [J], *Journal of Inner Mongolia University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 2011(06):05-10.
- QI Siqin, The Relation of Origin between Guarding Palace during the Period of Mongolian Yuan and Genghis Khan Mausoleum: On the Nature of Genghis Khan Mausoleum[J], *Journal of Inner Mongolia University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 2014(01):11-16.
- Sain, To what extent did Shamanism affect the Chinese minorities groups in terms of performing sacrifice in the royal palace[J], *Northwestern Journal of Ethnography*,2000(01):76-86.
- Shirokogorov, S. M. 1985, *Social Organization of the Northern Tungus*[M], Inner Mongolia People's Publish House, Hohhot.
- Shumanism Reaserch" Writing Group,The Institute of Ethnology,Chinese Academy of Social Science, 1978, *A Brief History of Mongolian Shamanism*[M].(Internal data)
- WU Baoshan,Genghis Khan and the Management Custom of Shamanism——From Tengri to Mongolian Beki [J], *Journal of Minzu University of China (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*,2015(05):105-109.
- Wu Bingan, On the View of Heaven and Spirit during the Rise of Manchu——One of the Researches on Manchu Belief[J], *Manchu Minority Research*,1987(03):65-73.
- Wuyun Gerile, Reflection on the Shamanistic Foundation of the Memorial Ceremony to Genghis Khan[J], *Journal of the Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*, 2005(06):82-88.
- Zhang Yahui, Qing Shaman Rituals and Myths of Sacrifice[J], *The Qing History Journal*, 2011(04):35-48.

# The Change of Cultural Significance from the Oral Tradition of Giant Story among Taiwan's Atayal Ethnic Groups

Li Qiu Hua <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH12

---

## ABSTRACT

During the Japanese occupation, the Japanese government collected a large number of giant stories about Taiwan's Atayal ethnic group. As for the name of the giant in the story, the Atayal people are mostly called Halus, the Truku people are mostly called Dnamay, and the Seediq are called Lanamai. Although the names are different, the description of the appearance and behavior of the giants are quite close. In the past, this story should bear the imagination and anxiety of the Atayal people about the alien race that is not conducive to the ethnic group, but also harmful to the hunting ground and tribal women. Similar giant stories spread to modern times and have made a lot of adjustments in the plot. The reason may be the alienation and criticism of their own ethnic culture under the influence of alien rule and education. In the 1990s, with the gradual improvement of Aboriginal awareness and ethnic education, when the giant stories were used as ethnic culture teaching material, there were also the phenomena of deletion and selection of sex related plots and the transformation of oral tradition. As time goes by, the significance of telling, recording and spreading has gradually changed and become a cultural phenomenon for thinking.

*Keywords: Giant story; atayal; oral tradition; rewritten version; cultural significance changes.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

What I study is the oral and text giant stories of Atayal in Taiwan in different versions and the cultural significance behind them. Therefore, the Atayal ethnic group story files is important. For example, the *Investigation Report on Ethnic Minorities* by the provisional old customs Investigation Association of the governor's office of Taiwan, the *Traditional Culture, Tribal Philosophy, Fairy Tales and Modern Significance of the Atayal Nationality* written by Lessa Aguiyou, and the article of the *Atayal People in South Taiwan* written by Li

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 275265334@qq.com;

Yiyuan. From these documents, we can know that although the names of giants in the stories of the Atayal, Truku and Seediq ethnic groups are different, the description of the appearance and behavior of giants and the plot of killing giants are very similar.

In addition, in Liu Xiumei's *on the Story of the Atayal Giant Harus in Taiwan*, Wang Renhong's *Ethnic Thinking in the Evolution and Adaptation of the Story of the Tattooed National Giant*, and Qing Xiang's *Legend of the Atayal Giant Harus and its Implications*, they believed that the giant stories have spread to modern times, and the plot is not as complete as the literature during the Japanese rule. Some sex related plots are gradually decreasing. This may be due to the fact that in peacetime, the story was written as a textbook for ethnic education and brought into the classroom, which played a role in ethnic language education and no longer emphasized the opposition between ethnic groups.

I think their research has made a lot of achievements, but I think there are still some deficiencies in the following aspects. The story plot is interpreted in different times, oral and text forms, and the expression of their own cultural meaning will be affected. For example, the cultural power in writing, writing must be modified and so on. I think it is necessary to compare the plots of oral stories and text stories in various historical periods. In addition, I think they need to further discuss the relationship between the plot of the story itself and ethnic groups. Based on this, I will carry out the discussion in this paper.

## **2. ORAL VERSIONS OF GIANTS STORY IN JAPANESE OCCUPATION AND RESTORATION PERIOD**

The fourth and fifth volumes of the *Investigation Report on Ethnic Minorities* describe the stories of various nationalities. Similar stories are recorded in many nationalities. The contents of the stories are as follows:

At that time, a man named Halus had a huge penis. Whenever the rainstorm caused a disaster and the river flooded, the villagers invited him to cross the river with his penis as a bridge. However, whenever a man crosses the river, his penis will shorten and cannot reach the other side. Halus was very lecherous. When he saw a woman weaving in the house, he put his penis through the window and invaded the woman. Once, Halus and the villagers went hunting together. A deer ran towards Halus under the pursuit of the community. He immediately opened his mouth. The deer thought it was a cave and jumped in. He also rudely chewed the deer and its belt bone and swallowed it. The community was stunned and couldn't say a word for a long time. After that, they discussed and thought that if Halus continued to live, he will eat all the game leaving them without animals to hunt. So one day, they burned a big stone on the mountain and shouted, "Halus! A deer ran down the mountain ! Catch it quickly!" Then they rolled the burning

stone down the mountain. Halus really thought the deer was coming and swallowed the stone in one breath. As a result, he was killed on the spot.<sup>1</sup>

The giant story was recorded during the Japanese rule. It continued to spread among the nationalities after the restoration, and was also recorded by some field or literary and historical workers. After the war, due to the social unrest in Taiwan, the academic investigation temporarily stalled for a period of time. It was not until the Institute of Ethnology of the Academia Sinica restarted the investigation of Taiwan aborigines in the 1960s that there were new records. The main ideas are as follows:

In ancient times, there was a man whose penis was very big and terrible. Sometimes when the water in the stream rises, he can straighten his penis and let woman walk across it as a bridge; but when a man walks by, it's soft and shaking. Usually, he wraps his penis around his waist, which can be wound several times. Men with large penises often attack women. Sometimes he works in the mountains and can stretch his penis into the village to rape women. Once he saw a beautiful woman in the village weaving at home. He stretched out his things and wanted to rape the beautiful woman. However, when the door of her house was closed, he stretched it from the window. When he was about to reach her crotch, she found him. She hurried to take a matching knife and cut it off. The great Yin man was in great pain and hurriedly took back his penis.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, by consulting the records of the giant oral stories after the Japanese occupation and the restoration, the common plots are: (1) The giant has a huge penis. (2) When the river surges, the giant uses his penis as a bridge, which is easy for women to pass, but not for men. (3) The giant steals their prey. (4) The giant is lecherous and harass women. (5) Finally, people killed the giant.

Moreover, through the analysis of the above plots, it is considered that this is the fear of the Atayal ancestors for the uncontrollable natural world and the imagination of alien aggression. Under the long-term influence of foreign Japanese rule and education, it has increased its fear of foreign nationalities. Therefore, it warns and unites the internal forces of the people in the form of ethnic stories.

### **3. REWRITTEN VERSIONS OF GIANTS' STORY IN 1990S**

In the 1990s, Aboriginal oral literature entered a period of rewriting research and textbook compilation. For example, Lin Daosheng's *Anthology of oral literature of Taiwan's Aborigines* (1996) also contains giant stories.<sup>3</sup> The opening chapter explains that aborigines have many legends and stories about men and women

---

<sup>1</sup> *Taiwan Governor's Office Provisional Old Customs Survey Association, 2012, Atayal • Part 1, Volume 5 of the Investigation Report on Ethnic Minorities, compiled by the Institute of Ethnology of the Central Research Institute, pp. 276-318.*

<sup>2</sup> Li Yiyuan, 1962, *Atayal People in Nan Ao, Collection of Institute of Ethnology, 14, 97-135.*

<sup>3</sup> Lin Daosheng: *An Anthology of oral literature of Taiwan's aborigines, Hualien City, Hualien cultural center, 1996, page 4.*

and penises in a similar tone. Then, in the presentation of the giant story, it retains the plots of huge penises, crossing the river with penises, eating up prey and burning stones to kill giants. In particular, the end of the article also adds the landscape and the giant's burial place played by the giant with a huge penis when he was alive. This narrative may be a comprehensive rewriting of the giant story recorded in the documents of the Japanese rule era, but it abandons the plot of the giant harassing and sexually assaulting women. In addition, there is the legend of the Atalya hunting people, which has also been rewritten, but the giant story presented in this book has not been added to the author's personal comments, which due to the different readers preset by the author.

After 1991, Taiwan's "Ministry of education" began to promote mother tongue and local education, and the preservation of mother tongue and culture by various ethnic groups of Taiwan's aborigines. In 1994, the Ministry of education formulated the five-year medium range case plan for the development of Aboriginal Education (95-99), which gave birth to many mother tongue and ethnic culture teaching materials. Among them, the local culture textbook of the Atayal nationality also has the adaptation of the giant story and is nominated as the great Hashi. This story is written for the sixth grade students in the local textbook. It is included in the myth and legend unit of the Atalya nationality. In addition to narrating the story in words, some pictures and photos of the Atalya people wearing ethnic clothes are added in the presentation of the giant story in the textbook. The attribute plot is divided into three paragraphs. The first paragraph describes that there was a tall giant named Hashi in the Atayal nationality. When the river rose sharply, he used his arm as a bridge, but only let women pass, not men. According to the second paragraph, Hashi often harasses women by virtue of his figure, and the tribal men negotiate to get rid of the giants. Finally, the last tribe deceived Hashi and asked him to wait for prey at the foot of the mountain. As a result, the big red stone rolled down and the giant died miserably.

In addition to the ethnic culture teaching materials mentioned above, there are also Karirudan myth and Rmun Truku of Taroko nationality with giant stories. For example, the Karirudan fairy tale, adapted from the Saidek folk tales in Hualien, Taiwan, combines the legend of giants with the legend of spirit birds. The outline of the story is as follows:

Giant Dnamay can swallow a water deer and often steal the prey of his people. The people can't stand it and want to get rid of the giant. The clansmen and birds agreed to burn stones on the mountain to burn the giant, but no one dared to push the stone because it was too hot. Later, groups of Sisil worked together to push the stone. The giant thought that another prey had been driven down, opened his mouth and swallowed the hot stone, so he was burned to death. People were surprised at the power of Xixi bird and respected it from then on.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> *Xiulin Township Office, Hualien County: karirudan myth (Hualien County, Xiulin Township Office, Hualien County, 2015), pp. 22-26.*

Rmun Truku of Yongtaruke combines the giant story with the sun shooting myth. The first half is the giant story and the second half is the sun shooting myth, but there is no special connection between the two. The story is summarized as follows:

Taroko people are often bullied by the giant Denamai, and their prey is always eaten. The young people of the tribe are excited to defeat the giant. The old woman of the tribe sang a weaving song, and the young man gradually calmed down. The old woman told him that things could only be solved with patience like weaving. The young man thought of a way to burn stones. The next day, the clan people burned the stones red and rolled down the mountain and pretended to chase their prey. Denamai thought there was another prey to eat. As a result, he swallowed a hot stone and rolled down the valley in pain. Since then, Denamai never dared to make trouble again.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike oral biographies and other rewritten works, the people directly "thought" of burning stones down the mountain to burn giants. This rewritten story has more modifications on the process of tribal youth trying to fight giants. The people are angry and want to fight giants by force, but after the old woman sings and gives advice, the people calm down and come up with ways to outwit them. In addition, the outcome of this adaptation to the giant does not end with death, but that the giant is taught not to harm his people again, which is a special case in the current adaptation works. The two giant stories are adapted and drawn for children. In addition to narrating the story in Chinese, they also present the ethnic language in romanization on the same page, which invariably desalinates the sex related plot, and describes the harm of giants to their people, focusing on the capture of hunting materials.

#### **4. PLOT COMPARISON BETWEEN ORAL STORY AND TEXT STORY**

Table 1 is the author's collation and comparative analysis of the main plots in the collected oral versions and adapted stories. Through the comparison and arrangement of the main plots, the author has two findings: first, in the comparison between the oral plots of the Japanese occupation and the Renaissance, the sex related plots are relatively intact, but the material plunder of giants has decreased. According to the author's analysis, this is closely related to the background of Taiwan at that time. At this time, the Japanese occupation of ethnic minorities had only a short period of material plunder and armed repression, but the long-term existence was the Japanese social appeasement and Japanese assimilation education policy. Therefore, it can be inferred that during that period, the material occupation of the Atayal nationality by the Japanese decreased, but the social problems such as sexual assault on women still exist.

---

<sup>5</sup> Qiu Fanyun's story, Jiluo haluoke's Taroko language, Zheng Yanyu's drawing: Rmun Truku of Yongtaroko (Hualien, Taroko National Park Management Office, 2015), page 4-15.

**Table 1. Collation and comparisons of the main plots**

Giant Storyline Unit Analysis Table								
Plot unit	Journal Title	Giants have huge penises	Bridge with penis	Open mouth and eat up prey	Lecherous and adulterous tribal women	Hot stones kill giants	Number of stories	Notes
	Report on investigation of nationality, Volume IV, Part II: Taroko and sedek nationality	√	√		√		2	Oral story
	Nationality Investigation Report, Volume V, Atayal, part I	√	√	√	√	√	7	Oral story
	Oral Legend of Ethnic Groups People in Taiwan	√	√	√	√	√	1	Oral story
	Atayal People in Nan Ao	√	√		√		1	Oral story
	Atayal Culture Textbook	√	√		√	√	1	Oral story
	Pin'aras ke' na bnkis Atayal	√	√		√	√	1	Oral story
	Stories and Ballads of Atayal people in Heping Township	√	√		√	√	1	Oral story
	Taiwan peach bamboo seedling folk story			√	√	√	1	Oral story
	Stories of Atayal People in Hunting Township (I)	√	√	√	√	√	1	Oral story
	Atayal Oral Stories in Datong Township, Yilan, Taiwan	√	√				6	Oral story
	Saidek Folk Stories in Hualien, Taiwan	√	√	√	√	√	1	Oral story
	The Legend of the Atayal Hunting People	√	√	√	√	√	1	Lin Daosheng, Anthology of Oral Literature of Taiwan Aborigines (1996)

**Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation**  
*The Change of Cultural Significance from the Oral Tradition of Giant Story among Taiwan's Atayal Ethnic Groups*

<b>Giant Storyline Unit Analysis Table</b>								
<b>Plot unit</b>	<b>Journal Title</b>	<b>Giants have huge penises</b>	<b>Bridge with penis</b>	<b>Open mouth and eat up prey</b>	<b>Lecherous and adulterous tribal women</b>	<b>Hot stones kill giants</b>	<b>Number of stories</b>	<b>Notes</b>
	Textbook on Local Activities of National Primary School, Volume 4 of Atayal Nationality				√	√	1	Primary School Textbooks (1998)
	Oral Literature of Taiwan's Indigenous Peoples	√	√	√	√	√	1	LeiSa Aguiyou, Traditional Culture, Tribal Philosophy, Fairy Tales and Modern Significance of Atayal (2012)
	Karirudan Myth			√		√	1	Selected Stories of Hualien County (2015)
	Taroko rmun Truku			√		√	1	Taroko National Park Management Office (2015)

The investigation and research confirmed this speculation is a field investigation by the author. From 2011 to 2012, the author had the honor to participate in assisting the Atayal oral literature collation plan in Datong Township, Yilan County, Taiwan, and especially asked the respondents about this story. Through the author's interview, it can be found that giant names derive specific meanings in the daily discourse of male ethnic groups. For example, when the narrator you Qinsheng finished his story, he specially mentioned, "now we talk about 'Halusu', which means drooling. It has become a synonym for 'lecherous' and messy people among the male population in Datong township." This statement is roughly the same as that of many local male ethnic groups. Therefore, the author speculates that male narrators should know the plot of lecherous giants molesting tribal women, and only avoid sexual topics when telling the story, so they intentionally or unintentionally delete this plot. This is similar to the fact that when the author is engaged in gathering and recording in his hometown, the interviewees only mention Halusu, and the narrators have scruples and taboo attitude, it must be guided again and again before it is possible to induce the situation to match. In the interview on the image of the Japanese during the Japanese occupation, people's avoidance and angry attitude also confirmed the elaboration of painful memories such as foreign violence against ethnic women. In addition, the author believes that the male narrator may have some scruples about telling the story because of the related plot of alien aggression and violence against the women of the ethnic group, which is detrimental to the dignity of the male of the Atayal nationality. To sum up, it can be considered that the taboo giant Halusu symbol has become synonymous with lecherous people. Therefore, the author believes that at least two points can be confirmed. One is that the sex related plots in the stories of the primitive Atayal ethnic groups are more real. Second, the giant related plot and its influence are relatively long and well known to the people. Third, more or less, in the Japanese occupation period, the sexual plot represented by the giant story may become a metaphor for alien aggression at that time.

Second, in the adapted textual story, the plot is adjusted with the audience. For example, in response to the decline in the age of readers (from the sixth grade textbooks to children's illustrative Storybooks), the plots related to sex and violence are also diluted and adapted. As readers and audiences adjust the sex related plot of the text attribute, there is not much to analyze, but another phenomenon worthy of the author's attention is in the field investigation. That is, the male people in the same hometown hold more negative views on the giant Halusu in the story, while the female people hold more positive views. For example, when Wu Lin Desheng and Wu Jinhua were interviewed, Mr. Wu thought Halusu was a lecherous, but Ms. Wu's statement was completely different. She thought Halusu was a very powerful person who could do anything.

I'm thinking about whether the sexual concept represented by sexual symbols such as giants is normal at first, just like the needs of diet and sleep, and then humanistic gives it mysterious meaning.

## 5. DISCUSSION THE DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF GIANTS STORY

Li Yiyuan believes that anthropologists' research on folklore can be roughly divided into two ideas: historical research and functional analysis. The study of history focuses on the evolution of a legend in a nation, seeks its distribution and spread among neighboring nations, and then infers the possibility and way of its dissemination or contact. The research of function takes the analysis of the structural or functional relationship between legends and myths and other cultural factors of the national society as the research significance.<sup>6</sup> This paper mainly adopts the perspective of functionalism. I think, through the analysis of the story, at least the following points are worth noting.

First, the evolution of the giant story reflects the collective consciousness of male chauvinism. Although the story itself describes the early and distant ancestral period of the Atayal nationality, in the process of the evolution of the story, the plot has been changed more or less, which reflects the social environment and collective consciousness at that time. As Liu Xiumei said, "The invasion of foreign nationalities has led to the transformation of the tribal life form. However, when the women of the Atayal tribe admire these foreigners, the status of men in the ethnic group has been shaken, resulting in group jealousy. On the contrary, for girls, the entry of foreign nationalities has given them a new vision. Inter-marriage with the Han nationality is a way to leave the tribe and enter a civilized society. Therefore, it is against women it is a new deed to improve life. Therefore, some popular stories even strengthen the plot of molesting women, saying that the violated women even die. " Moreover, in the oral version, from the Japanese occupation to the recovery and even today's stories, the violence and sex related plots of giants are relatively intact. The difference is that the related plots of material plunder have changed. This is related to the cessation of armed repression by the Japanese army, the transition to a peace policy, and the defense of self-dignity by male ethnic people.

Second, we should face up to the male cultural power in oral stories and text writing. Through the comparative related plots, we can know that people's description of sex has changed from the authoritative oral expression of the early bold and direct tribal leaders to the textual cancellation or neglect of sex related plots in peacetime, reflecting the transfer of cultural power from the beginning to the government and the so-called The domestication of modern civilization. Under the cloak of the popularization of ethnic languages in teaching materials, it still needs many reviews and verbal modifications in the publication of teaching materials. Whether it is the early deterrence of ethnic groups or under the so-called modernization, "civilization" To avoid sexual plots in order to protect women and children must also be an indoctrination of power and official consciousness. In particular, it reflects the control of male chauvinism, that is, in the early stage, it distorted the sexual function of other races in the form of intimidation, so as to better control the refusal of women of their own race to intermarry with others. In the modern era, it is to take sexual shame as soft

---

<sup>6</sup> Li Yiyuan, 1963, *Taiya people in South Australia*, collection of Institute of ethnology, 15, 97-135.

control, restrict women's cheating and restrict women's dominance in men  
Further development in the field of work and so on.

Third, the controlling effect of the sexual plot in the giant story on women. Whether it is the terrorist exposition of the giant's sexual assault on women in the oral version of the ethnic group story, or the deletion of sex related plots in the teaching materials, it is a kind of deprivation, taboo and intimidation of women's sexual power from the perspective of male power. Sexual taboo has become an excuse to protect children and women. In fact, sex education for children Popularizing and emancipating women's sexual concepts are the rights that people should have, rather than making them nihilistic, mysterious, taboo and shameful. On the contrary, if sexual knowledge is regarded as a social taboo, especially for the vulnerable groups represented by women and children, they lose their right to know and express, and even social understanding, tolerance and openness, it is actually not conducive to the self-determination of vulnerable groups My expression and rights defense have further fallen into the situation of being bullied by powerful groups, and have been limited in many related fields, such as work field, sensitive topic research field and so on.

Fourth, with the change of time and space, the cultural implication and function of the story have changed. I think we should not simply associate the giant story with strengthening ethnic unity, but should see the origin and development context of the story. At the beginning of the birth of the story, it stems from the fear of the Atayal ancestors of the uncontrollable natural world, foreign aggression and their own It can be said that the imagination of resistance is based on a primitive fear of mankind. Later, why is such a story alive enough to continue? This is because under the long-term influence of foreign Japanese rule and education, it has increased the fear of foreign races. Therefore, it is spread in the form of ethnic stories and metaphors within ethnic groups. In peacetime, it is over The whole story is limited to the collection of folk stories investigated and studied by scholars, while the terrorist plots such as sexual assault and violence in some ethnic stories in the teaching materials are gradually weakened. It can be said that most people no longer need deterrent stories and use fear to educate ethnic groups. Presumably, at the moment when ethnic integration rather than ethnic antagonism is emphasized, this kind of plot is special and uses intimidation as a means As time goes by, ethnic stories will gradually fade out of people's sight. Instead, such stories are likely to become people's talk after dinner and the existence of entertainment functions and taboo jokes.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The Giant's story is not an ordinary national story that praises and improves its own quality, but establishes the negative image of other nations through the description of terror, sets off the image of our nation, and expresses it in the way of comparison and deterrence. Under different time and space backgrounds, the author combs the plots of the oral version and text rewritten version of the Atayal giant story in Taiwan, and summarizes the five main plot segments in the current

story, which are summarized as follows: the Atayal met an alien giant with a huge penis earlier. Giants have a good side. When the river rose, he used his penis to help women cross the bridge. But the negative impact of giants is to rob people's prey and harass women. Finally, everyone worked together to kill him.

After that, through the comparative analysis of the evolution of the story plot between the oral version and the text version, and combined with my field investigation experience, the author summarizes the main changes of the story evolution into two points: first, from the comparison of the plot of the oral version, the preservation of the plot related to sex is relatively complete, but the proportion of the plot of material plundering of giants has decreased. Secondly, in the adapted text story, in view of the decline of readers' age, the plots related to sex and violence have also been diluted and adapted.

Finally, on this basis, this paper discusses the cultural connotation of the giant story, and draws the following four conclusions. First, the story reflects the collective consciousness of men. This is the answer to the question why the sexual plot in the oral version remains complete and the plot of plundering material is reduced. The author believes that this is not only the behavior of male dominated tribal leaders (storytellers) to safeguard men's own dignity, but also a threat to women's intermarriage and unity with foreigners.

Second, we should pay attention to the cultural power of storytellers and storywriters. In traditional oral stories, the elders with cultural oral power use the huge plot of sexual harassment and plundering of women to intimidate women. In peacetime, by deliberately removing the sexual plot, the control of cultural power will become more invisible and hidden.

Third, the controlling effect of the sexual plot in the giant story on women. The stigmatization of the neutral plot of the giant story and the reduction of the sex related plot. The author believes that in the long-term evolution and social formation process, sex has been artificially endowed with the meaning of shame, mystery and taboo, especially in the restriction on women with reproductive ability. In order to ensure the smooth progress of patriarchal social order, sexual taboo can also be regarded as a cultural means of social control over women at the subconscious level.

Fourth, with the change of the time and space background of the giant story, its cultural connotation and function have also changed. At first, this story was used to educate and warn the people and unite the internal forces of the people, which is inseparable from the custom of "Grass Out" of Atayal in Taiwan and the long history of national struggle. In the Japanese occupation era, Giant Stories were used to metaphorically vent their dissatisfaction with the Japanese rulers. In the peacetime, it was used for national language education in the text, but in the folk circulation, it became people's talk after dinner, and finally became a folk story for entertainment.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## REFERENCES

- LESA aguiyou, 2012, Traditional Culture, Tribal Philosophy, Fairy Tales and Modern Significance of Atayal Nationality: Taibei. Boya bookstore. 147-152.
- Li Yiyuan, 1962, Atayal People in Nan Ao, Collection of Institute of Ethnology, 14, 97-135.
- Lin Daosheng, 1996, The Legend of the Atayal Hunting People, Selected Works of Oral Literature of Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan, by Hualien cultural center, pp.4
- Lin Daosheng, 1996, An Anthology of Oral Literature of Taiwan's Aborigines, Hualien City, Hualien Cultural Center, 4.
- Liu Xiumei, 1998, On the Story of Harus, the Atayal Giant in Taiwan, Annual Journal of Folk Literature, (02)333-346.
- Qing Xiang, 2020, the Legend of the Atayal Giant Harus and the Implication behind it, Notes on Humanistic Education, 372, 92-97.
- Taiwan Governor's Office Provisional Old Customs Survey Association, 2012, Atayal • Part 1, Volume 5 of the survey report, compiled by the Institute of Ethnology of the Central Research Institute, pp. 276-318.
- Taroko National Park Management Office, 2015, Rmun Truku, Story of Qiu Fanyun, jiluo Halong, Taroko Language, drawn by Zheng Yanyu, pp. 4-15.
- Wang Renhong, 2018, Ethnic Thinking in the Evolution and Adaptation of the Story of Tattooed National Giants, Chinese Journal of China Culture University, 35-36, 87-100.
- Xiulin Township Office, 2015, Hualien County, Selected Stories of Hualien County, by Xiulin Township Office, pp.22-26.

# The "DongKuan" in Modern Society

Li Yiyan <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH13

---

## ABSTRACT

The Dong, one of China's 56 ethnic groups and an important part of the Chinese nation, has resided in southwest China for a long time. Because of their unique geographic location and historical process, they have bred a very distinctive and bright ethnic culture. That extensive and profound culture of Dong nationality's tradition is conceptualized as the "DongKuan". The Dongkuan is a kind of Unwritten law of Dong minority. A living fossil of the former national organizational structure, also the key content of Dong nationality tradition. It has an educational and accessory function when Dong Minority was structured as the harmony society, and is a legitimate guarantee from generation to generation of harmonious culture. However, in modern circumstances, Dongkuan has lost its function as customary law. Even so Dongkuan as a kind of remains, still exists in Dong society and plays a certain role. It plays a positive role in environmental protection of their living land. Therefore, this paper will try to introduced the origin, development, transmission and changes of "The Donkuan", and explore its possible function and significance in modern society, like in field of cultural inheritance, tourism performance, ethnic education, social control and so on.

*Keywords: Dong nationality; dongkuan; unwritten law; former national organizational; harmony society.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I will focus on the Dong customary law which is also the unwritten law "DongKuan". In the first part, I will focus on the meaning, history and changes of "DongKuan". We will start with the discussion of the word "Kuan" by scholars, explore what role it played in Dong society historically, such as its function as a legal, military, political and social organization, and finally define how it died out as a local autonomy law. In the second part, I will introduce what "DongKuan" is like in modern society. In the modern society, "DongKuan" has lost its role as a customary law and has become a subconsciousness rooted in the behavior of the Dong people, as well as the most important cultural tradition of the Dong people, including but not limited to its role in forest protection, modernization, and elderly retirement. Finally, in the third part, I will focus on the

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: [yiyanlilee@gmail.com](mailto:yiyanlilee@gmail.com);

reconstruction and transformation of "Dong money" from history to modernity. For well-known reasons, China began to reform and open up after the 1980s. This reform, which was almost based on modernization theory, led to a dramatic change in Chinese society as a whole. This change has also profoundly altered the face of the traditional Dong society. "In this section, I will focus on this tension, which is deeply embedded in the structure and organization of Dong society, as well as on "DongKuan" as a traditional cultural authority. In this section, I will focus on this tension in the structure and organization, and how "DongKuan" as a traditional cultural authority has been reconstructed.

## **2. THE HISTORY OF "DONGKUAN"**

"DongKuan" has a long history in Dong minority's life and practice. It is not only a unwritten law to make a harmonious society, but also the key content of Dong's traditional culture. Therefore, in first part of my paper, I will try to make the origin, development, transmission and changes of "The Donkuan" clearly.

"DongKuan" is a kind of customary law in the traditional society of Dong Ethnic Minority. It is not in the form of written law, but an unwritten law. In traditional Dong People Society, it not only plays the social control function of law, but also has the structural function in economy, politics, relatives and culture. In chapter 1, i will try to explore the history, development and vicissitude of "DongKuan". Dong Ethnic Minority has its own language, but it has no written language of its own. As such, most of the records of Dong Ethnic Minority are written by other written peoples, mainly Han in Chinese.

So, what is "DongKuan" indeed? It is a kind of unwritten law of Dong ethnic minority, also called by "Kuan", "KuanZuzhi", which generally uses a rock as a symbol for the existence of the "DongKuan". The "DongKuan" originated from the intermarriage between the phratry and the phratry in Dong people, and then developed into the intermarriage between the tribes. According to the available information, the written record of "DongKuan" first appeared in the Tang dynasty, but it was obvious that "DongKuan" had existed before the Tang dynasty, and its already such common in Song dynasty's written record. In Shi KaiZhong's words, the literal of "Kuan" got two meanings, the first is the meaning of the word itself, which also has two meanings: the Chinese meaning and the Dong meaning; the second is the meaning as the name of the organization (Shi Kaizhong, 2009).

There are another several expressions for the literal meaning of "Kuan". Wang ShengXian thought "Kuan" is the chinese "TiaoKuan", which english means "clause", so its a kind of Chinese loanwords (Wang Shengxian, 1989). But in Wu ZhiDe's words, at early age of Dong society, "Kuan" called by "ShiFa", which means the law of rock (Wu Zhide, 1992). Yang JinShuan agree with Wu, but also thought it has an another meaning which is a chain of alliances (Yang, 2009). In other way, Shi KaiZhong as a Dong people who can speak Dong language, Based on his knowledge of the Dong language, he think in chinese "Kuan" has the meaning of sincere friendship, quiet similar to "entertainment". In the meaning of Dong ethnic minority, "DongKuan" has the same meaning as "DongKuan" in

Chinese. It can be considered that Dong language and Chinese may learn from each other (Kaizhong, 2009). In summary, the word "Kuan" has two means like Shi said, one is the laws of Dong people, and another one is a civilian organization of traditional Dong society, and is in with other cultures, mainly Han culture in the exchange of development and change.

So now we know "DongKuan" is not just a law, but also has a organizational function. Then how about the specific form of its organization? The organization structure of Dong People is made up of several villages. With the union of many villages is called "XiaoKuan", "Xiao" means small, the union of each "XiaoKuan" forms "ZhongKuan", "Zhong" means middle, and the Union of "ZhongKuan" forms "DaKuan", "Da" means big. The "DaKuan" sometimes also called by "LianKuan" which means big unions and extra-large village.

Different types of appellation are divided into historical administrative organization, village household and residential area, and so on. But "DaKua" or "LianKuan" has a large area and a wide distribution, which is rare in historical records (Jiang, 2008). And "Kuan" as an organization of Dong people, Mainly refers to the military and political organizations. In each "Kuan" has the "KuanShou", "KuanJun", "KuanJiao". "KuanShou" means the leader of the "Kuan" organization, "Shou" means "head", and decided by the scale of "Kuan", its also divided into "XiaoKuanShou", "ZhongKuanShou", "DaKuanShou" or "LianKuanShou" which scale is more and more big. "KuanJun" is the army of each "Kuan" organization, "Jun" is means army or troops, mainly build up with young men from every village in "Kuan" Organization. In Dong People's Society, because "KuanJun" is made up of young men from 15 or 16 years old and up to 36 years old, it is also called "Sanshiliu" means thirty six. "KuanJiao" also called "Jiao" in chinese records means "foot", and the main duty is to transmit orders, guarding the Drum Tower, if in case of an emergency sound the drum warning others (Cao, 2008).

In summary, we know the "Kuan" is a unwritten law and a military and political organization, but how is vicissitude? Just as we summary, the "Kuan" is a organization which contact with military, but also we can include it to a political organization form. Its form of change is represented by another kind of political organization, which was changed by the deepening of the feudal government at that time. The establishment of an official system in the ethnic minority areas in the southeast of Guizhou began to change the internal organizational structure of Dong people at that time. As the regime grew, it further undermined the very institutions that make up Dong people. The intervention of the imperial power of the feudal government divided the territory belonging to Dong people, encroached on the rights and interests of Dong people, and planned the conflict between the organizations and the official organizations. By the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China, the government in power had established a new "Baojia" system and "TuanLian" system in the Dong area, but it still could not replace the original "Kuan" organization of the Dong Ethnic Minority. Until the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the state organization was further improved, and a new state management organization

was established. These organizational measures gradually infiltrated into the Dong society, and then completely replaced the organizations in the Dong society, suddenly the political form of "DongKuan" completely disappeared in the 1980s (Zhu, 2012). But we need to care that the cultural form of "DongKuan" has been inherited to this day.

### **3. THE "DONGKUAN" IN MODERN SOCIETY**

About what is "DongKuan". the meaning of the words "Kuan", and the history, transmission, change of unwritten law "DongKuan" was already clear enough.

So, the second part of my paper, I explore the nowadays function of "DongKuan". just like the end of part 1 I said, "DongKuan" has lost his legal form indeed, and becomes a kind of social memory and traditional culture of Dong peoples.

And in several academic papers, we will know the meaning of "DongKuan" nowadays. First, we should know that "DongKuan" still exists as the social subconscious of the Dong people, and plays a very positive role in forest protection. In Luo KangLong's words, in all production activities of human society, people must carry out extensive cooperation in the production process, and effective cooperation needs institutional guarantee. The formation and development of Dong's artificial forestry in the lower reaches of Qingshui River in Guizhou Province is realized under the protection of Dong's social local system, mainly manifested in the customary law of "DongKuan". Because the forest resources in Dong area have been effectively utilized under the protection of the local system of Dong society, the risk and uncertainty of this mode of economic activity are reduced to the greatest extent (Luo, 2010).

In second way, "DongKuan" not only exists as a subconscious in the minds of the Dong people, but also plays a vital role in local knowledge, especially as a value in the process of modernization and rural governance in modern China. It has an excellent guiding role in enabling the Dong people to embrace China and the world in a manner consistent with their own habits. That Lu SiXu Based on the contemporary background of rural governance, taking the local knowledge theory as the research perspective, through the field investigation and study of the "DongKuan" in Zhuping village in southeast Guizhou, reveals that the "DongKuan" as a kind of local knowledge is in the governance of the Dong Village, it is of great practical significance to the coordinated development of local society, economy, culture and ecology. By exploring the normative value of local knowledge in rural governance and its realization, it is helpful for other areas to attach importance to and draw lessons from local knowledge to maintain rural stability and promote rural development of local experience and folk wisdom, thus providing new ideas for the study and practice of rural governance (Lu, 2020).

In more specific research, Xu DongYang and Tian YinSheng said: "In order to protect the culture of the Dong, promote the development of small, poor and scattered villages, and promote poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, based

on the modernization research of Dong Kuan, we construct a targeted village linkage development system according to linkage subject, linkage elements and inherent linkage logic. It includes four major aspects: governance linkage, off-territory governance to accelerate the flow of factors; industrial linkage, small-scale peasant economy scale operation; cultural linkage, protection and activation of Kuan-culture ecological space; ecological linkage, utilization and protection of natural resources, so as to promote the original isolation and decentralization of rural planning and construction towards open linkage (Xu, 2020)."

Connect with Lu and Xu's research, Liu Chao who work for Chinese Academy of Social Sciences give us a new and concrete viewpoint of "DongKuan". We all know the continuation and transformation of "DongKuan" system is another self-adjustment of Dong traditional system in the new historical stage. In Liu's research, he based on the fieldwork and structural function analysis of the Elderly People's Association in Dong Minority village, and looks at the appearance of the Dong Kuan System in the perspective of transformation, then reflects the current research ecology of the Dong Kuan System. Found that the "DongKuan" System in the perspective of transformation is not a separate expression of the multidisciplinary "knowledge form" in the context of historical literature, but presents itself as an ontological continuation of a Total System. It is coupled with the unique group composition and relationship structure, folk beliefs and social customs, as well as life style and behavior style of individual or group of Dong Minority, which is manifested in the daily life world and implicit as the ontological power. Therefore, when "DongKuan" System is realizing self-transformation in realistic level, the academic community should also realize the discussion from "knowledge form" to "dynamic ontology" at the academic level, based on the integration of field work and historical documents, and see its significance as a Total System in modern society (Liu, 2020).

There also have a little different point from Tang QiongFang, in her opinions the "DongKuan" as a intangible cultural heritage, the core is a form of grass-roots autonomy, which is mainly manifested in internal governance and external defense. The inheritance and protection of the "DongKuan" should follow the idea of "Seeing people, seeing things, seeing life", return to its spiritual core, and participate in rural governance. In his words: "Specifically, according to the needs of the times, it is to "reorganize" the organization, agreement and activities of "Kuan", and deal with the relationship between the inheritance and innovation of "DongKuan", local governments and other rural organizations (Tang, 2020)."

We can see that Luo pays attention to the social subconsciousness and value norms of "DongKuan". Xu, Tian and Lu all pay attention to the value role that "DongKuan" can play in rural governance. Although Liu also pays attention to rural governance, he also provides a new research perspective and its very enlightening. Tang regarded "DongKuan" as an intangible cultural heritage, but ultimately attributed its function to China's rural governance. Now we can conclude that the function of "DongKuan" in modern society, it comes down to the role of rural governance, but its deeper function is to exist in the Dong

nationality as a valuable and influential culture. It no longer exists in the Dong society as a common law, but a deep-seated cultural memory exists in the Dong People's mind and plays an important role. In last part of my paper, I compare the differences between "DongKuan" in history and modern society, and give some explanations for its changes.

#### **4. RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE "DONGKUAN" TRADITION**

In last two parts, we clearly showed that the "DongKuan" tradition has a long history in Dong minority's life and practice. It is not only an unwritten law to make a harmonious society, but also the key content of Dong's traditional culture. Even if in the changes of history, "DongKuan" has lost his legal form indeed, it becomes a kind of memories and traditional culture of Dong peoples, but the "DongKuan" tradition still exists as the social subconscious of the Dong people, and plays a very positive role in modern Dong society.

Then in this part I will try to show how the reconstruction and transformation of the "DongKuan" tradition shifted as an authority. Before the founding of New China, the feudal dynasties and the administrative power of the Republic of China were not able to exercise direct rule over the remote Dong areas, and the Dong people relied on this traditional autonomy for self-management and self-protection to maintain the stability and development of their ethnic group. After the founding of New China, with the establishment of the people's democratic dictatorship system, the people's governments at all levels in the Dong areas were also established. With the implementation of the national regional autonomy system and villagers' autonomy, the DongKuan system lost its original space of existence and was replaced by township people's power and villagers' committees at all levels. However, the "Kuan" culture, which is the core element of "DongKuan", has not disappeared and is not likely to be completely replaced by new ideas. With the development of economy and society, the "DongKuan" system has emerged in a new way to reconstruct its authority and play an active role in maintaining the social order of Dong villages, mediating disputes and promoting the orderly development of Dong villages by effectively integrating with the national grassroots power.

As a kind of social organization, "DongKuan" organization has implied the factor of change since it was created, and it is bound to change with the change of social content. With the development and stability needs of Dong villages, the "DongKuan" system emerges in a new way and plays an important role. The reconstructed "DongKuan" system has a different organizational structure from the one before the founding of New China. The original three-level "DongKuan" organizational structure of small, medium and large villages appears in new forms, such as the village leaders' association, the old people's association and the villagers' group management committee. Meanwhile, the "DongKuan" system reconstructed on the basis of natural villages and villagers' groups is completed under the institutional model of villagers' autonomy system. It takes the form of the Zhai Lao Association, the Old People's Association and the Group

Management Committee as the carrier of its operation, and uses the village rules and regulations to regulate the public order of the village. Its fundamental nature of democracy, self-management and self-service remains unchanged, and still has the functions of regulation and control, management and adjustment, and mobilization and cohesion. Under the new political system, the operation of the "DongKuan" system also has some new functions and embodies new characteristics.

In part 2 of this paper, we can easily find that the current township rules and regulations have important similarities with the traditional statute, in essence, the township rules and regulations are an evolution and inheritance of "DongKuan". Its purpose is to ensure the peace of the party, and it is mandatory, autonomous, local, civil and democratic. The rules and regulations of the village are generally discussed in mass meetings, negotiated by village cadres, village elders, clan chiefs, and retired cadres who have returned to the village, and then formulated after consulting the local people. Some are written on paper or wooden boards and hung in the drum tower or other public places, and a very few are carved on stone monuments and set up by the drum tower or by the main roads, with a wide range of democratic and distinctive local autonomy, with prohibitions and responsibilities, rewards and punishments, leniency and strictness, which every household should know and everyone must abide by. For example, in Yandong Township, Liping County, after the liberalization of forestry policy, the phenomenon of responsible forest and collective forest being cut and stolen on the mountain was very serious. In 1984, the local government made use of the senior citizens' association, published the township rules and regulations, and held several mass meetings, and the theft of forest trees was quickly stopped. The local exchange of internal experience summed up: "digging ditches with the water, to take advantage of the situation; the development of the statute, the use of village elders; small cases are not allowed out of the village, large cases reported in a timely manner; each to ensure a safe side, open the door to sleep (Huang, 2012)."

In China's rural village governance, there is not only a lack of what Huntington calls "institutional accommodation capacity," but also a lack of power organizations sufficient to support rural political stability, and rural public space is characterized by homogeneity. The public space in rural areas is characterized by homogeneity.

Therefore, instead of weakening the state's ability to govern the countryside, proper civil self-governance can, to a certain extent, provide the possibility of establishing sufficient power organizations to support rural political stability. Therefore, with the support and promotion of the rural authorities in the People's Republic of China, the Dong "DongKuan" authority is reconstructed in contemporary times in order to maintain public order in Dong villages, improve village appearance, improve villagers' autonomy, and promote the construction of grassroots democracy.

After all we know that "DongKuan" is the name of the regulations of the Dong people. The reconstruction and transformation of "DongKuan" System is the core of the recurring adaptation of traditional authority of "DongKuan". After the foundation of New China, "DongKuan" System was replaced by township governments and village committees. However, under the typical political environment in the Dong areas, "DongKuan" as well as its built authority did not vanish. Instead, it revives in new forms of organizations and even effectively integrates with town level management, playing an active part in maintaining local social stability and promoting the development of rural Dong areas.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In the first part, I introduced the meaning of "DongKuan", its structure and its role as a military, social and political organization in the traditional Dong society, and this part focused on what form "DongKuan" existed in the Dong society in history. Then in the second part, I explore the possible roles and functions of "DongKuan" in modern society, including but not limited to the reconstruction of traditional culture, the protection of forest resources, the retirement of the elderly, and the construction of a harmonious countryside, through the modern research of other scholars on "DongKuan" culture. Finally, in the third part, I focus on how "DongKuan" was reconstructed and shaped as a Dong Traditional Culture from history to modernity, especially after China's reform and opening up in the 1980s. We believe that the authority shaped by this traditional culture is different from the traditional modern theoretical authority, which is more suitable for today's diversified society in China.

After all we know that Dong Harmony Culture has a long history and extensive and profound contents, which was conceived in the ancient times, formed in the Tang and Song Dynasties, perfected in the Yuan to the Republic of China, and matured after the founding of New China. Dong is not only the highest value standard for the psychological quality, ethics and morality, social behavior and lifestyle of the ethnic group, but also the silent command that governs the social activities of its main body, and the guarantee for the organized, orderly and long-term stable development of the ethnic society. It has produced good influence and social effect in the long history of Dong people. Therefore, exploring and discarding the unwritten laws of the Dong people in contemporary society, exploring, guiding and learning from the good and reasonable connotations of the unwritten laws of the minority people have a positive influence and promote the strengthening of the supervision and control system, further improving the social security in minority areas and promoting the construction of socialist spiritual and material civilization.

At present, the academic community mainly focuses on the various functions of DongKuan, such as cultural, military, educational and legal functions, as well as its role in contemporary social development, such as building social harmony, regulating behavior and raising people's awareness of behavior. To sum up, the research results of "DongKuan" have not only explored the concept, characteristics, contents and changes of "DongKuan", but also explored the role

and significance of "DongKuan" to the Dong region today. These research results are undoubtedly of special significance to the rescue, protection and development of the unique Dong culture. The study of "DongKuan" is not only to sort out and summarize the results of "DongKuan" research, but more importantly, to find out what deficiencies still exist in the results of "DongKuan" research, so as to strengthen the research of its deficiencies and promote the enrichment and development of "DongKuan" research, so as to make better use of "DongKuan" cultural heritage to develop the Dong region. In order to promote the economic, social, and cultural development of the Dong ethnic area, we will strengthen the research on "DongKuan" and promote the enrichment and development of "DongKuan" research.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Cao Duanbo, Qu Liping. Dong money and the family organization of the Dong people[J]. Journal of Huaihua University, 2008,27(6):4-4.
- Huang Mei. The Reconstruction and Transformation of the Traditional Authority of Dong Styles[J]. Journal of Original Ecological Ethnic Culture, 2012, 4(3):6.
- Jiang Mingsheng. Summary on the Study of Dong Styles[J]. Guizhou Ethnic Studies, 2014, 35(2):4.
- Liu Chao. The Dong Money System from the Perspective of Transformation——Based on the Research of Dong Village "Old People's Association" [J]. Guizhou Ethnic Studies, 2020, 41(3):7.
- Lu Sixu. The Normative Value of Local Knowledge and Its Realization Method under Rural Governance——A Case Study of Dong Money in Zhuping Village, Southeast Guizhou[J]. Journal of Kaili College, 2020, 39(2):8.
- Luo Kanglong. The protection of forest resources by Dong traditional social customary law[J]. Original Ecological Ethnic Culture Journal, 2010, 2(1):6.
- Shi Kaizhong. Research on the Organization and Changes of Dong Minority Money [M]. Nationalities Publishing House, 2009, 34-43.
- Shi Kaizhong. Research on the Organization and Changes of Dong Minority Money [M]. Nationalities Publishing House, 2009, 51-54.
- Tang Qiongfang. Reflections on the Path of Dong Money Participating in Rural Governance under the Background of Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection [J]. Culture Journal, 2020(11): 3.
- Wang Shengxian. Dong Culture and Customs [M]. Guizhou Nationalities Publishing House, 1989, 21-22.
- Wu Zhide. Exploring the Origin of the Character "Fan" in "Dong Collection"——Also Talking about the Character "Du"[J]. Guizhou Ethnic Studies, 1992(2):5.
- Xu Dongyang, Tian Yinsheng. Research on the Regional Linkage of Villages under the New Dong Model--A Case Study of Sanbaishuikou Village Consortium in Liping County, Guizhou[J]. Intelligent Building and Smart City, 2020(5): 2.

***Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation***  
*The "DongKuan" in Modern Society*

Yang Jinquan. The Name of the Dong Nationality Style[J]. National Forum, 1990(2):4.

Zhu Yi, Xiang Sirui. The Historical Changes and Social Functions of "Dong Style" in the Dong Nationality's Customary Law[J]. Journal of Wuhan Textile University, 2012,000(001):76-79.

---

© Copyright (2023): Author(s). The licensee is the publisher (B P International).

# The Fracture and Reconstruction of Guzang Festival

Xinyi Luo <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH14

---

## ABSTRACT

Guzang Festival, the oldest and most magnificent Miao festival in the Miao villages of Leigong Mountain and Moon Mountain in Qiandongnan Prefecture, Guizhou Province, is celebrated once every 13 years, when communities get together worshipping their ancestors. It is therefore highly valued by the Miao people, and some families even exhaust their money in the gift exchange custom. This traditional culture was once forbidden because it was too “extravagant”, but after 2000, it became popular again.

This research paper will explore the reconstruction of such a fractured traditional culture by comparing literature before 2000 with after 2000. In Guzang Festival, which part has been lost, which one has been preserved, and how to bring it into full play its modern latent energy? On the anthropologically theoretical side, it involves collective memory as well as gift exchange. The act of giving gifts is the material carrier for ancestor worship and the construction and strengthening of collective memory. How the collective memory of Guzang Festival of Miao ethnic group get strengthened and consolidated, and what role the gift exchange plays practically. Furthermore, the essay tries to summarize the “total prestations” through the flow of gifts within the clans, which involve cultural and social functions.

*Keywords: Guzang festival; cultural fracture; cultural reconstruction; collective memory; gift exchange.*

## 1. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Miao nationality is a cosmopolitan nation. As is known to all, their branches distribute in different regions, not only in East Asia (especially in southeast of China), but also in Southeast Asian countries and the United States. This allows us to see the continuous migration of Miao people. Therefore, whether in the dimension of time or space, their rituals are difficult to be deciphered. And Guzang Festival among Miao nationality all over the world is only held in a few small areas in Guizhou Province. Among them, scholars have conducted field

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 10620211153929@stu.xmu.edu.cn;

work on such a festival in Leigong Mountain in Leishan County (PAN, 2013;) and Moon Mountain in Congjiang County (YANG, 2009; ZHANG et al., 2018). Specifically, Leishan County, Qiandongnan (southeast of Guizhou Province) Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture in Guizhou Province, is honored as the "Miao's Cultural Center of China" and is one of the main settlements of Miao people after their previous great migrations.

In May 2006, the State Council included the Leishan Miao Guzang Festival in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage masterpieces. This is the result of an in-depth understanding of Guzang Festival as well as a motivation for scholars to continue to study it. According to YU (2012), Guzang Festival is the most representative festival of Miao in Leishan County. Compared with other Miao ethnic regions, the Guzang Festival in Leishan County over the years has been presented more fully in terms of scale, atmosphere, number of participants and cultural connotation.

There are three main parts of my writing paper *The fracture and reconstruction of Guzang Festival*. Part one is mainly about the collective memory that has been structured in such a highly valued festival among Miao people. Part two puts the fracture and reconstruction of Guzang Festival under different specific social contexts, especially in the context of Chinese ethnology. Part three discusses the permanent as well as the changed collective memory about Guzang Festival from an anthropological perspective. Thereinto, gift exchange will be an important view point.

And my train of thought is from "specific" to "general". What the "general" to be discussed at the end of the paper is the culture fracture and the culture reconstruction with a kind of changing collective memory.

## **2. THE GUZANG FESTIVAL: COLLECTIVE MEMORY BASED ON GIFT EXCHANGE**

Firstly, I need to introduce the connotation of *Gu*, and the purpose of Guzang Festival. After knowing about the general picture of Guzang festival, part1.2 will present an intensive study of it.

### *The sacrifice holiday of Miao people*

Guzang Festival, in a nutshell, is a kind of sacrificial activity based on consanguinity of Miao people. Interpreted from the literal meaning, "Gu" has three kinds of meanings. One is the *Gushe* ("she" could be comprehended as an association), a form of basic social unit in ancient Miao society. It also refers to the physical drum as the home of the souls of deities and ancestors. Over time, the texture of the drum changed from wooden to bronze. The third meaning of "Gu" is a kind of animal, they are cows or bulls that have been neutered. "Zang" refers to the collection of drums (the second meaning of "Gu"). Generally, the drum is stored in the house of headman or the oldest and most venerable villager of *Gushe*. Guzang Festival is also called Chigu Festival ("Chi" means eating, "gu"

is the third meaning mentioned above. “Chigu” evolved into eating pigs nowadays. Such a transformation of sacrifice is also an interesting point, which will be discussed later in the second part.).

There are three main purposes of Guzang Festival in tradition, and each of them corresponds to a legend. Firstly, to memorize ancestors. Jiang Yang is the ancestor of Miao nationality and his mother is Butterfly Mother. To worship her mother, Jiang Yang invented Guzang Festival. It is said that Butterfly Mother was born from a maple tree, so the maple tree was used to make a wooden drum for her to rest in peace.

Secondly, to express the joy of harvest. In ancient times, a group of Miao ancestors migrated to the boundary of Xijiang Town, Leishan County. After the hunting dog went down the mountain and returned, there were a few grains of rice stuck on its body. The ancestors thought it was a good omen, so they settled in Xijiang. They worked hard and harvested every year. They packed their grains in bronze drums, one bumper bronze drum a year, and had harvest for 13 consecutive years. Thus, they decided to live together permanently in Xijiang. To commemorate this event, they held a grand celebration including playing reeds, dancing around bronze drum, and killing “Gu” (the third meaning of “Gu”) to worship their ancestors. This celebration continued to the later Guzang Festival.

Thirdly, to express the loyalty to love and the harmony of the villagers. In ancient times, a Miao girl named Bang Qiao was taken away by the tiger, and a boy named Bao Geng went through all kinds of hardships to save Bang Qiao successfully, but did not leave his name. Bang Qiao suffered 3 years, playing reeds and dancing copper drums to find a benefactor for 6 years, Bang Qiao’s father spent another 3 years in testing Bao Geng. It took 12 years before and after the marriage between Bang Qiao and Bao Geng.

*A kind of potlatch in modern society?*

Guzang Festival includes a series of procedures, there are mainly three rituals. Waking up “Gu”(especially refers to the spirits and ancestors rested in the physical drum), killing “Gu”(the third meaning) to sacrifice, and hide “Gu”(the second meaning) in the house of headman or the oldest and most venerable villager of *Gushe*. Specifically, I concentrated on the second phase of Guzang Festival which includes gift exchange among the village people. The following will narrate some details of presents in giving and returning.

Guests participating in the Guzang Festival must bring the necessary gifts in the sacrifice ritual. In the village of Kongbai, these gifts are mainly singular fresh drake, singular fresh carp, 2-3 kilograms of glutinous rice, rice wine and firecrackers. The host will give the guest a corresponding gift in return. There are corresponding regulations for the types of rewards. Generally, a cow is divided into four parts: head leg, second leg, third leg, and forth leg. The head leg belongs to the mother’s brother, the second leg is given to the brother of one’s wife, and the third and forth leg are given to other relatives. In PENG and

DENG's survey (2021), the most important returning gifts in Kongbai Village (the village sacrifices pigs during Guzang Festival) are pig legs. A pig leg with a tail must be given to the uncle, but it is necessary to ensure that each household can bring back a pig leg.

The reason why it is called a kind of *potlatch* is because of its exchange behavior and extravagance. According to Mauss, it is known that potlatch is a kind of total prestation system in a greater intensity. It not only exchanges gifts, but also reorganizes the system of rights and obligations in the entire social structure. According to ZHANG (2108), during the procedure of killing "Gu", adult pigs must be all killed, so looking around, many families are covered with pigs on the ground. On this day, every household slaughtered at least three or four pigs, and the largest household slaughtered 17 pigs. But PENG and DENG (2021) in their analysis of gift exchange in Kongbai village, Leishan county argue that no matter how extravagant or cheap, gifts were originally just a kind of symbol, but in recent years it has been impacted by foreign cultures and it begins to have a great sense of comparison.

Such a ritual should be attached to a great importance, for it concerns the change of the forms of killing "Gu", and paramountly, the change of Miao people's collective memory about their ancestors and spiritual temperament conveyed by tradition. Whether it is a kind of *potlatch* in modern society is not as important as its meaning in gift exchange. There will be more arguments from anthropological perspective in the third part of the research paper.

### **3. HISTORICAL CHANGES OF GUZANG FESTIVAL**

The prohibition of Guzang Festival started from the early 1950s and lasted to the late 1970s. But after 2000, it became popular again. Along with the fracture and reconstruction, how did the changes happen under different specific social contexts? It's the question I will address on in this part.

#### *The prohibition in the course of Chinese modernization*

In the book *History and Culture of the Miao Nationality* by LI Tinggui, ZHANG Shan and ZHOU Guangda, the fracture of Guzang Festival was set in the course of Chinese modernization. Guzang Festival has two constraints, one is economic, and the other is non-economic.

From the economic perspective, LI Tinggui and others hold a strongly evolutionary view of traditional culture. They believe that in the development of national economic construction, those traditional concepts that are not conducive to economic development should be discarded, so that the Miao nationality can be among the most advanced nations in the near future(1996). Therefore, the Guzang Festival was considered as one of the economic factors restricting modernization. The economic evaluation of Guzang Festival directly led to the government's interference and prohibition of this ceremony from the early 1950s to the late 1970s. Many scholars, including some Miao scholars, are influenced

by the concept and also believed that the Guzang Festival is a kind of “superstition” or “waste”.

However, there still is an objection from a neutral standpoint, “those who are critical of Guzang Festival may have a good wish, hoping that the Miao people will invest their limited economic resources in economic activities of reproduction. But their perspectives are biased (YANG, 2000)”. YANG also says, such a criticism began as early as the Qing Dynasty. After the Qing government quelled the uprising of the Miao people in western Hunan in the Qianjia period, Fu Nai, who was responsible for handling the aftermath, banned the local Miao people from holding the ceremony of slaughtering oxen. The Qing government regarded it as a kind of “secret society” to guard against, but the public excuse is to prohibit “luxury”.

LI and others’ book still holds a functionalist view of traditional culture. According to the description, Miao ancestors were forced to move continuously due to the wars, and the Miao society was divided into many small closed circles. This made it difficult for the Miao people living in each closed circle to make extensive connections within the whole ethnic group, let alone, outside the ethnic group. Above is the non-economic factor that Guzang Festival is accused of restricting modernization.

Nevertheless, YANG evaluates “Gu” as a symbol of social integration, just like the function what makes the Qing government feared. During the specific investigation of the Guzang Festival (YANG, 2000)), it was found in Taijiang, Leishan, Rongjiang and other counties in Guizhou. “Guzang Festival also transcends the meaning of ‘blood-related’ clan to fictitious clan and common sacrificial ancestor of village landing”. In many villages, there is a relationship between “general Gu” and “divided Gu”.

*The fracture and reconstruction of Guzang Festival in the context of Chinese ethnology*

YANG Shengmin’s paper (2017) provides a kind of historic thought within the Chinese ethnological context on this Guzang Festival research. What is noteworthy is that the prohibition of Guzang Festival actually fits within Yang’s second stage of the development of Chinese ethnology. And the revival of Guzang Festival after 2000 exactly falls in the golden development period of Chinese ethnology. It can surely be no coincidence that the fracture and reconstruction of Guzang Festival are strongly associated with the national social as well as political context.

Benefited from ethnic identification during the transformation to “Soviet ethnology”, Guzang Festival, as an importance factor of Miao people, was described and investigated by ethnological specialists. But because of some economic and social factors mentioned in 2.1, that was at odds with the proletarian political discourse during the time, it had been forbidden. However, after 2000, Chinese ethnology attaches great importance to application and

development, thus the relationship between traditional Chinese culture and globalizing economics arouses reflection. Guzang Festival, as the oldest and most magnificent Miao festival, is able to present itself to the public to gain economic benefits.

#### *The missing potlatch in Guzang Festival*

In part 1, I have mentioned that there is a transformation of sacrifice in Guzang Festival. “Chigu” evolved into eating pigs nowadays. It can be seen that the festival consumption of Miao people is not completely irrational or crazy.

According to YANG Zhengwen’s investigation (2000), the time for the mass slaughter of “Gu”, which is called “Black Guzang”, does not occur every thirteen years. Miao people hold the sacrifice based on their own capacity, and it is quite common for villages to establish it once in 40 to 50 years. The killing of pigs during the Guzang Festival is called “White Guzang”. At present, there are already quite large areas where sacrifice “White Guzang”. Such an adjustment and transformation are conscious. What’s more, the “Gu” they slaughtered for sacrificial ceremonies were basically exclusively raised for Guzang Festival. If they are inspired to raise more cattle for meat eating through sacrifices, it may not only have no negative impact on their economy, but also improve their lives.

And there are three important roles played during the transformation to bring it into full play its modern latent energy (BAO, 2016). First, the holders of Guzang Festival themselves. They form a cultural community together. And the community is the core force for the cultural inheritance, enhancing Miao people’s “cultural self-confidence” as well as “cultural awareness”. Second, national power, which will provide a good policy environment for the healthy and orderly development of Guzang Festival. Last but not the least, social force. It can fully excavate the cultural connotation of Guzang Festival, encourage people from all walks of life to actively participate, and continuously expand the team and quantity of cultural development.

Anyhow, the rebirth of Guzang Festival discarded its “potlatch” “bourgeois” traits, the emphasis during the ritual presenting switching to “healthier” ethnic culture such as sacrifice dance and sacrifice songs. That is a positive change from heritage protection view.

#### **4. COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND GIFT EXCHANGE: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

In part 1, there is a general view and some extensive rituals about Guzang Festival. And in part 2, I have traced to the historical changes of it.

What’s more, from an anthropological perspective, what is the permanent collective memory about Guzang Festival? How does the collective memory has changed with the historical changes of Guzang Festival? How the collective memory of Guzang Festival of Miao ethnic group get re-strengthened and re-

consolidated, and what does the role the gift exchange re-play practically nowadays? I will discuss these questions in part 3.

#### *Two carriers of collective memory*

##### Big man in Guzang Festival

*Guzang Tou*, the big man in Guzang Festival, is the core figure of Guzang Festival. As a bridge between humans and gods, he is a matchmaker for people to sincerely present gifts to their ancestors.

According to YANG's fieldwork (2009), WANG Laojin, who was choosed to be *Guzang Tou* at Jialiang, refused at the very start. What noteworthy is that the social context of this certain Guzang Festival at Jialiang. Guzang Festival was fractured for nearly half a century at Jialiang, and it just kind of faded into oblivion. Guzang activities was recovered till 1996 there. Hence, the first recovery was splendid, 154 households, 687 people participated. Therefore, choosing a reasonable and decent *Guzang Tou* is really important. Through one egg divination and four grass divinations, Wang Laojin won the *Guzang Tou* competition, and the two descendants of the old *Guzang Tou* were unsuccessful. But Wang Laojin had three concerns

Since ancient times, his family has not killed cattle to respect the ancestors, and no one has ever been a *Guzang Tou*. 2.He is not a village cadre, and he is afraid that the other would be dissatisfied, 3.His family has only one Guzang cow, which is not as good as a family with two cows. He is afraid of ridicule.

Above narration involve three sides, economic, authority, and power. However, the villagers are determined to choose Wang Laojin. It can be seen from this fact is that the villagers believe in the choice of ancestors and gods more than traditional inheritance, power surrender, and economic superiority.

Although the process of modernization has changed a lot in Guzang Festival, what remains unchanged is the observance and reverence for the gods as well as ancestors. In collective memory, grass and egg divination symbolize the wishes of the ancestors. Guzang Festival should not violate the wishes of the ancestors in choosing *Guzang Tou*. The big man in Guzang Festival is a particularly prominent carrier in collective memory.

##### Gift exchange in Guzang Festival

*Lang regulation*, as the folk law in Miao society, banned killing and eating a mount of cows during Guzang Festival in 2009(XU,2010).To some extent, it was a turning point for Miao's traditional memory of Guzang Festival. But it emphasized the importance of gift exchange. The law says,

*To kill a cow, consider the amount of meat divided according to the amount of gifts given by the guests. A large amount of meat must not be left. The principle is to finish dividing the meat.*

Gift exchange, as a kind of traditional memory of Guzang Festival is preserved. The complexity of the exchange have mentioned in part 1, now based on cultural anthropology, we find out that the profound cultural significance in it. It is called reciprocity among villagers-ancestor as well as hosts-guests(XU,2013). Therefore, gift exchange is also an unavoidable carrier of collective memory in Guzang Festival.

*The reconstruction of collective memory and the meaning of gift exchange*

The reconstruction of Dengmai Miao's Guzang Festival connects it with the physical condition of people, hoping to restore health through Guzang rituals. This allows us to see the reconstruction of "diachronic common memory" under the discourse of modernity (ZHANG,2017).

From 2013 to 2015, the Long Clan of Jiamian Township organized a long-lasting Guzang Festival. The cause of this activity was that the patriarch of a clan named Long suffered severe joint pain and foot pain. This 60-year-old man sought medical treatment everywhere, and even went to the Guizhou Medical University to see a scientific expert, but he couldn't find the problem. The villagers thought that this might be a pain that science could not explain. In desperation, after being introduced by others, he found a wizard to come home performing the egg divination ceremony. Based on the results of the divination, the wizard told the parents that the ancestor spirit had arrived home and that the Guzang Festival must be held to ask for health to ancestors as soon as possible. The wizard suggested that the patriarch act as *Guzang Tou*, and hold a grand Guzang Festival that lasts for three years and it need the entire Long clan to participate. Only when the ancestors are sent away to their satisfaction can the old man recover his health. The wizard strongly warned the patriarch that if he refused to serve as the *Guzang Tou*, or hold Guzang Festival, then everyone in his clan would die. With the awe of ancestors and fear of death, the old man carefully prepared the Guzang Festival for the coming year.

The above example let us see the meaning of the creation of collective memory and the exchange of gifts with ancestors. Elimination of sickness does not exist in the collective memory of the ancient Guzang Festival, and it is not one of the purposes of Guzang ceremony. But this is only the superficial purpose. At a deeper level, it is to obtain the blessing of the ancestors through the heavy gifts to them. As it is said in the *Poem to Sacrifice the Cow*:

*Oh! cow! In the early years, you voluntarily replaced the sheep and took on the heavy responsibility of sacrificing. ....There will be no wrong to use you worshiping ancestors, ancestors will be so happy, our family will be prosperous, men will have great talents, and women will pretty as fairies(XU,2013).*

In a word, the viewpoint on collective memory and gift-exchange deepen the understanding of cultural connotations of Guzang Festival in the context of modernity.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Maurice Halbwachs, the pioneer of collective memory theory, regards memory as a collective social behavior, and social organizations or groups have corresponding collective memories. An ethnic group often uses common rituals to strengthen their collective memory regularly, or establish permanent physical monuments to maintain this collective memory, and nation-states always using historical education to institutionalize collective memory. Halbwachs emphasizes how individual memories are shaped in collective interactions, but its memories formed through collective interactions are, in the final analysis, personal narratives. Its “collective memory” actually refers to the sum of many individual memories. The collective here is not an abstract concept, but a concrete collection. It is Paul Connerton who really makes the collective the subject of memory. Connerton pointed out in *How societies remember* that a group uses rituals to shape a common memory, which is not only the product of the addition of the private memories of each member, but also belongs to the group itself.

The Guzang Festival is a ritual used by the Miao people in a specific area to regularly strengthen their collective memory that belongs to the whole ethnic group. In the Guzang Festival, in addition to the *Guzang Tou* and the oldest villager, priests are also the important figures. On the second or third day of Guzang Festival, the local priest is responsible for chanting the “The Song of Guzang” that calls the gods of sky and ground, and the holy spirits of ancestors. The song traces the history of Miao nationality from ancient times to the family nowadays in order to carry out re-education of Miao’s history and culture from generation to generation (PAN, 2013). That’s an indispensable way to construct collective memory of Gushe, and Miao nationality as well.

And the three legends Mentioned in the first part, not only indicates the purposes of Guzang Festival among Miao people, but also carry on the collective memory in Miao ethnic group through successive generations. Furthermore, some scholars (ZHANG et al., 2018) find a pragmatic function of Guzang Festival, to dispel illness. However, it seems to have no “traditionality” nor universality among Miao village. This is the traditional invention and the shaping of collective memory discussed in the third part.

However, this research paper not only discusses the ceremony of Guzang Festival itself as a collective memory, but also discovers the constant core and essence of social culture in the state of fracture as well as reconstruction. And from my point of view, that is the “total prestation” through the flow of gifts within the clans, which involve cultural and social functions. According to Mauss, the main reason for forcing people to exchange gifts is society. Society needs this kind of reciprocity system to ensure the progress of social activities and the establishment of social norms. It can be said that nearly all exchange behaviors

are for the establishment of a certain social relationship, and participation in social exchange activities is the basic element of the establishment of social networks.

There are many researches on gifts by Mauss that are also suitable for the gift giving and return of the Guzang Festival in the Miao ethnic area. The relationship between gifts for the festival and maternal kinship and marriage has a deep connection, that is, it contains the kinship of both parents. In part one and part two, the description of the owner's "return of the pig leg" mentioned that the head leg belongs to the mother's brother. Therefore, it is very typical to study the social structure, social activities, social norms and social order based on the kinship of the Miao nationality through the gift study of Guzang Festival.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Bao Longyuan.2016.The Miao people's Guzang Festival's Cultural Connotation and Inheritance Protection Path:Taking GaoPai Village in RongJiang County of Guizhou Province as an Example.School of Ethnology and Sociology, 32(01):57-62.
- Li Tinggui, ZHANG Shan, ZHOU Guangda. 1996.History and Culture of the Miao Nationality. Beijing:China Minzu University Press,448-449.
- Pan Dingfa.2013.Fieldwork Report of Leishan Miao's Guzang Festival. Collection of Chinese Mountain Ethnic Studies, (00): 67-99.
- Peng Sitao, DENG Xiaohua.2021.An Anthropological Perspective of the Cultural Connotation of Miao's Guzang: Based on an Analysis of Gift Exchange. Guizhou Social Sciences, (05): 104-108.
- Xu Xiaoguang.2010.Review on "Jialiang Yi-lang" of Hmong People in Yueliang District of Rongjiang County in Southeast Guizhou Province.Journal of Shandong University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition),(02):35-43.
- Xu Xiaoguang.2013.Gifts of Guzang Festival: Study on the Rituals of "Gift Exchanges" in the Ancestor Worship Activities of the Miao Nationality in Southeastern Guizhou.Folk Law,12(00):334-345.
- Yang Shengmin.2017.A review of Chinese ethnology in the past hundred years and its summary in the new era. International Journal of Anthropology and Ethnology, (06): 1-6.
- Yang Yuanlong.2009.Ancient Reliques among the Miao at Jialiang: A Field and Case Study in Chiguzang Ceremonies in Mt. Yueliangshan Area.Journal of Original Ecological National Culture,1(01):111-120.
- Yang Zhengwen.2000.The Ceremony of Guzang Festival and the Miao's Social Organization.Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities(Philosophy and Social Sciences), (05): 13-26+158.
- Yu Lin.2012.An Analysis of the Cultural Connotation of Gu Zang Festival of Miao Minority: Take Leishan County of Qiandongnan in Guizhou Province as an

- Example. Journal of Qiannan Normal College for Nationalities, 32(03): 30-33.
- Zhang Chi, QIU Mingyu, ZHANG Xiong. 2018. A Survey Report of Miao's Guzang Festival in Jiamian Township. Festival Studies, (01): 110-121.
- Zhang Chi.2017.Guzang's Sacrificial Rituals and Cultural Symbols of "Dengmai" Miao Nationality.Religious Studies,116(03):151-157.

---

© Copyright (2023): Author(s). The licensee is the publisher (B P International).

# Research on the Shadow Play Culture in Shaanxi

Xu Shuang <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH15

---

## ABSTRACT

In 2011, Chinese shadow puppetry was recognized as "intangible cultural heritage" by UNESCO. This traditional art, inherited for thousands of years, was recognized by the world and became a valuable asset for humanity. As the earliest birthplace of shadow play in legend, Shaanxi has a long history of shadow play inheritance. It is said that the emperor of the Han Dynasty missed his deceased concubine and looked at other people's figures and performances across the veil, just like seeing his lover. The shadow play then spread from the palace to the people. It has become an important people's leisure and entertainment in the Song Dynasty.

The rise and fall of shadow play in Shaanxi is the epitome of the development history of shadow play in China. In the development history of shadow play, Shaanxi shadow play has formed a unique play performance style. Shaanxi Province is still one of the most important performance areas of shadow play.

This paper will introduce the definition of Shaanxi shadow play, review the development history of shadow play, tell the development status of shadow play and its cultural by-products, and put forward some suggestions on the protection and promotion of shadow play.

*Keywords: Shadow play; intangible cultural heritage; cultural anthropology; Shaanxi shadow play.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article first gives a brief introduction to Shaanxi shadow puppets by describing the characteristics, classification and social functions of Shaanxi shadow puppets. Next, I reviewed the history of shadow puppets, introduced three legends about the origin of shadow puppets, and briefly described the spread and development process of shadow puppets. Then, this article analyzes the development status of Shaanxi shadow puppetry, and sees that its development is facing many difficulties and also sees new development opportunities. At the end of the article, three suggestions are made for the

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 2389763799@qq.com;

protection of intangible cultural heritage of shadow puppets from the perspective of cultural anthropology.

## **2. SHAANXI SHADOW PLAY: WHAT IS IT?**

### *The characteristics of Shaanxi shadow puppets*

Shadow puppets, are a kind of performance art widely spread among the people. The performance of shadow puppets relies on light shining on the screen, coupled with music and folk art performers' rap, while performing various actions by master shadow puppets, through which we can produce wonderful shadow puppet art. Shaanxi shadow play, also known as "shadow play", is one of the oldest and most representative shadow play in China.

Shaanxi shadow puppets have formed a unique performance style in thousands of years of historical evolution: First, from the perspective of performance time, the season of concentrated performance of shadow puppets starts every year from November to March of the lunar calendar; and shadow puppets are generally available on demand. At this time, dozens of traditional dramas are prepared for the "play folds" for the audience to choose at will. Second, from the perspective of the performers, from the past to the present, shadow puppet costumes have always been simple, with fewer people. In Shaanxi shadow puppet performance, at least five people are needed. (The "Front First" is the person who plays the role of recitation, singing and percussion music in the whole play. The "Sign Hand" specializes in shadow puppet performances. "Specially responsible for musical instruments such as clappers, bowls, etc.) Third, from the perspective of the repertoire, Shaanxi shadow puppets have a long history, so there are many repertoires. Among them are traditional repertoires, such as "You West Lake". There are also some repertoires that record the lives of ancient people, such as "Tokyo Dream Hualu", and some are based on history, such as: "Changbanpo". Fourth, from the perspective of singing, there are mainly Laoqiang and Wanwanqiang. Laoqiang mainly comes from Huayin County, Shaanxi Province. It has rough melody, simple accent, bold vibe, generous and tragic. And Wanwanqiang is a rap form that absorbs some local folk art and boatman's chants.

### *The classification of Shaanxi shadow puppets: East Road and West Road*

Chinese shadow puppetry is composed of six factors: shadow puppetry, shadow play technology, singing skills, lighting, stage, and musical instruments. The six factors have different characteristics, forming their own styles of different regions and genres. Among them, the local color of shadow puppets is the most obvious, which is an important basis for distinguishing the genres of shadow play. Different styles of shadow puppets are not only restricted by the rules of traditional folk art, but also driven by the local people's aesthetic concepts and appreciation. Shaanxi shadow puppets are a very important category of Chinese shadow puppets. At the same time, Shaanxi shadow puppets are also divided

into two categories, namely, according to the style of modeling, they are divided into east and west.

East Road shadow puppets are represented by Hua County, with exaggerated and bold shapes, rich and gorgeous colors, exquisite carvings, small body shape, highlighting the expression of the face. To make her character distinct, her singing voice is dominated by Wanwanqiang Huaqiang. In the shadow puppets of the East Road, the characters of Sheng and Dan have small noses and mouths, and they are embellished with vermilion. The female image is extremely charming.

West Road shadow puppets are represented by Fengxiang, who are generally large in size, burly and magnificent, rugged and powerful. The singing cavity of the table is mainly Xianban and Qinqiang. The characters of the Western Road shadow puppets are basically separated, Dan, Jing, Mo, Chou, etc., the specific drama characters have their own characteristics, but the overall shape is complete and generous, simple, the patterns are also exquisite.

#### *The social function of Shaanxi shadow puppets*

Shaanxi shadow puppets have realized certain social functions through its simple and interesting manifestations, whether in remote ancient times or in the present era. Some functions have changed from very important to less important with the development of the times, such as the function of witchcraft; and Some functions are becoming more and more important, such as entertainment functions. Now let's make a brief analysis of the social function of Shaanxi shadow puppets.

First, the witchcraft function. As early as the Spring and Autumn Period before the appearance of shadow puppetry, the people of Chu were very superstitious about the soul. At that time, people even believed that people's illness or death was due to the death of the soul. During the Han and Tang Dynasties, shadow puppetry played a role in expelling evil spirits and inspiring souls in funeral ceremonies. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the witchcraft function of shadow puppets was still used by the common people. People worshipped the gods and begged for a good harvest.

Second, the entertainment function. Shadow puppets are mostly born in the countryside. The creative themes and expressions of shadow puppets are closely related to the life experience of ordinary people. Their expressions are also easy to understand and easy to be accepted by ordinary people. This way, there will be more audience. The people love shadow puppet shows.

The third is the enlightenment function. The educational function of shadow puppets is manifested in two aspects: On the one hand, shadow puppets are sometimes combined with religion. On the other hand, shadow puppet performances are often closely related to social education. Shadow puppets are mostly based on folk historical stories and myths. The works vividly portray loyalty, evil, kindness and ugliness. Under the exaggerated artistic performance,

people have accepted the teaching of distinguishing right from wrong, dispelling evil and promoting goodness, which is very helpful for people with lower education in rural areas and children to establish values.

Fourth, the aesthetic function. Exquisite character modeling and vivid performances bring an audio-visual feast. Many people are fascinated by it and deeply love the art form of shadow puppetry, and I am one of them. The magic of sound and the image of the picture are used in human emotions, causing associations, imagination, resonance, triggering positive emotions, and bringing aesthetic pleasure.

### **3. WHAT IS THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN AND SPREAD OF SHADOW PLAY?**

#### *The origin of shadow play*

Due to the long history of shadow puppetry and the lack of clear historical records, there are divergent opinions on the story of its birth. Here are some of the main origin legends:

The first legend asserts that shadow puppetry originated in the Han Dynasty and was the earliest method of sorcery to call souls. This statement originated from the record in the "Sou Shen Ji": Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty loved concubine Mrs. Li died at a young age. Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty missed his lover very much. The way Qi people call for souls is to use a piece of white cloth at night, light candles all around, and let Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty sit far away. From the emperor's eyes, it is like seeing the shadow of his lost love through the white cloth. This legend became the foundational origin of shadow puppetry.

Legend two considers that shadow puppetry originated in the Tang Dynasty, and this statement is related to the other two art forms of the time. One is the puppet show. There is a great similarity between the puppet show and the shadow puppet show. From a poem written by Emperor Ming of Tang, it can be seen that the puppetry production and performance skills at that time were quite mature, and the description of the puppetry manipulation in the poem is very easy. Reminiscent of the performance of shadow puppets. The other is vulgar talk, which is similar to the form of rap. It is to adapt the Buddhist scriptures into a rap style. When speaking, images or moving paper figures are used to draw illustrations to capture the audience. These two claims have no factual bases.

Legend three is that many people believe that shadow puppets originated from the folks, and shadow puppets everywhere believe in their origin legends. According to an artist in Jinzhong, Shanxi, Huanglong and his nephew cut animal skins into human forms in front of the windows to entertain themselves during the Yin and Shang Dynasties. Later generations cut them into paper windows and shadows, which later became shadow puppets. According to the Hubei shadow

puppet artist, the history of shadow puppetry can be traced back to the dispute between Chu and Han in the late Qin Dynasty. Legend has it that Zhang Liang used shadow puppets to arouse the enemy's homesickness in order to "incite rebellion." These folk rumors are all from the mouths of local artists, and they are not enough to prove it.

Because of the long time and the scarcity of historical materials, there are different opinions on the true source of shadow puppetry, but the art of shadow puppetry matured in the Song Dynasty and reached a consensus. In the Northern Song Dynasty, Gao Cheng's "Jiyuan of Things" records: "During Renzong of the Song Dynasty, there were people in the city who were able to talk about the Three Kingdoms, or adopt and add decorations. The history of the filmmakers is the image of the Wei, Shu and Wu Tripartite War." This can be confirmed shadow play had already formed in the Northern Song Dynasty.

#### *The spread and development of shadow play*

##### The spread of shadow play in China

On the one hand, the spread and development of shadow puppets was influenced by cultural exchanges in peacetime; on the other hand, it was forced to spread. In the cruel war, the victor took the shadow puppets as slaves for his own enjoyment. For example, after the Jinren broke Kaifeng, some shadow puppet artists moved south to Lin'an with it. As a popular entertainment activity, the shadow puppet industry quickly took root and developed into the Hangzhou shadow puppet genre. While the Jinren kidnapped the royal family and nobles, they also kidnapped shadow puppet artists. Along with the sufferings of the artists, the art of shadow puppetry has spread to various places.

##### Overseas dissemination of shadow puppetry

The overseas spread of shadow puppets was also affected by wars. The rulers of the Yuan Dynasty used shadow puppets as entertainment in the court and army. The Mongols went south and west, accompanied by shadow puppets. The Mongolian army made expeditions to vast areas of Eurasia, and shadow puppetry was introduced to Persia, Arabia and Turkey. And the vast areas of other Eurasian and Southeast Asian countries, such as Siam, Burma, and the Malay Islands.

The introduction of shadow puppetry to the West is also inseparable from the role of cultural exchange. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Catholic missionaries brought Chinese shadow puppets to France. In 1767, they performed in the Paris Theater and later introduced it to London, England. The great German poet Goethe once introduced Chinese shadow puppets at the exposition, and George Sadour of France described Chinese shadow puppets as the pioneer of film in the "General History of Movies".

The development path of shadow puppet art

The development of shadow puppet art has not been smooth sailing. It has experienced ups and downs. In the late Qing Dynasty, some local officials feared that shadow puppets would gather in the dark night scene, banning shadow puppet performances and even arresting shadow puppet artists. Before and after the Japanese invasion of China, the society was in turmoil, the people were dying, and the shadow puppet industry fell into a trough. After liberation, the remaining shadow puppets and artists across the country were reborn. The ten-year catastrophe destroyed the shadow puppet art that was widely hidden among the people and passed on from generation to generation. After the reform and opening up, the endangered situation of shadow puppet shows began to be reversed. Although traditional culture has a rejuvenating social environment, under the impact of new technologies such as contemporary film and television audio and popular entertainment, the endangered situation of shadow puppets is still difficult to reverse.

#### **4. THE DEVELOPMENT STATUS OF SHAANXI SHADOW PUPPETS**

##### *Dilemma*

Like many other folk art forms that are on the verge of extinction, shadow puppetry is also facing an increasingly distressed living space. With the death of elderly shadow puppet audiences and the impact of modern media, shadow puppetry has gradually lost the private market, coupled with its own problems in the production and preservation of shadow puppets, the humanistic and ecological space for shadow puppetry performance is getting narrower and narrower.

##### Dilemma in protection

The production of shadow puppet works is relatively difficult, and it is also difficult to preserve. The craftsmanship of the shadow puppet works is relatively complicated, the image is exquisitely crafted, and the craftsmanship is meticulously crafted. It requires more than 20 production processes and the requirements for the preservation of the finished product are very demanding. There will be a deformation, fading, etc., resulting in damage to the shadow puppet work. Coupled with the emergence of some modern production machines such as shadow puppet laser engraving machines, it has greatly damaged the image of shadow puppets and is very unfavorable to the protection and inheritance of shadow puppets in Shaanxi.

##### Difficulties in inheritance

Performing shadow puppet performances and making shadow puppets is very difficult. Many performers are very old, and the inheritance of shadow puppets lacks successors. The scripts of shadow puppets are all manuscripts, and with the passing of many traditional art performers, many scripts have been lost.

Coupled with excessive interest pursuit and commercialization, the inheritance and protection of Shaanxi shadow puppets is too focused on chasing interest. In many cases, inferior materials are selected for production, which has greatly affected the reputation and inheritance of Shaanxi shadow puppets. The protection of this brings great difficulties.

There are fewer and fewer artists engaged in shadow puppetry. With the passing of the older generation of shadow puppet artists, the actors of the shadow puppet show have also appeared in a situation of "nothing to pick up". Although some shadow puppet theaters want to train a few young people, no one wants to learn it. The main reason is that the income from shadow puppetry is not as good as the income from part-time work. In the old society, shadow puppet artists carried the burden and left the village to support their families. The image of shadow puppet artists in the society is that they have left their hometowns, are displaced, have low social status, and are basically illiterate or less educated people, so they are in the lower class of the traditional social class. The desire to get rich quickly and promote social status brought about by modern knowledge education has caused many people to attach importance to children's formal school education, and shadow puppets, which are in a private and marginal position, have been left out.

#### The dilemma in the social environment

With the popularization of TV and movies among the people, people's entertainment and pastime methods have undergone major changes. Television, which represents modern science and technology, has replaced the traditional art of shadow puppetry. Between modern media and traditional shadow puppetry, people are more inclined to accept modern media that is rich in information. Therefore, both in terms of time and space, the shadow puppet market is shrinking significantly. The plot progress of shadow puppets is relatively slow, the story is relatively cumbersome, and it is difficult to promote and popularize. In recent years, the shadow puppet market has been shrinking year by year, and the audience is mostly elderly people, and there is a lack of motivation in the protection, inheritance and development of Shaanxi shadow puppets.

#### Difficulties in policy support

In addition, the guarantee and support system of relevant government departments is not sound enough, and there is a lack of in-depth understanding of the protection and inheritance status of Shaanxi shadow puppets. The lack of funds in the process of implementing relevant policies is not conducive to effective communication between relevant government departments and private institutions.

#### *New opportunities*

On the one hand, with the rise of short videos, some shadow puppets are performing shadow puppets on platforms for the general public. Those who love shadow puppets can also easily follow traditional shadow puppets. The benign

interaction between performers and viewers has promoted the development of shadow puppetry. Traditional arts with fewer and fewer audiences receive more praise and bring wonderful folk culture to young people. On "Kuaishou", a short video platform popular with netizens, Wei Zongfu, the inheritor of Dao Qing shadow puppets, is an internet celebrity with 176,000 fans. Mr. Wei, who has followed his grandfather to learn shadow puppets since childhood, has been performing for more than 40 years and has won widespread attention and applause on the Kuaishou platform. Being named the "Leader of the Happy Country" is not only a great change to Mr. Wei's acting life, but also a convenient window for many netizens who are interested in traditional art performances. They can enjoy the video of the shadow puppet show in their own home and participate in the live broadcast.

On the other hand, the design of cultural and creative products related to shadow puppet elements also has great development potential. These products are liked by children and young people, but also by tourists. In my childhood, I was deeply attracted by the performance of "Monkey King Three Beats the Bones" and I strongly asked my parents to buy me a small shadow puppet of Monkey King that I could take away. The small figure in the glass is still in my desk. Some scholars have studied the cultural connotation of Shaanxi shadow puppets and the construction of visual symbols to make people understand the artistic characteristics of Shaanxi shadow puppets, and combine the cultural symbols of its regional characteristics with modern consumer demand and product design to create unique and interesting Cultural and creative products, to realize the inheritance and inheritance of traditional culture.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

From the perspective of cultural anthropology, some suggestions are put forward on the heritage and protection of Shaanxi shadow puppet intangible cultural heritage.

### *Handle the relationship between tradition and innovation*

In the discussion of China's "intangible cultural heritage" protection, there are generally two propositions. One is biased towards a conservative perspective. The cultural works that have been passed down to this day of "Original Flavor" advocate that the "intangible cultural heritage" must be original, pure and not cross-border, and cannot be mixed with others. Another view is that the announcement of intangible cultural items as "heritage" is actually a kind of social naming, although the words used in social naming may be original, modified or completely new. I agree with the latter view that non-material culture is "living" and is carried by human life activities, rather than immutable. As Hobsbawm said in "The Invention of Traditions": "Those claiming that ancient traditions often stem from recent inventions. The invented traditions are symbolic and imply the continuity of the past. Some traditions are inherent. Some traditions were invented, and some traditions were rebuilt after they disappeared, but these can all be called traditions, or formally established as traditions, and become true traditions after a period of time."

In the historical process of the development of Shaanxi shadow puppetry, we not only maintained the tradition, but also transformed the tradition and created many new traditions. Some of the shadow puppets. The work reflects the ideology and culture of the old age, and it can no longer be understood and accepted by young people today, so many of its audiences are the elderly. So how to create works that can be understood by young people today is Shaanxi. The development of shadow puppets is a crucial issue.

*Handle the relationship between others and oneself well, and give full play to the role of local people*

The lack of inheritors of Shaanxi shadow puppets is a big dilemma facing the development of shadow puppets. The stability of the family (or clan) structure and inheritance mechanism in traditional Chinese society has to some extent created the fixedness of the intangible cultural heritage inheritance system—whether it is dependent on the group inheritance method of the family and the local society, or the form of individual inheritance between father and son, master and apprentice has not undergone major changes in a long period of time in the past. Therefore, only by paying attention to the "root" of Chinese rural culture can we grasp the intangible cultural heritage. This "root" refers to the relationship between the blood, geography and industry of Chinese rural culture. Although the intangible cultural heritage survives in contemporary society, it is due to its The continuation is the tradition of the agricultural civilization period. People are the core factor in the inheritance of traditional family workshops. To solve this problem, the welfare of intangible cultural heritage needs to be truly benefited by the local people, and the local people need to play the main role.

*Form a good interaction model between the government and the people*

The intangible cultural heritage protection movement initiated by my country in the early 21st century has formed a protection model of "government-led and social participation". Under this model, the country's dominant position in cultural construction has been constantly emphasized, and the government's guiding force in the direction of cultural development has also been continuously highlighted. In this context, the local government spares no effort to transform the cultural space, hoping to realize the transformation of cultural heritage into political and economic resources. In this way, "intangible cultural heritage protection" has become a gorgeous coat of government departments in many places, and its essence is only to serve economic development, and the role of culture is not taken seriously. Fortunately, in the long-term protection of intangible cultural heritage, the interaction between the government and the private sector is undergoing subtle changes. The government is also adjusting its work plan.

*Summary*

All in all , Shaanxi shadow puppets have formed a unique artistic style in the course of thousands of years of development, and have produced important

social and cultural influences. However, this traditional art form is facing a severe crisis today. It is not only the difficulty of protection and inheritance, but also that the social environment brought about by the change of lifestyle and entertainment is not conducive to the inheritance of shadow puppets. In addition, the government's support for the protection of shadow puppets is also still need to find a more reasonable way. Above, I put forward some suggestions for the further development of Shaanxi shadow puppets from the perspective of shadow puppets themselves, local shadow puppet artists, and shadow puppet policies.

Just as the ancient poem describes the shadow puppets: "The account is in the past, the drums are under the lights. The world is invincible, and the army is invincible." The shadow puppets have become the recorder and narrator of the vicissitudes of China for thousands of years. The roles played by people are also appreciated by people of different ages. In today's cultural prosperity, shadow puppetry still has its value. It not only serves as an intangible cultural heritage, but also as an art form that tells history. It allows people to praise good and evil. As a feature film integrating singing and performance, it brings people an aesthetic feast.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Chen Xiaolu, 2018, Shaanxi Shadow Play Heritage Protection and Inheritance Dilemma [J], *Art Technology*, p42, p215-235.
- Chen Yaqian, 2015, the use of shadow puppet elements in illustrations in Huaxian County, Shaanxi [D], Shaanxi Normal University
- Cui Yongping, 1993, On the art of Chinese shadow puppetry [J], *Literature and Art Research*, p55-65.
- Fang Lili, 2020, "Intangible Heritage" Protection from the Perspective of Cultural Anthropology——Comment on "Cultural Anthropology and Intangible Cultural Heritage"[J], *Intangible Cultural Heritage of China*, p112-123.
- Hui Yang, 2011, Research on Chinese shadow puppet art and its inheritance and development[J], *Art Education Research*, p31+36.
- Li Xin, Liu Shengnan, Wang Liwei, 2018 Phenomenon and Essence: Lingyuan Shadow Play Research from the Perspective of Cultural Anthropology [J], *Northern Music*, p33
- Wu Jiaqin, 2007, Chinese folk art-Shaanxi folk shadow puppets[J], *Forum for Science and Technology Association (second half of the month)*, p136-137.
- Yang Jianwei, Peng Min, Wang Yi, 2019, Research on Cultural and Creative Product Design under the Cultural Symbol of Shaanxi Shadow Play [J], *Packaging Engineering*, p151-156.
- Yu Dan, 2012, *Shadow Play (Chinese Cultural Knowledge Reader)*[B], Jilin , Jilin Literature and History Publishing House,p15-41.

Zhou Wanxi, 2021, The history of the development of shadow puppets[J] , China Airlines, p36-37.

Zhu Yanjun, 2021, Shadow Play of Huan County Dao Qing from the Perspective of Dramatic Anthropology [J/OL]. China Building Materials Science and Technology, p176-177.

---

© Copyright (2023): Author(s). The licensee is the publisher (B P International).

# **Mobile Phone Practice of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Inheritance and Development of Gannan Tea Picking Opera**

**Xu Wei** <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH16

---

## **ABSTRACT**

Gannan tea Picking opera is the combination of oral literature and folk music and dance, with strong local flavor and distinct Hakka characteristics. In 2006, It was selected as a national intangible cultural heritage. At present, the majority of gannan tea picking troupes lack editing, creation, performance and researchers. Some rely on old artists to sing, and the number of singers is decreasing. However, through the network media represented by mobile phones, Gannan Tea Picking opera is re-connected with local areas and radiates new vitality. With the popularity of smart phones, mobile phones have become an important carrier for the inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage. Through the video software in mobile phones, people can watch documentaries or videos about intangible cultural heritage, or directly enjoy various activities related to intangible cultural heritage by using its live broadcast function. This paper attempts to investigate how gannan tea Picking opera was inherited and developed in the virtual community centered on Gannan region through mobile phones relying on ethnography network methodology. After discussing the current situation of mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking opera, the possibility of inheritance and development of current intangible cultural heritage through the Internet will be further discussed.

*Keywords: Intangible cultural heritage; gannan tea picking opera; mobile phones; inheritance and development.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The main content of this paper is about the mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera, and the mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera is

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 25610117583@qq.com;

regarded as an important means of the inheritance and development of this intangible cultural heritage. The main body of the thesis consists of three parts.

The first part is the answer to "What is the mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera?" In this part, I will briefly introduce what Gannan Tea Picking Opera is at the beginning, including its definition, history and current situation. I will highlight the depression of Gannan Tea Picking Opera as an intangible cultural heritage. Then I will focus on what is mobile phone practice and draw out the definition of the scope and content of mobile phone practice in Gannan Tea Picking Opera.

The second part introduces Mobile phone practice in Gannan Tea Picking Opera. I will introduce the mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera. I will investigate how participants of Gannan Tea Picking Opera use video websites on mobile phones to watch and spread Gannan Tea Picking Opera, such video websites include Douyin, Kuaishou, QQ Music, etc.

The first part is the answer to "Why is there the mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera?" In this part, I will first discuss the causes of the mobile phone practice phenomenon of Gannan Tea Picking opera]. Then I will discuss the influence of mobile phones on the inheritance and development of Gannan Tea Picking Opera. Finally, I hope to discuss the possibility of inheriting and developing intangible cultural heritage through Internet based on the mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera.

## **2. WHAT IS THE MOBILE PHONE PRACTICE OF GANNAN TEA PICKING OPERA?**

Gannan Tea Picking Opera is one of the many tea picking operas in Southeast China Hills. It is mainly spread in the southern part of Jiangxi province, which is referred to as "Gan" for short. Therefore, after the founding of new China, the government named the tea picking opera in this region as "Gannan Tea Picking Opera". Tea picking opera is popular in Jiangxi, Hubei, Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian and other places. According to legend, it originated from tea picking songs in mountainous areas of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and absorbed local folk ditty and "colored lantern" (a folk performance). Because of the traffic barrier in southeast China in ancient times, the tea picking opera originated from many sources and had different musical characteristics. Tea picking opera is commonly known as "tea lantern opera" and "lantern opera", because most of its folk performances are "two Dan and one Chou" or "Sheng Dan Chou" three-person configuration, also known as "three-legged opera" and "triangle opera".

The history of tea picking opera can be traced back to the tea picking songs popular in the fields during the Tang and Song dynasties. Hakka people constantly migrated from north to southeast China sang tea picking songs while picking tea on the tea mountain. In the early Qing Dynasty, tea picking songs were gradually combined with folk lanterns to form tea picking lantern, which turned from self-amusement in the fields into folk activities at specific festivals.

Since then, tea picking lantern gradually jumped out of the limitations of the original labor and festival folk customs, and formed a tea picking opera with hakka customs and cultural characteristics. Gannan Tea Picking Opera is a wonderful flower among many tea picking opera. It spreads in the region where tea picking opera originated, and also has new performance and content with the development of the times.

The Gannan Tea Picking Opera is performed in Hakka dialect and has a variety of vocal music. "Fan dance", "Single water sleeve" and "Dwarf step" are known as the three unique wonders of Gannan Tea Picking Opera. The content of gannan tea picking opera mainly focuses on the life of rural nobodies. The content of the traditional Gannan Tea Picking Opera is family life, working life, as well as the encounter in the process of going out to do business. Since the 1950s, the theme of Gannan Tea Picking Opera has gradually expanded to the Red Army, Soviet Area, poverty alleviation and other modern life themes. In general, the themes, dances, costumes and props of Gannan Tea Picking Opera all come from daily life and are deeply rooted in the fields of Hakka area. It shows the life of rural insignificant people with playful comedy. However, with the development of the times, the content and characteristics of Gannan tea picking Opera have also changed.

In 2006, Gannan Tea Picking Opera was selected as China's national intangible cultural heritage. As an intangible cultural heritage, the question of how to inherit and develop Gannan Tea Picking Opera has gradually come into public view. Wang Jingbo (2015) investigated the history and current situation of tea picking in southern Jiangxi and northern Guangdong on the basis of anthropological field investigation, and she believed that in modern society, Gannan Tea Picking Opera has appeared in two forms: state and community. The state elevated the Gannan Tea Picking Opera to the height of the people's art and incorporated it into the system of political propaganda. And Gannan Tea Picking Opera formed a complete system of teaching, research and performance, and opera creation has constantly brought forth the new. However, in local communities, the development of Gannan Tea Picking Opera is almost stagnant, most of the tea picking troupe lack of editing, creation, performance and research personnel. Gannan Tea Picking Opera all rely on old artists, and the artists who can sing tea picking opera are less and less available. The inheritance and development of Gannan Tea Picking Opera show a state of separation between the country and the community. However, through the network media represented by mobile phones, Gannan Tea Picking Opera is re-connected with the local area and radiates new vitality.

Cai Yuling et al. (2017) proposed that the Internet can become an important tool for the innovation and development of intangible cultural heritage, driving the development and expansion of the whole tea picking opera, so that it can be better continued and inherited. Media such as Weibo and WeChat can serve as important platform for the spread of Gannan Tea Picking Opera. At the same time, with the popularity of smart phones, those who have always loved Gannan Tea Picking Opera have entered the network world. They watch documentaries

or videos of Gannan Tea Picking Opera through mobile phones such as Tiktok and Kuaofou, or directly enjoy various activities related to Gannan Tea Picking Opera by using its live broadcasting function. The aforementioned series of mobile phone-related Gannan Tea Picking Opera activities can be considered as the mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera.

Gao Lisha (2018) believes that mobile phone practice refers to the space practice and production of subjectivity by people or groups using mobile phones. She wrote about the ethnography of a hani and Yi migrant worker group in Yunnan about the mobile phone practice in their daily life. Through mobile phones, they have overcome the "knowledge gap" that they cannot write, built ethnic space in the network world, and spread ethnic cultural events carried by video. In this process, different individuals have different practice contents: some people take the initiative to use mobile phones to share their own songs and videos, some people spread these videos as audiences, some people evaluate these videos in the network public space..... The mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera shows similar characteristics -- opera lovers in the virtual community took the initiative to construct a network community space marked by Gannan Tea Picking Opera, which injected new vitality into a declining cultural creation in reality.

### **3. MOBILE PHONE PRACTICE IN GANNAN TEA PICKING OPERA**

The mobile practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera is a series of mobile phone-based activities related to Gannan Tea Picking Opera. When these activities are concentrated on a network platform, the fragmentary video, voice and text related to Gannan Tea Picking Opera in the network world are connected into a virtual community. Bu Yumei ( 2020 ) believes that in "virtual community", people conduct activities such as information exchange, joint entertainment or study, establishing relationship network, and generate a certain degree of identity through constant revisiting and shared norms -- continuous human interaction takes place in it, just as it does in real geographical space. This paper will take the virtual community in the mobile APP as a way to observe the mobile practice Gannan Tea Picking Opera, showing how people in the virtual community watch and spread the video of Gannan Tea Picking Opera, how to publish and share their views on Gannan Tea Picking Opera, and even how to learn Gannan Tea Picking Opera. This paper looks for the online community of Gannan Tea Picking Opera from three mobile phone apps, which are Youku Video, Kugou Music and Douyin.

Youku Video is the mobile application of YoukUNET.com, the largest digital entertainment platform in China, with a variety of videos and rich entertainment resources. Kugou Music is a music sharing software and audio media player software, can realize music and music MV search, download and play. Both Youku Video and Kugou Music are mobile phone applications launched in 2011. Based on the popularity of the web version and the widespread popularity of smart phones, Youku Video and Kugou Music are commonly used applications by many Chinese netizens at that time and even now. Douyin is a software with

strong social function that produces and plays short music videos. Users can select songs and match short music videos to form their own works. In today's Chinese Internet world, Douyin has attracted a large number of users due to its simplicity and ease of use. According to xinhuanet.com (2020), the number of daily active users of Douyin exceeded 400 million in January 2020. At the same time, its powerful data push function and social networking function have refined the segmentation of user groups, users can find their own online community in Douyin through various tags. These three mobile applications all have a wide range of user groups, and have formed and developed the network community of Gannan Tea Picking Opera based on video, audio, social and other fields.

**Table 1. The brief situation of Gannan Tea Picking Opera in these three apps**

<b>The brief situation of Gannan Tea Picking Opera in these three apps</b>				
<b>APP</b>	<b>main function</b>	<b>amount</b>	<b>coverage</b>	<b>Main participants</b>
Youku Video	Watch and upload videos	approximately 360	Over 45 minutes of repertoire video	Relatives of fans and fans
Kugou Music	Listen and upload the audio	approximately 70	Less than about 5 minutes of audio	fans
Douyin	Upload short videos and live broadcasts	cannot be counted	Less than 10 minutes after the clip of the video	Communicators and fans

(1) Youku Video

Youku Video has about 360 videos related to Gannan Tea Picking Opera, ranging in length from one or two minutes to four or five hours, and most of which are over 45 minutes with complete plots. Most videos are full videos or excerpts of a play, but there are also simple videos of a few minutes of dancing or instrumental performance. Most of the interactive videos are under the videos of classic dramas with complete plots, and viewers communicate across time and space in the way of bullet screen and comments. But it can also be seen that the vast majority of videos have no comments at the bottom, only watching records.

Searching "Gannan Tea Picking Opera" in Youku Video based on the "views", it can be found that the video work with the most views in Youku Video is Gannan Tea Picking Opera's traditional drama "Shang Guangdong", which has received 261,000 views, 742 likes, 54 comments and 90 retweets. There are many mountains and few fields in Gannan Hakka area, so many craftsmen go out to repair potS, bowls, shoes and other industries. Part of Gannan Hakka people want to go to Guangdong to earn a living, Gannan Tea Picking Opera has produced this kind of play accordingly. If the boat along the river downstream to Boluo, Huizhou, known as "Xia Guangdong"; And if the mountain road by Xunwu

to Pingyuan, Xingning, etc., it is called "Shang Guangdong". Here are some excerpts from the comments section of Shang Guangdong:

1. Reminds me of my childhood! It reminds me of my love for my hometown!
2. I never expected Ganxian Tea Picking to be so beautiful, so pleasant to listen to and so funny. We must carry it forward and try to go abroad.
3. Gannan Tea Picking Opera, beautiful, I looked again.
4. Beautiful, charming, lyrical, catchy and popular, it is the most popular factor of Tea Picking!
5. Only your friends, so why would you upload it online? Really... Cutting...
6. More exciting tea Picking related content, concern public number: Gannan local Tea Picking Opera.

The extracted comments are those with relatively smooth sentences. There are also many comments that use emotion icon as emotion expression and many comments with incorrect sentences that are not included. The contents of the comments are diverse: some directly express their love for the content itself, some encourage Gannan Tea Picking Opera to carry forward, some recall their childhood and four years of hometown, some complain about the uploads, and even some advertising... It can also be inferred from their language characteristics that most people in the comment section are from Ganzhou area, and the Hakka dialect in Gannan Tea Picking Opera arouses their homesickness. At the same time, their older age and low level of education make them express their feelings in colloquial characters, such as mandarin mixed with Hakka dialect and common exclamation marks.

The comment section of other Gannan Tea Picking Opera videos in Youku Video has the same characteristics as the comment section of Shang Guangdong. In the comment section, audiences comment on the video content and express a nostalgic and joyful mood. In addition, the audience will constantly express their opinions in the comment section in the way of building buildings, and will reply to other people's questions, and even quarrel because of different opinions. In another clip, the audience even got into a fight over whether the actress was beautiful, with several comments left several days apart.

## (2) Kugou Music

Search "Gannan Tea Picking Opera" in Kugou Music, and there are about 70 audio songs, most of which are about 1 to 5 minutes of a Gannan Tea Picking Opera or accompaniment, and some of which are nearly 20 minutes. In general, Gannan Tea Picking Opera in Kugou Music is incomplete. They not only cannot show the performance and dance of opera by video, but also do not upload the complete singing content of Gannan Tea Picking Opera. Uploaders and listeners communicate in the comments section, and listeners sometimes participate in the reproduction of songs' lyrics. Most of the audio's comments section is pretty quiet, but a few can have up to a hundred comments.

The comments section of Kugou Music and Youku Video have many similar features, but there are also some features from the music community. There are 74 comments in the comments section of the clip of "Shao Meizi" uploaded by an anonymous singer in Kugou Music. "Shao Meizi" is hakka dialect, "Shao" means a quick look, "Meizi" usually refers to one's beloved lover who has not yet held a wedding. Here are some excerpts from the comments section of "Shao Meizi":

1. Reflects the love stories of ordinary children in the old society
2. The sound is unpleasant, too sharp, without the taste of original ecology
3. Tea picking opera should be innovated by adding some modern Musical Instruments and new singing techniques to make it easy to be accepted and popularized by the younger generation, and there is much room for exploration.
4. When I was a child, the most happy news is to hear the village, and invited gannan opera group to sing... Gannan Tea Picking Opera left me with beautiful and happy memories of childhood
5. Everybody, because the play is too long, I typed it out one word by one with my mobile phone. Because it is too long and I don't have time, I mainly had to play the key. I just uploaded the first half
6. Shanling Village, Junbu Township, Yongfeng County, Jiangxi Province.

In terms of expression form, most listeners of Gannan Tea Picking Opera in Kugou Music express their ideas in the form of words, and some comments add some emotion icon and repeated punctuation marks to express strong feelings. From the point of view of the content, most of the audience are still expressing their love and encouragement for Gannan Tea Picking Opera, but the behavior of commenting on the singing quality, complaining about the lack of lyrics and self-reporting their hometown obviously has the characteristics of Kugou Music community.

When people's perception is focused on hearing, the shape, appearance and clothing of actors are not visible, and the audience will be particularly sensitive and harsh to the singing. For the audio with poor quality, they will leave comments in the comment area, such as "lack of Zhongqi", "singing too bad". Most of Gannan Tea Picking Opera is performed in Hakka dialect, but there are differences in Hakka dialects in different regions. The audio without lyrics annotations makes some listeners unable to understand what the audio is singing, and there are always complaints of "no lyrics" in the comment section. Sometimes audio uploaders and enthusiastic Gannan Tea Picking Opera enthusiasts will take the initiative to produce lyrics and display their achievements in the comments section. Self-reporting hometown is common in the comments section of Kugou Music, where one user says where he is from, and others reply where they are from.

### (3) Douyin

A search for "Gannan Tea Picking Opera" on Douyin brings up various categories of videos, users, products, live broadcasts, music, topics and locations. There are many users in Douyin who are fond of Gannan Tea Picking opera or hope to spread it. Their accounts upload their own videos or videos with

Gannan Tea Picking Opera as background music in the form of we-media. The videos may be added with topics like "# Gannan Tea Picking Opera", and they may live perform use the live broadcast function of Douyin. There are also many users who only watch and comment on Douyin's Gannan Tea Picking Opera video or live broadcast.

The comments in the comments section under the video of Gannan Tea Picking Opera in Douyin are very distinctive in the form of expression. The words in the general is very simple, such as "Gannan Tea Picking Opera is nice," but behind the text will add several groups of emotion icon, expression to express the meaning of the applause, thumb up, roses, heart, and a cup of tea, 666, etc., and even a lot of comments is just some dynamic packages, expression to express the meaning of a little praise, happy, that's nice, congratulation, etc. Most of the comment sections of Gannan Tea Picking Opera show the same morphological characteristics - full of colorful colors and consistent text.

The comments under the Gannan Tea Picking Opera video in Douyin are basically the same as those in the comments section of Youku Video and Kugou Music: expressing love, encouraging development and evaluating content, etc. Among them, Gannan Tea Picking Opera as an intangible cultural heritage has been widely talked about. In addition, Douyin's Gannan Tea Picking Opera community has a sense of synchronicity. Most of the videos uploaded to Douyin are not long ago shot by the uploader, and sometimes the uploader himself is also in the video, so the comments can create a strong sense of reality and participation. Comments tend to focus on the video itself rather than recalling childhood or missing home through the video. Synchronicity is also reflected in the instant interaction between the users who upload videos and the users who watch videos in the comment area. The users who upload videos are willing to reply to the comments in the comment area so as to attract audiences and gain popularity. The Gannan Tea Picking Opera community of Douyin also provides a channel to learn Gannan Tea Picking Opera. Some fans will learn from the performers or players of Gannan Tea Picking Opera troupe, which is run by the folk.

The mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera can be roughly divided into two stages. In the early stage, it mainly uploaded and played videos and audio produced before the emergence of smart phones, such as the mobile phone practice on Youku Video and Kugou Music. In the later stage, it is mainly the realistic performance of Gannan Tea Picking Opera, such as the mobile phone practice on Douyin. Compared with the mobile practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera on Youku Video and Kugou Music, the mobile practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera on Douyin can better reflect the suitability of Gannan Tea Picking Opera and smart phones. Although geographical divisions still exist, fans of Gannan Tea Picking Opera on Douyin have transcended time and actively engaged in mobile phone practice related to Gannan Tea Picking Opera on Douyin in a synchronic way. Zhang Moyan(2020) believes that the opera Douyin short video will reflect the shape, meaning, sound and beauty of the opera culture, and as the Douyin short video pays more attention to the user

experience, the opera Douyin short video can be imitated and transmitted by more opera fans, which not only increases the communication degree of the opera culture, but also adds the interaction between users.

Most of the Gannan Tea Picking Opera fans come from Gannan rural areas. They have lived or used to live in Gannan rural areas for a long time and can understand the Gannan Tea Picking Opera sung in Hakka dialect. Like the minority migrant workers studied by Gao Lisha, smart phones have almost realized their leap from having no digital to owning all digital at once: they have cameras, camcorders, walkmen, watches... At the same time, the convenience and simplicity of smart phone operation make smart phone go beyond its tool attribute and become a carrier of social network and social activities that extend people's real life. This is also the most prominent feature of the mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera in Youku Video, Kugou Music and Douyin -- mobile phone is no longer external to reality, not represent but present reality, mobile phone is a part of the reality or the reality itself.

#### **4. WHY IS THERE THE MOBILE PHONE PRACTICE OF GANNAN TEA PICKING OPERA?**

There is no doubt that the mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera is based on the widespread popularity of smart phones. Since 2011, most people's lives have entered the era of mobile Internet, and seemingly overnight, everyone has a smartphone. From a single call function in the past, mobile phones now integrate call, SMS, photography, surfing the Internet, shopping, listening to music, video and e-books. They not only greatly meet people's communication needs, but also meet people's entertainment needs. Smart phones have become an indispensable part of people's daily life. With the help of various mobile phone applications, all people's needs seem to be carried out in the virtual world constructed by mobile phones: online shopping, online chat, online games...

For a long time, Gannan Tea Picking Opera was very popular in Gannan region and had a group of practitioners and enthusiasts. With the popularity of smart phones, these people extradited the fading Gannan Tea Picking Opera from reality to the virtual network world, and gathered into a network community marked by Gannan Tea Picking Opera. The inheritance and development of Gannan Tea Picking Opera has experienced many setbacks, but it finally returned to the soil where it once lived, namely the vast local communities in the rural areas of Gannan. With the development of society, smart phones make scattered fans gather together in the network, they are the mass basis of mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera. However, the online community organized by the public is very fragile, and the sense of identity often only happens in the comments section of a Gannan Tea Picking Opera within a few minutes. In some aspects, the "legitimacy" of the inheritance and development of Gannan Tea Picking Opera in the network community comes from the signboard of the intangible cultural heritage of Gannan Tea Picking Opera.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Mobile phone practice has made the inheritance and development of Gannan Tea Picking Opera break through the constraints of time and space, making Gannan Tea Picking Opera, once lost contact with local communities, revitalize in the internet world, and also meet the "living inheritance" of intangible cultural heritage. Wang Chen (2016) believes that the inheritance of traditional Chinese opera should not only stay on the support of the opera troupe and the inheritors, but should restore the cultural ecology of traditional Chinese opera, so that the opera can return to life, so that the audience can return to the scene of performance, and realize the active protection of the cultural heritage of traditional Chinese opera.

Can the mobile phone practice of Gannan Tea Picking Opera give some enlightenment significance to the inheritance and development of the current intangible cultural heritage? The answer is yes. The development of information technology fundamentally follows the production, dissemination and consumption of cultural products. The inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage needs to face to face under the background of modern network in the important position in people's daily life, in order not to be forgotten and neglected, intangible cultural heritage should be with the help of mobile phones to establish "face to face" living inheritance, and develop a variety of forms of expression to promote the development of intangible cultural heritage.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## REFERENCES

- Bu Yumei. (2020) Field work analysis and reflection on network ethnography. *Ethnic Study* (2), 18.
- CAI Yuling, Yan Jiawei, Lin Yulan, & Lei Mingxin (2018). Protection and Inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Background of "Internet +" Era: Takes Jiangxi Tea Picking Opera as an Example. *Communication and Copyright* (1), 108-110.
- Case Study on the Caicha Drama in the South of Jiangxi and the North of Guangdong (doctoral thesis, Sun Yat-sen University).
- Gao Lisha (2018). Daily Life and Mobile Phone Practice: Ethnography of a Hani and Yi Migrant Workers in Yunnan (PhD thesis, Yunnan University).
- Huang Xin (2020, January 17). Xinhuanet. Douyin has more than 400 million daily active users--more people, bigger world. Retrieved January 17, 2020, from [http://www.xinhuanet.com/info/2020-01/17/c\\_138712187.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/info/2020-01/17/c_138712187.htm)
- Wang Chen. (2016). Research on living inheritance of intangible cultural heritage of Chinese opera. *Art schools* (5), 5.
- Wang Jingbo (2015). State, Community and Local Drama in Modern Times: A Zhang Moyan. (2020). Douyin short videos. (Doctoral dissertation, Shanxi University).

# Television Media and the Inheritance of Chinese Traditional Culture: The Chinese Poetry Conference as an Example

Xu Xiaojing <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH17

---

## ABSTRACT

As an original TV cultural program, *Chinese Poetry Conference* has been loved by audiences since it was broadcast. Its success has also aroused scholars' attention to the combination of traditional culture and Television media technology. Poetry, as the representative of traditional culture, contains profound philosophy and carries the emotion of ancient people. It is the treasure of traditional Chinese culture. After entering the 21st century, the development of TV media technology has entered a new stage. How to combine it with traditional culture has become a problem worth thinking about. By reviewing the development of Chinese cultural TV programs, it is found that local cultural programs need to be deeply combined with traditional culture, and need to make use of advanced media technology to innovate in content and form, so as to arouse people's attention and thinking.

As we can see from *Chinese Poetry Conference*, with the development of television media, TV media and traditional culture have a deeper combination in the form and content. And this article will take the *Chinese Poetry Conference* as an example to discuss the influence of TV media on the inheritance and dissemination of Chinese traditional culture, as well as the changes of traditional culture in the process.

*Keywords:* Traditional culture; television media; Chinese poetry; Chinese poetry conference.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Chinese Poetry Conference* is a TV show produced by China Central Television (CCTV) since 2016, and it has been held for six seasons up to the present. *Chinese Poetry Conference's* main theme is "appreciate Chinese poetry, seek cultural genes, and appreciate the beauty of life". After the broadcast of the *Chinese Poetry Conference*, it has achieved high audience rating and a high click

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 15611687920@163.com;

rate on the Internet. Many people are able to review Chinese poetry through television and regain interest in poetry. In addition, the *Chinese Poetry Conference* has been recognized by mainstream media in China. For example, People's Daily and Guangming Daily published articles that highly praised the guiding role of CCTV's Chinese Poetry Conference in the construction of socialist spiritual civilization today, and played a good demonstration effect in promoting the mainstream values of Chinese society.

Besides the *Chinese Poetry Conference*, there are some other TV cultural programs, which aim at inheriting traditional culture, and they are very popular among the audience. As a representative local cultural program, the success of *Chinese Poetry Conference* is a model of the successful combination of Chinese traditional culture and TV media technology, as well as the combination of content and form. Firstly, this paper will discuss the importance of traditional culture and the development of Television media, traditional culture plays an important role in the formation of national cultural memory and cultural consciousness. Meanwhile, the development of TV media technology also provides technical support for local cultural programs. Then I will summarize the stages and characteristics of the development of Chinese TV cultural programs. The combination of traditional culture and TV media is on the one hand the embodiment of national discourse, on the other hand is also the needs of mass culture. The third part will analyze the reasons for the success of "Chinese Poetry Conference" in terms of content and form.

## **2. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURE AND THE CHARACTERISTICS AND DEVELOPMENT OF TV MEDIA**

### *The Importance of Chinese Traditional Culture*

Traditional culture plays an important role in shaping China's cultural memory and forming cultural consciousness.

#### Traditional Culture and Cultural Memory

For a nation or country, the collective memory which comes from its history and culture forms individual identity and group identity (Zhang, 2017). On the one hand, preserving the collective knowledge passed down from generation to generation ensures the continuity of culture and thus constructs the cultural identity of future generations. On the other hand, creating a shared past, collective memory, provides people with a sense of holistic and historical awareness (Zhao, 2015). From this perspective, cultural memory is of great significance for transferring norms and values, constructing identity, and cohesive group identity.

Traditional culture which precipitates the spiritual quality of the Chinese and contains the cultural genes of the Chinese is the collective "cultural memory" of the Chinese nation. Chinese characters, idioms, poetry, opera, calligraphy, painting, music, dance and so on are all carriers or manifestations of cultural

memory. The national spirit contained in traditional culture has subtly shaped the personality and aesthetic taste of the Chinese people.

Traditional Culture and Cultural Consciousness.

The concept of cultural consciousness was proposed by the sociologist Fei Xiaotong in 1997. "Cultural awareness is a difficult task. We must understand our own culture and the multiple cultures we come into contacting with before we have the conditions to establish our position in the emerging multicultural world" (Fei Xiaotong, 1994). Since then, Fei Xiaotong summarized the process of cultural consciousness as:

*Every form of beauty has its uniqueness (各美其美)*

*Precious is to appreciate other forms of beauty with openness (美人之美)*

*If beauty represents itself with diversity and integrity (美美与共)*

*The world will be blessed with harmony and unity (天下大同)*

We can achieve cultural awareness from two aspects. On the one hand, it means to re-understand traditional culture and then form a deep emotional identity. On the other hand, we need to constantly innovate the existence of traditional culture to adapt to the development of contemporary society (Zhang Aifeng, 2017).

We can see the inheritance and development of traditional culture is very important. The cultural programs is the innovative practice of Chinese TV media at the level of "cultural consciousness" and the media reconstruction of cultural memory.

*The Characteristics and Development of TV Media*

As a traditional media, TV media has been challenged by new media, but still has an advantage in content production. At the same time, TV media draws on some of the advantages of new media to enhance its own communication capabilities.

Television media has rapidly replaced newspapers, magazines, and radio as the most influential media in the past century. The brand image accumulated over many years of development, the broad audience, the dominant position in news information release, etc. have given TV media a unique advantage. As a traditional audio-visual media, TV media integrates text, sound, and images, and has a strong appeal and communication power in spreading Chinese traditional culture.

Although the rapid rise of the Internet and new media has caused unprecedented impact on traditional television media, for the broadcast of major news events, TV media still has the strongest social dissemination power. Compared with network media, television media is more authoritative and credible, especially news information. The public is more willing to accept and believe the information

released by television media. And in the media field where content is king, TV media dominates the production of high-quality content, and still has an unparalleled advantage compared with the emerging new media.

However, TV media also has its own shortcomings compared with new media. Firstly, compared with new media, television media is restricted by time and space in disseminating information. Thus, TV media cannot make information instantaneous and persistent. Secondly, the one-way transmission of TV media makes the audience participation is lower than new media. Thirdly, the information disseminated by TV media is produced by itself, and one of the important features of new media is User Generated Content (UGC). Therefore, in terms of the amount of information, TV media does not have any advantage compared with new media.

However, the interactivity and timeliness of new media have not only brought challenges to the dominant position of traditional television media, but also provided brand new strategic thinking for accelerating the integration and development of traditional television media and new media. The series of all-media communication strategies such as diversified live broadcast with the joint of TV station and Internet, extensive dissemination to the entire media, derived new media programs and so on make up for the single linear communication shortcoming of traditional TV media(Xu Xiaohui and Li Rui 2016).

### **3. THE DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINESE CULTURE TV PROGRAMS**

Cultural TV programs can be defined in a broad sense and in a narrow sense. In a broad sense, as Taylor defined culture in *Primitive Culture*: the compound whole, all TV programs belong to cultural programs. From the narrow sense, cultural TV programs refer to TV programs that influence people's spiritual world with unique "cultural quality" under the background of literature, art, ecological environment and other cultural forms as well as various cultural phenomena. From a small number of early programs with relatively single forms to a significant increase in the proportion of programs now, the program forms and styles gradually diversified, China's original traditional culture TV programs have made great progress. The development of Chinese cultural TV programs can be divided into three stages.

#### *Initial development period*

The initial development period of Chinese TV programs mainly refers to the 1980s to 2000. The rise of TV cultural programs benefits from the comprehensive liberation of social thought after the end of the Cultural Revolution. The social elite represented by intellectuals and artists spread their enlightenment thoughts and modern concepts in various social fields through various cultural forms (Yan Mei, 2017). On the whole, Chinese TV programs in the early stage of Reform and Opening Up had a strong elite color, and all kinds of programs produced during this period also imprinted obvious elite cultural characteristics. For example, the

CCTV program *Observation and Thinking* was launched in 1980, the documentary *Story of the Yangtze River* appeared in 1983, and TV classes appeared successively in the early 1990s.

### *Stagnation period*

After entering the new century, with the rapid development of market economy, social ideas and concepts have undergone diversified changes, and more choices and breakthroughs have been made in the creativity and topic selection of TV programs. In contrast, traditional culture has been labeled as "old-fashioned" and "outdated" intentionally or unintentionally, and has been neglected and marginalized. In these circumstances, documentary and humanistic programs with traditional culture as core topic are increasingly rare on the TV screen since the new century. Even if they are occasionally broadcast, the broadcast time is arranged in non-prime time. Although there are some cultural programs in the form of interviews and documentaries, the audience and influence are small. Instead, "entertaining" variety shows dominate prime time. These variety shows cater to the audience's desire to follow stars, voyeurism and dream about stars, which have a small educational significance. Moreover, there are few original cultural programs. Many programs directly copy overseas TV programs on the domestic screen by buying the copyright of overseas TV programs.

The essence of this tendency is the "logic of audience rating" criticized by Bourdieu. The logic of audience rating has replaced the logic of criticism within each discipline, and increasingly affects and controls cultural production (Bourdieu, 2011). Consequently, in this period, local cultural TV programs did not get sufficient attention and development.

### *Renaissance of TV Cultural Programs*

Since 2010, thanks to the intervention of the state in the development of media, China's original cultural programs have developed.

Michel Foucault pointed out that discourse is power, and discourse and power complement each other and are inseparable. "Discourse" is the coat of power, and only by relying on "discourse" can real power be realized (Wu, 2019). Driven by the logic of capital, media discourse "fawned" on the market and profit, showing the lack of educational significance. In this case, at the end of 2011, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television issued "Opinions on Further Strengthening the Management of TV Programs" (cutback on TV entertainment), and each satellite TV station was required to have no more than two entertainment programs per week during evening prime time. Under the influence, every TV station increased the research and development of cultural programs for the adjustment.

In this context, distinctive TV cultural programs came into being. For example, CCTV's "Chinese Poetry Conference", "Letters Alive", "The Reader", Henan TV's

"Chinese Spelling Hero" and so on appeared and were welcomed by the audience. These successful TV cultural programs have two characteristics. First, these programs are all aimed at promoting Chinese excellent traditional culture. Second, cultural TV programs have cultural attributes and media attributes, and social benefits and market benefits need to be considered. Cultural inheritance is the basic function of cultural TV programs, which is determined by their cultural attributes. At the same time, as TV products, cultural TV programs also have entertainment functions, which is determined by their TV media attributes.

Therefore, from the perspective of the development of Chinese cultural TV programs. Cultural TV programs need to meet the people's need on three aspects: the cultural needs of the audience, the needs of cultural inheritance and the needs of the media's own development. First, only by focusing on the spiritual and cultural needs of the masses in modern society, can cultural TV programs be closer to people's lives in terms of topics and designs, and gain emotional resonance. Second, TV is still an important medium for inheriting Chinese fine culture. Third, in nowadays, with the fierce competition among various media, TV programs must constantly innovate in style, content and operation and establish a unique style to gain momentum for development.

#### **4. THE SUCCESS OF CHINESE POETRY CONFERENCE**

This part will talk about the success of *Chinese Poetry Conference* from two aspects. First, in terms of content, it combined traditional poetry with reality. Through the analysis and interpretation of poetry, it realized the interpretation of the real situation through the reproduction of traditional feelings. Second, it used the competition mechanism and players needed to answer questions on the spot, which increased the viewership of the program. The unification of cultural heritage and entertainment made the program a success.

##### *The Content of Chinese Poetry Conference*

Poetry is a precious spiritual wealth of Chinese traditional culture, has important position in the traditional culture. For thousands of years, poetry has been the favorite type of literature for many people in China. This is a saying, "Chinese literature is one of the major parts of China's ancient traditions, and Chinese poetry is just like the best prize in this famous culture's literary treasure house." However, in the information society, the fast pace of life and the fragmentation of cultural transmission and consumption make deep and systematic study less and less, which will cause people to forget the traditional culture. In this case, the *Chinese Poetry Conference* undertakes the social responsibility for the inheritance of traditional culture.

On the one hand, the program covered a wide range of contents in the selection of poetry, and the categories included ode to things, pastoral, frontier, bold and unrestrained, ode to history and so on. As most of the poems selected in the program are from primary and secondary school textbooks, almost every poem can be called familiar.

On the other hand, the program invited scholars to explain the content of poetry in a simple and understandable way, which can arouse people's interest in poetry. The program invited professor Li Bo of Nanjing Normal University, Associate professor Meng Man of Minzu University of China, Professor Wang Liqun of Henan University and Professor Kang Zhen of Beijing Normal University to be its critics. These scholars are loved by the audience for their profound knowledge and approachability. For example, when it comes to Su Shi (1037-1101)'s words "People like autumn wild goose who has a trace, but things like a dream without a trace" (人似秋鸿来有信,事如春梦了无痕), Professor Wang Liqun explained Su Shi's philosophy of life that life should be free and easy, and it's also a combination of Confucianism and Taoism (Luo, 2016). The program not only conveyed the philosophy of traditional culture through the interpretation of poetry, but also mentioned the historical origins of traditional customs. For example, Meng Man explained the verse "Old TaoFus are always replaced with new ones" (总把新桃换旧符). The TaoFu, the peach wood charms against evil, was hung on the gate on the Lunar New Year's Eve in ancient times. After the development of the past dynasties, the TaoFu was replaced by the Spring Festival couplets. In this way, the origin of the custom of pasting Spring Festival couplets was introduced to the audience.

Therefore, due to the wide range of poetry and the interpretation of the poetry, *Chinese Poetry Conference* has its characteristics and advantages in the content, which can make people learn knowledge and inspire.

#### *The Form of Chinese Poetry Conference*

The *Chinese Poetry Conference* has many innovations in the form. First, different from the previous cultural programs which took the didactic model, *Chinese Poetry Conference* adopted the internal cycle competition mechanism. Contestants of *Chinese Poetry Conference* were from all walks of life, including foreign friends, children, police officers, teachers, entrepreneurs and so on, so they are affectionately known as the Hundred. The Hundred were highly representative of society and gave people a sense of intimacy. The competition was composed of two parts: individual chase competition and challenge competition (Yangfei, 2020). In each race, all 100 contestants compete and the number of failures is the contestant's score. The contestants for the next race will be the top five contestants with the most correct answers and the fastest answers. Every contestant may stand in the stage, some may stand in the stage more than once, and every second of the match was exciting and suspenseful.

Second, the visual and musical design of the stage was very distinctive, which highlighted traditional Chinese culture. The overall tone was mainly blue, so that the program appeared serious and calm. According to the program content, the big screen in the background played visual symbols of traditional Chinese culture, such as thatched huts, green bamboo, Chinese landscape paintings and so on. As for the musical design, nervous live music and the sound of wrecking sailboats were played whenever scores were announced. And with the scholars' comments, the melodious sound of the flute which is a traditional Chinese

musical instrument played gradually, making the audience feel sad, happy or optimistic together with the ancient people in Tang and Song dynasties (Yanxia, 2016).

Third, the program had a good interaction mechanism. The audience can answer the questions together with the contestants. *Chinese Poetry Conference* adopted multi-screen communication mode. When watching the program, the audience can also participate in the interaction by following CCTV network, China Network Television, CCTV video and audio, CCTV science and education Microblog, WeChat or logging in the program area of CCTV network. The combination of Internet technology and TV media made the audience participate in a higher degree and got people's attention and love.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This article mainly discusses the success of *Chinese Poetry Conference* from the combination of Chinese traditional culture and TV media technology. First, the success of *Chinese Poetry Conference* reflects the country's emphasis on traditional culture. One the one hand, traditional culture plays an important role in shaping people's cultural memory which is of great significance for transferring norms and values, constructing identity, and cohesive group identity. On the other hand, the understanding of traditional culture is the premise of forming cultural consciousness. At the same time, we need to constantly innovate in order to adapt traditional culture to the development of contemporary society.

Second, mainstream discourse attaches importance to the content of TV media, as television media is the most influential media outlet. Although TV media is inferior to new media technology in terms of interactivity and timeliness, it still has an advantage in terms of authority and content. At the same time, all media communication strategies, such as diversified live broadcasting, wide spread of all media and derivative new media programs, combined with the Internet, make up for the deficiency of single linear communication of traditional TV media and inject vitality into traditional TV.

Third, the success of *Chinese Poetry Conference* is the trend of The Times, reflecting a stage of the development of Chinese TV cultural programs. The development of Chinese cultural programs has gone through three stages: initial development period (1980-2000), stagnation period (2000-2010) and revival period (2010-present). From a small number of early programs with relatively single forms to a significant increase in the proportion of programs now, the program forms and styles gradually diversified, China's original traditional culture TV programs have made great progress.

*Chinese Poetry Conference* is a representative program of the revival period. The reason for its success lies in its innovation in content and form. In the content, *Chinese Poetry Conference* adheres to the inheritance and innovation of Chinese traditional culture, and it has gained the support of the state and the masses. It combined traditional poetry with reality. Through the analysis and interpretation of poetry, it realized the interpretation of the real situation through

the reproduction of traditional feelings. In the form, the innovation of competition forms, the exquisite stage design, emphasizing of audience experience, and so on reflects the use of technology in the program. The innovation in form makes it easier for the program to attract the attention and participation of the audience.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## REFERENCES

- Bourdieu. About TV [M]. Xu Jun, translated. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2011.
- Fei Xiaotong. Individual-Group-Society: Self-reflection on a Lifelong Academic Course[J]. Journal of Peking University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition),1994(1).
- Liu Yanxia. The Cultural Communication Function of "Chinese Poetry Conference". Digital Media Research, 2016,33(09):39-41.
- Luo Qi, Tang Miao. Analysis on the Spread of Traditional Chinese Culture by TV Programs—Taking "Chinese Poetry Conference" as an Example[J]. News Knowledge, 2016, (10): 27-29.
- Su Shi (1037-1101), a writer, calligrapher and painter in the Northern Song Dynasty.
- Wu Yan, Yuan Han. Creating a Consciousness of "Community": On the Shift of Mainstream Media Discourse Adjustment—Thinking Based on TV Cultural Programs[J].Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China), 2019,41(08):111- 114.
- Xu Xiaohui, Li Rui. Talking about the Inheritance and Dissemination of Chinese Traditional Culture by TV Media from "Chinese Poetry Conference"[J]. Contemporary TV, 2016(7):78-79.
- Yan Mei, He Tianping. The evolution trajectory and cultural reflection of TV cultural programs [J]. Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China), 2017,39(07):87-90.
- Yu Yangfei, Liu Yibing. Research on the Innovative Value of TV Cultural Programs—Taking CCTV's "Chinese Poetry Conference" as an Example [J], Western Radio and Television, 2020.41 (24): 151-153.
- Zhang Aifeng. Media Reconstruction and Value Communication of China's "Cultural Memory" by Original Cultural Programs[J]. Modern Communication: Journal of Communication University of China, 2017(5):85-90.
- Zhang Aifeng. Media Reconstruction and Value Communication of China's "Cultural Memory" by Original Cultural Programs[J]. Modern Communication: Journal of Communication University of China, 2017(5):85-90.
- Zhao Jingrong. Cultural Memory and Identity [M]. Life-Reading-New Knowledge Joint Bookstore, 2015,5.

# **The Imagined ox Horn Souvenirs of China Hmong and European Vikings**

**Wang Lu** <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH18

---

## **ABSTRACT**

In the context of tourism, the imagined ox horn souvenirs may be equal to the stereotype of Hmong people in China or the Vikings in Europe. Regarding tourism souvenirs, anthropology focuses on the construction of cultural meanings and the narration of special historical scenes.

Ox horn culture is typical in Hmong people's areas where it has an exclusive explanation of religion and myth. The ox horn items such as ox horn wineglasses are used in many rituals and festival ceremonies. Even if some Hmong groups use goat horns, mass production has set the ox horn image as dominant Hmong souvenirs in southwestern China.

In Europe, Victorian archaeologies may take the two ox horns next to the buried Viking helmet as decorations on the helmet for granted. Whether the Vikings wear horned helmets or not is still a controversial issue. However, owing to the entertainment medium, wearing ox horns has become a classic image of Vikings in history, impacting the souvenirs of Viking heritage tourism.

Based on the published materials, this paper compares and discusses these two cases of ox horn souvenirs. Authenticity and commodification are antinomic, but the construction of the imagined cultural icons in both cases is worth investigating.

*Keywords: Hmong; Vikings; ox horn; souvenir; tourism.*

## **1. THE NATURE OF OX HORNS**

Through published documents, advertisements online and ancient games, we will display some pictures of the Hmong and the Vikings. In the first part, we will focus on the narration of the native Hmong people in the Southwest of China. The later part is about the Vikings and we will mostly focus on the Swedish people in this part.

Government documents of the Guizhou Province show that toasting is one etiquette of the Hmong people for wedding, festive events, or welcoming and

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 719859568@qq.com;

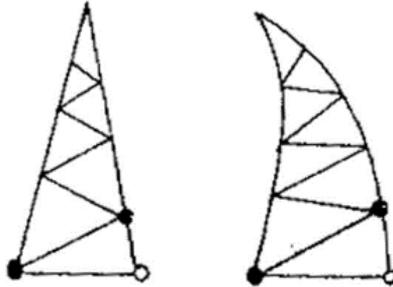
farewell. In general, the wine cups are made of buffalo horns, scalpers horns, or mountain-ox horns. So how are the horn cups made? In the daily life of the Hmong people in the southwestern China, the domestic buffalos and yellow cows are treated as the farmers' families. The family love shows in the festivals, when the cattle can share the happiness of the celebration with a cup of wine and some meat instead of forage. When the oxen die, the sad people will cut their horns down to make the winecups and the winecups can be decorated with silver if possible.

Many papers have seen the ox horn as the traditional music instruments, and the instruments may be magic power tools in some rituals. It is not difficult to make ox horns into musical instruments. That is, the tip of the animal's horn is sawed flat, and then a small hole is drilled in the center of the saw cut to communicate with the inner cavity of the horn, and it is expanded above the round hole to form an obtuse angle. There are also some horns with a wooden or bamboo mouthpiece on the upper end. When playing, the smaller ox horns are played by the player holding the horns with both hands; for larger sizes, the bottom of the ox horns should be held in front of the chest with the left hand, and the horns should be played by the player with the right hand. The horns are played at different pitches depending on the change of mouth shape and the control of breath. The small-sized horns sound high-pitched and sharp; the large-sized horns are thick and melodious, and they are all suitable for solo or ensemble. Sometimes, the ox horn winecup can also have a unique decoration. A local newspaper reported a Hmong girl in a national minority vocal talent show, who was singing the Hmong songs and had drawn the audience's big attention by holding a delicate oxhorn winecup.

What's more, we can find that the ox horns can be made to comb and so on. An ancient chess game made of ox horn and the decorations on the oxen in bullfights both illustrate the Hmong people's love for their cattle. The ox horn chess is simple but requires certain skills. It is a chess game to cultivate early childhood intelligence and is often played by the rural cowboys. An ox horn represents both the cattle and the mountain. There are two small "cowboys" and one big "cattle" (Fig. 1). The "Zig" route represents both the road and the mountain in the mountain. The ox horn represents the grazing land, and the bottom line is the bullpen.

Most academic papers show that the ox horns are on the Vikings' helmets. Here we pay attention to three examples of the Vikings' helmets.

The first case is the primary education about the history of the Vikings. A topic of the Swedish upper primary school history teaching is whether the Vikings really had helmets with horns. We can easily find that most students in this class see the Vikings as barbarians with ox-horn helmets on their head (Fig. 2). It's not surprised that even the Swedish students have this idea. We will see more cases of this kind in the following paragraphs.



**Fig. 1. Horn chess figure. The white point is cattle. The black dots are cowboys**



**Fig. 2. Drawings by Jenny, grade 5. Pre-test in the left and the post-test in the right**

The second case is about the Vikings' items in the modern life. We can find the symptom of the Vikings especially the ox horn helmets in the modern adventure novels, alcohol advertisements, souvenirs in tourist shops of Sweden and beauty contest. Newspapers of the old times displayed many illustrations of the Viking helmets with ox horns (Fig. 3). Modern Swedish people themselves are fond of wearing this kind of helmets in many occasions. Some players in a popular computer game call the character wearing a special helmet "Viking girl" for short (Fig. 4 and 5).

The last one is about the Viking heritage tourism, which involves the museums, heritage centers, theme parks, village reconstructions, and seasonal trading fairs or markets. Souvenirs of the Viking heritage tourism have obvious helmets of ox horns (Fig. 6).

*Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation  
The Imagined ox Horn Souvenirs of China Hmong and European Vikings*



Fig. 3. Advertisement for the Swedish alcohol monopoly *Systembolaget* in the evening paper *Expressen* 21st of October 2009



Fig. 4. Erika Johnson, winner of beauty contest “Miss Hawaiian Tropic” in the US, is carrying a replica of a horned Viking helmet



**Fig. 5. Wigfrid, a character in computer game named Don't Starve on the Steam game platform, with a special helmet to help herself**



**Fig. 6. Viking souvenirs commonly for sale in tourist shops in Sweden**

Through all the sources, we can view the ox horns as the most distinctive features of the Viking helmets in all situations. Whether the old decorations or the new fashions, the Hmong people and the Swedish people from the young to the elder have their exclusive playthings of ox horns and are both in deep love with the ox horns. The ox horns have nearly been involved into all aspects of daily life and has almost become a cultural consensus that does not need to be questioned. But are the horns really nature? In other words, is the ox horns the authentic belongings of the Hmong and the Vikings?

## **2. ON THE EXISTENCE OF OX HORNS**

In the first part, illustrations have left a direct impression on us that the ox horns are everywhere in societies of China Hmong and European Vikings. And in part 2, we wish to figure out whether the ox horns are the authentic belongings of the Hmong and the Vikings or not. We will complete this part from two aspects. One is about the totem of Hmong people besides the ox horns; the other is about how the Viking horned helmet are invented.

When it comes to the ox horn decorations of Hmong people, we probably suspect they are just from the buffalos since the Hmong people keep the buffalos. It seems that ox horns are rooted in the farming life of the Hmong people. People might think that ox horns are exclusive products of the Hmong people. But many details about the decorations and the legendary stories tell us some interesting clues about the second version.

First, there are not only ox horns, but also something about dragons. In a place called Shidong in the western part of Hunan Province, Hmong people's silver headdresses are in the shape of ox horns, with two dragons carved on them, two dragons fighting for a pearl in the middle. This image is indeed a bit strange. Why are there dragons on the ox horn decorations? And some articles can tell us about something named ox-dragon.

A traditional pattern named 'gobwob' is widely used on the sleeves and backs of Hmong women's jackets in Danzhai County and Sandu County, Guizhou Province (Fig. 7). The implication is a vortex that cherishes the memory of the ancestors who traveled through mountains and rivers and moved westward along the river, experiencing countless rapids and waves. This is the symbol of the buffalo squirrel because the buffalo is the incarnation of the dragon. The Hmong people worship the ox-dragon, especially its curls and horns.

The Hmong people in the Qingshui River Basin and Southeastern Guizhou Province regard the dragon and the ox as the same mythological animal, and the dragon in their imagination has a pair of big horns. They believe that the dragon is an animal that controls rain, and the buffalo is an animal that cultivates the land. Hence the combination of the two can ensure smooth weather and a good harvest in the villages of the Hmong people.

In addition, there are some Hmong branch groups who have more explanations for the ox horns. Some of them think that this decoration is not an ox's horn or even a horn.



**Fig. 7. The 'gobwob' pattern**

It is said that the ancestors of the Hmong people in Pingmo may be nomads from the north, who settled in the south because of the war. They use sheep horns instead of ox horns for traditional activities.



**Fig. 8. A longhorn Hmong girl**

The longhorn Hmong is a branch of the Hmong. Women of the longhorn Hmong have special headdresses, which makes them very striking (8) Longhorn Hmong have different interpretations of their unique headdress. The first is to show respect to the ancestors. Second, the prototype of the headgear is a vengeful crossbow. By legend, the King of Hmong was shot to death by the enemy's arrows. Therefore, the Hmong people put bows on their heads as a memorial. Third, it symbolizes power and majesty. Fourth, to imitate antlers. Fifth, it symbolizes the golden pheasant's crown. They believe that the pheasant has the mysterious power to call the light and drive away from the darkness.

Then we turn to North Europe. What do the Swedish people say about their ox horn helmets? Sadly, there is no archaeological evidence to show the Vikings wore any type of horns on their helmets. Yes, Scandinavians may wear a helmet when they march into battle, but there is no reason to believe that it is decorated

with horns. But in the Viking era (between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries), the warriors were either naked or wearing simple helmets, possibly made of iron or leather. Despite years of searching, archaeologists have not found a Viking-era helmet decorated with horns. In fact, there is only one complete helmet that can be clearly called the "Viking's helmet". This 10<sup>th</sup>-century relic was discovered on the Gjermundbu farm in Norway in 1943. It has a round iron cap, a shield around the eyes and nose, and no horns at all.

Literature has shown where the idea of ox horn helmets comes from. The popular image of Vikings wearing horned helmets can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Scandinavian artists included helmets in their depictions of attackers. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, opera writers and costume designers created horned helmets for Viking characters, and a lasting stereotype was born. Some writers may have taken inspiration from ancient Greek and Roman chroniclers, who described the northern Europeans wearing helmets decorated with various ornaments, including horns, wings, and antlers. But not only did this headgear fall out of fashion at least a century before the Vikings appeared, but it was also likely only donned for ceremonial purposes by Norse and Germanic priests.

To sum up, the Hmong people will have completely different interpretations of their decorations and totems due to differences in regions and branches. What everyone thinks about the ox horns may turn out to be dragon horns, antlers, pheasant crowns, etc. The well-known ox horn of Hmong people winecups can also be made of sheep horns. The Viking horn helmet has no archaeological evidence at all in history. This may be entirely due to the imagination and exaggeration of fantasy writers, and it also contains misunderstandings and misquotes of history.

We can finally say that based on rigorous knowledge of anthropology and archaeology, neither the Hmong people nor the Viking horns are real. So, why do such imagination and mistakes happen at the same time in these two distant ethnic groups? Such a coincidence is quite amazing. We will explore the underlying reasons in the following part.

### **3. THE INTRIGUING HISTORY OF OX HORNS**

This phenomenon exists both in Europe and southwestern China. So why the horns became the similar decorations for the peoples in these two distant places? The answer may lay down on two aspects: one is about the ethnic group identity; another is about the commodification and tourism.

When going through the history literature of the Hmong people and the Vikings, we will find something common called 'the uncivilized'. As a well-known minority nationality of China, Hmong people have been viewed as barbaric and bizarre people since ancient times. Take the traditional research document *Baimiaotu* as an example. It is an encyclopedia that highlights the strange appearance and strange customs of the Hmong people in the southwestern region. Today, with frequent population flow and highly developed information technology, some

people still maintain a stereotype of the Hmong people. In parts of Guizhou Province, 'Miaozi' implies racial discrimination. The Hmong people themselves can call themselves 'Miao', but if the Han people call them 'Miaozi', the Hmong people will be angry.

Much about the early history of the Viking period remains unclear, our understanding hampered by the lack of written sources. Even the very origin of the term 'Viking' itself is obscure. It was not in fact much used by contemporaries (at least not in the annals that chronicle the first raids), with the Anglo-Saxons in England preferring *Dani* ('Danes'), the Franks *Normanni* ('North-men'), the Irish *Gall* ('Foreigner'), the Byzantines and Arabs opting for variants on *Rus* or *Rhos*, and regular occurrences of the pointedly religious reference *pagani* ('pagans') in the western European annals. The word has been variously associated with the Old Norse *vig*, meaning 'battle', or *vik* ('bay' or 'inlet'), and could also be connected to the *Viken*, the large bay in Norway's Oslofjord whence many of the raids against England were launched. Less plausible attempts at etymology include *vikja*, meaning 'to move', supposedly derived from the Viking propensity to wander, and even a corruption of *vicus*, the Latin name for the settlement outside a military fort and therefore a reference to the inhabitants who were the 'camp folk'. Contemporary uses of the word 'Viking' are in fact limited to a handful of occurrences in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in the ninth century, in which, in the form *wicingas*, it refers to small bands of raiders.

We can see that, like the Hmong people, the Vikings are a weak and marginal ethnic group in history. And their own ethnic narratives are not dominant historical writings, but some epics and oral literature. The Hmong epic, is called 'hxak hlieb/haxk lul' in the Hmong language. It is a cultural treasure spread in the three major dialects of the Hmong language. It involves Hmong history, mythology, agriculture, marriage, funerals, etc. Therefore, Hmong epic has important research value and has attracted the attention of scholars at home and abroad, and was included in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage list of China in 2006. And the reason why the image of the Vikings will be fabricated by later generations is that there were almost no documents of their own. The Vikings love their heroic stories to be told by people. In fact, history fulfilled their hope. Only their terrifying stories about brave and fierce have been recorded by historians and writers.

Another aspect is owing to the tourism and commodification. The Hmong ethnic communities in Guizhou are relatively remote, and at the same time have relatively primitive natural scenery, which is very attractive. With the construction of various traffic arteries, tourism has also flourished in the Hmong area. However, since majority of tourists take short-term trip, the ethnic minority areas will intentionally restore and strengthen local ritual customs to attract these tourists. In fact, many folk ceremonies are restricted by time and space. For example, the 'Guzang Festival' of the Hmong people is only held once in 13 years, and only in festivals such as 'Guzang Festival' and 'Sister Festival' will there be 'Lusheng Jumping' activities. But in order to satisfy the tourists' curiosity,

**Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation**  
*The Imagined ox Horn Souvenirs of China Hmong and European Vikings*

the local people break time and space rule, and thus the mystery of the ritual and taboo itself is lost.

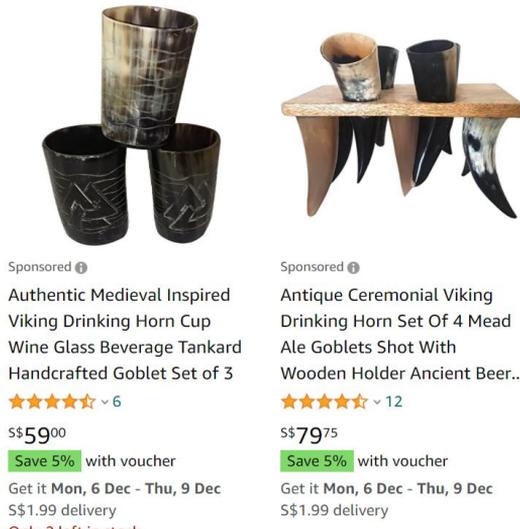
Vikings' tourism is mainly heritage tourism such as the Jorvik Viking heritage center York in the United Kingdom and Foteviken Viking village in Sweden. This form of tourism has grown since the 70s with new Viking museums being established, for example the Roskilde ship museum in Denmark, and older museums shifting their emphasis towards more Viking material. The current business is now based upon various museums, heritage centers, theme parks, village reconstructions, and seasonal trading fairs or markets supplemented by the activities of Viking reenactment or "living history" societies. In Scandinavia the image of Vikings in popular culture finds fewer references to war and warriors. Here the Viking representation is very much concerned with the people who abroad were known as pirates, but at home lived in a well-ordered society. European Viking heritage tourism has largely attempted to give greater credence to the latter representation. However, it is often still the more bloodthirsty image that initially inspires tourists to visit sites.

Under this model of social cognition and historical narrative, the public almost sees the Hmong and Vikings through fog. People who have the right to speak and control capital can easily carry on with consistent ideas when investing and consuming these marginalized groups. Not surprisingly, the ox horn decorations, which symbolizes wildness and strangeness, will be constantly produced in the modern tourism of the Hmong and Vikings. When we browse Taobao and Amazon, we can easily find the following souvenirs about ox horns.



**Fig. 9. A Hmong souvenir sold on Taobao**

**Traditions and Cultural Heritage: Genesis, Reproduction, and Preservation**  
*The Imagined ox Horn Souvenirs of China Hmong and European Vikings*



**Fig. 10. Viking souvenirs sold on Amazon**

It is undeniable that these souvenirs are beautiful and lovely. When consuming, we may not think too much about the authenticity behind it. What we pursue more is the joy of shopping and the exaggerated image of souvenirs. So, in this dilemma between commodification and authenticity, where should we go?

#### **4. CONSTRUCTING HERITAGE**

In this paper, we pay attention to the ox horns at first. Through all kinds of illustrations on the daily life and history documents, it seems that the ox horns do exist among the Hmong people and the Vikings. Then we carefully review some related literature and folk stories and turn out to find that the ox horn decorations are not authentic or there are no ox horns at all in the reality of the Hmong people and the Vikings in history. Lastly, through many background investigations, we make clear the social cognition and historical narrative about these two people. Therefore, with the help of the anthropology concepts of tourism, ethnic group identity, commodification and so on, we eventually uncover the cultural and economic development and the initiatives in the construction history about the ox horns. It is easy to understand now that the imagined ox horn souvenirs of China Hmong and European Vikings are caused by both the objective imagination on the special group and the subjective desire of the host for commodification. This progress is complex and dynamic.

But our purpose of disclosure is not to make a joke of those innocent native people or to attribute all misunderstandings to the modern strategies. We sincerely wish to rethink the relationship between the authenticity and commodification in tourism. And a better way for those host of tourism with a

more pleasing cultural performance is welcomed. What needs to be emphasized here is that the construction and imagination of the ox horn souvenirs can be good and has its reason to exist. We must not deny it just because it highlights its inauthenticity, let alone feel good about ourselves when we see something misunderstood by others. Only in this way can we think more rationally about the meaning of this misunderstanding and dilemma about topics like ox horn souvenirs.

There is a theme which relates notions of authenticity to processes of commodification. Indeed, it is argued that inauthenticity often stems from the commodification processes which give a phenomenon an alienating and explicit exchange value. For instance, some scholars suggest that the mystery of commodification lies in the way in which it can hide the very thing that determines its value, namely labor. According to this school of thought, heritage tourism of the Vikings or country tourism of the Hmong may also lead to a standardization of culture and a translation of a local phenomenon into a global one. Authenticity is also often consciously invoked as an actual marketing strategy. Similarly, various tourism commodities, such as souvenirs, are produced and consumed as 'authentic' experiences. But, quite clearly, their production can be a 'mixed blessing' because while it may be lucrative for a host community, it may also lead to a craft product being mass produced and becoming inauthentic and disassociated from its original meaning.

In other words, although this construction process is inauthentic sometimes, we are glad to see the change can bring fortune to the local people and has created something unexpected. Not like those who overemphasize authenticity and ignore the economic interests of local people, here we adopt a compromise strategy to deal with this dilemma. We respect the choices made by this history and society, rather than blindly pursue Utopia in the academic tones. In fact, it is hard to achieve the truth completely.



**Fig. 11. A Danish public service announcement about the Viking helmet**

In specific practice, we encourage a cultural presentation that is both authentic and entertaining. Cultural performers should regard themselves as cultural communicators, but strive to properly involve cultural features into modern daily life. Only in this way can they better achieve their goals. Take the following Danish public service announcement as an example (fig. 11), this advertisement not only leaves a deep impression on people, but also makes people rethink their stereotype of Vikings.

This hilarious short film tells a story about a Viking leader, who was originally unwilling to wear a helmet, but reluctantly put it on at the urge of the tribesmen and his son. Just as he rode out, his head was hit by the door rail. Fortunately, he was okay with his helmet on.

This advertisement is commendable. First, the Viking leader wear a right helmet without ox horns in this TV film. Second, the leader of Viking was reluctant to wear a helmet, so we may wonder whether the Vikings wear the helmets in history or not. Third, the funny story uses a humorous and hypothetical tone to illustrate the background, although it is a history scene about the Vikings. Hence more space for imagination is left to the audience, who will not make fixed pattern of thinking on Vikings at this time. Audience may consider the truth and the unreality especially in this joking tone. Fourth, the vivid scene warns people to obey the traffic rules and remember to wear a helmet to keep safe.

This is a very clever strategy of cultural propaganda. Heritage protection and cultural tourism can try to imitate it. The essence of this strategy is that the promoters themselves should maintain an open mind. When telling stories and introducing features, they should leave room for change and imagination. Be enthusiastic, not serious. And in modern commodification, this requires a diversification. For instance, the mass production of the Hmong souvenir toys in figure 18.9 can be more diversified, giving customers the right to customize the dolls' headgears and clothes. Then producers can provide customers with better service and experience without the disadvantages of stereotypes and false creations.

To summer up, we hope to draw a conclusion about the positive dimension of the cultural construction. With the rapid development of commercialization and informatization, the protection and utilization of cultural heritage will be very tricky. The balance between commercialization and authenticity can help locals and developers achieve a harmony between protection and profit. Just like the ox horns, it can be real or fake. The most important thing is that one doesn't stick to one opinion.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

Cederlund, Carl 1, (coceder@hotmail.com). The Modern Myth of the Viking[J].  
Journal of Maritime Archeology, 2011, Vol.6(1): 5-35

- Chris Halewood, Kevin Hannam. Viking heritage tourism[J]. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 2001, Vol.28(3): 565-580
- Danish funny public service advertisement: "Are you wearing a helmet?"  
[https://v.youku.com/v\\_show/id\\_XNTE3MTE2ODIwMA==.html](https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNTE3MTE2ODIwMA==.html)
- Guizhou Ethnic Culture Network.History and Culture > Customs and Customs > Why don't Pingmo Miao compatriots drink with horns?
- Huang Zhengbiao. "Ox Horn Wine" of the Miao Nationality[J]. *Big National Family*, 1997, (5): 40
- Jia Xiaoli. Niujiao[J]. *Music Life*, 2015, (10): 65
- Luo Yiqun. The Semiotic Significance of Miao Ox Horn[J]. *Journal of Guizhou University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2004, (4): 23-27
- Martin Stolare. Did the Vikings really have helmets with horns? Sources and narrative content in Swedish upper primary school history teaching[J]. *Education3-13*, 2017, Vol.45(1): 36-50
- Ren Juan. Analysis of the Worship Symbols of Miao Nationality's Silver Horns[J]. *Art Appreciation* 2015 (4): 95
- Ren Lanlan. Difficulties in the development of tourist destinations for ethnic minorities in Guizhou[J]. *Journal of Chifeng University (Natural Science Edition)*, 2014, Volume 30 (11): 94-95
- Roberta Frank. The Invention of the Viking Horned Helmet.
- Shen Fei. On the Miao Horn Totem Culture[J]. *Guizhou Ethnic Studies*, 1991, (1): 72-78
- The Custom of Duyun Miao People Toasting with Horns[N]. *Guizhou Political Consultative Conference News*, 2015.11.13
- The Northmen's Fury: A History of the Viking World. [J]. *Bookseller*, 2013, (5604): 32.
- Wen Shou, Long Kunhao. Miao girl Wu Chunhua and her horn wine glass[N]. *Guizhou Minzu Daily*, 2015.09.28
- Wu Wann. Exploring the implication of the image of the oxhorned dragon: taking the Miao costumes in Shidong, Taijiang and Xijiang, Leishan as examples [J]. *Journal of Zhejiang Art Vocational College*, 2020, Volume 18 (3): 140-148
- Xing Yu. A Preliminary Study on the Artistic Features of Suoga Longhorn Miao Clothing[J]. *Decoration*, 2011, (3): 93-95

# The Function of Ancestral Hall in the Modernization Process

Qi Yingrui <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH19

---

## ABSTRACT

As the product of Confucianism, ancestral hall has a long history and is one of the representatives of Chinese traditional culture, also a typical traditional building in southern China, especially in Fujian and Guangdong provinces. In Max Weber's view, the clan culture organized around the ancestral hall seemed to contain all the irrational elements, and thus became one of the biggest obstacles to the generation of Chinese modernity. However, the actual situation today tells us that the ancestral hall has not disappeared in the process of China's modernization. It has become a landmark building in southeastern China and has played an active role in reconciling the negative impact of modernization on the urban. Based on combing the historical origin of the ancestral hall culture and the evolution process especially during the Ming and Qing dynasties, this article reflects on Weber's theoretical assumptions about Chinese society and religion. On this basis, this article attempts to point out that ancestral hall and clan culture are not completely contrary to the development of capitalism. Eastern society represented by Southeast China has formed its own economic ethics on the basis of clan ethics, which may be different from the economic form of modern western industrial capitalism promoted by Protestant ethics.

*Keywords: Ancestral hall; Confucianism; modernization; max weber.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Max Weber focused on the traditional beliefs and spiritual temperament of the Chinese in "*Chinese Religions: Confucianism and Taoism*", and pointed out that the knowledge and character of the traditional Chinese society formed under the influence of Confucianism have negative effects on the Chinese capitalist economy and modernity. According to Weber, the legal and political structure of the patrimonialism, pacifist and secularist gentry groups, clan organizations based on ancestor worship, and absolute belief in witchcraft all constitute the characteristics of traditional Chinese society. Compared with the western world where capitalism had developed, traditional Chinese society had not completed

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 469637116@qq.com;

the process of disenchantment and rationalization, which is the critical process from traditional society to modern society. As a product of ancestor worship the ancestral hall culture seems to embody all the irrational elements that Weber called. However, the actual situation today tells us that the ancestral hall has not disappeared in the process of China's modernization. It has become a landmark building in Southeast China, and still plays an important role in modern society.

## **2. THE ORIGIN AND EXPANSION HISTORY OF THE ANCESTRAL HALL**

As a special place to commemorate and worship ancestors, ancestral halls originated from the ideology and practice of ancestor worship, and it is also a product of the ancient Chinese patriarchal system and hierarchy. As early as the Shang Dynasty, there was already a phenomenon of setting up special spaces to worship ancestors. After the Zhou Dynasty, the feudal rulers made strict regulations on the behavior of ancestor worship according to the patriarchal system based on the principle of patrilineal succession. The emperor could enjoy seven temples to worship the ancestors, the feudal princes had five temples, the senior officials could build three temples, the scholar-bureaucrats could only build one temple, and the common people cannot have temples (Cai&Dou, 2002). This is the so-called Zhao-Mu system. This strict hierarchical system of sacrificial rites embodies the powerful forces and centralized rule of the autocratic emperor, and its foundation is the feudal hereditary system.

The materials of social history have fully proved that the ancestral beliefs and worship rituals, patrilineal descent principles, and lineage property, which were included in the system of ancestral hall culture, had been already existed as separate elements in ancient China (Wang, 2005). However, the South China School pointed out that it was not until the Song and Ming Dynasties that these elements were organically integrated with clan organizations. To understand this systematic process of ancestral temple culture, David Faur believes that it must be connected with the operation of state rituals represented by Confucianism (David, 1999). Until the 12th century, the religious buildings in the Pearl River Delta region were nothing more than a few Buddhist temples and temples dedicated to local gods. The knowledge of ritual was in the hands of Buddhist, Taoist monks, and other religious figures. Commoners enshrined portraits, clay sculptures or tablets of of ancestors in Buddhist temples built next to the cemetery. Such temples were called "merit temples". During this period, a new generation of Confucian scholars represented by Zhu Xi promoted the use of Confucian family ritual as the core of local ritual in order to draw a clear line from Buddhism, Taoism and other folk beliefs to maintain Confucian orthodoxy. He proposed that common people can also set up altars to worship their ancestors at home, and name them "ancestral temples" to distinguish from merit temples (Zheng, 1992).

As the beginning of the ceremonial revolution in the Pearl River Delta region, the promotion of Neo-Confucianism provided ideological preconditions for the general development of lineage organizations. It was the Ming Dynasty that really

made the revolutionary development of ancestral halls and clans. Since the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, the imperial court established the Lijia system, a new national elementary organization. David Faur pointed out that instead of considering that this is a top-down mandatory requirement, it is better to say that this is the state's recognition of the local community centered on the land god sacrifice. Under the dominance of the household registration model based on the Lijia system, with the relationship between the local and the central government in taxation and finance as the core, the genealogy, land properties, worship and lineage organizations are organically integrated.

The legal reforms during the Jiajing period had a lot to do with the court's "Great Ritual Controversy" activities at that time. Since Emperor Jiajing was not the son of the previous emperor Zhengde, Jiajing insisted that he had the right to sacrifice to his biological father, but most courtiers believed the Jiajing should proceed from the maintenance of emperor order and sacrifice to Emperor Zhengde instead of his biological father. Finally, Emperor Jiajing won the argument. After the "Great Ritual Controversy", the emphasis on filial piety became prominent. A courtier named Xia Yan wrote a letter to the emperor asking to reform the ancestor worship ritual system and further relax the restrictions on ancestor worship by common people. As an official supporting Jiajing in the "Great Ritual Controversy" activity, Huo Tao established a family temple-style ancestral hall in his hometown of Guangdong in 1525. Since then, family temple-style ancestral halls have gradually become popular in the Pearl River Delta. At the same time, the local township organizations have expanded in the form of clan, which made the clan a means to stabilize the local society at that time.

David Faur believes that the unity of Chinese society stems from top-down common ritual system. It is the common pursuit of the emperors and scholar-bureaucrats of all dynasties to replace local customs and realize the unity of the country through the spread and penetration of official ritual in places (David, 1999). The popularization process of ancestral hall culture is one of the effective ways of this integration. The local society has brought closer the relationship with the royal power by actively changing and adapting to ritual. The lineage organization that emerged after the mid-Ming Dynasty was defined by Friedman, and it is also the lineage form we see today.

### **3. TRADITIONAL ANCESTRAL HALL CULTURE UNDER MAX WEBER'S PROPOSITION**

After the Ritual Revolution in Song and Ming dynasties, the ancestral hall culture completed its socialization process in China, especially in the southeast region. This process of expansion and civilianization has actually further strengthened the influence of the big traditions at the national level on the local level. The ethical norms centered on the Confucian lineage culture has further become the key force to maintain the unity of the empire. In any case, the patriarchal system with clan as the core is always the traditional political system of Chinese society.

In his research on social behavior, Weber pointed out that what directly governs people's behavior is economical and spiritual interest, not idea. But the "world image" (Weltbildes) created by the idea, often like a switch on a railroad track, determines the direction of the track( Weber, 2010b ). The ethical value contained in religion is usually the core force that shapes the world image, and it acts on people's actions through economic ethics. On this basis, through a comparative study of world religions, he demonstrated the reasons why other major religions except Protestantism did not develop modern capitalism first. Zhang Yanxing summarized the core embodiment of Chinese traditional culture as the "Ancestral Hall Model" and regarded it as a typical model that can be compared with the "Church Model" of Western Protestantism (Zhang, 2012 ). In other words, the lineage culture with the Confucian ethical system as the core is a typical embodiment of the "world image" that dominates the actions of Chinese people. In Weber's view, it is under the influence of this cultural system that the various social mechanisms of traditional China run counter to the development of modern capitalism.

In Weber's research, the transition from traditional society to modern society is mainly concentrated on three levels: the transformation of the spiritual world, the transformation of the law and the transformation of the economy. His discussion on the hindering effect of the ancestral hall culture on the development of modern Chinese capitalism is also mainly carried out from the above three levels.

Firstly, the evolution of the Chinese world image has never been separated from the monistic world image of witchcraft, and Weber even called China a "witchcraft paradise" (Weber, 2010b). On the one hand, lineage organizations based on blood relations deal with the relationship between people and the world through ancestor worship and regional god worship. On the other hand, through Dong Zhongshu's transformation and emphasis on Confucianism in the Han Dynasty, the idea of harmony between man and nature, which fusion of *yin-yang* and *Tao*, became the foundation of the Chinese worldview. The hierarchical relationship including father and son, emperor and minister, heaven and man had also become the *Heaven Tao* that people must abide by, that is, the order of the universe. On the basis of the above two, the ancestral hall culture was also influenced by Buddhism and Taoism, which added more elements of witchcraft and mysticism.

At the legal level, lineage organizations seem to have nothing to do with modern legislation. The administrative power of officials appointed by the emperor can only reach the county level. The areas below the county are basically controlled by one or several leading clans in the local area. As the elder of the clan, the leader who generally hereditary in family with *charisma*, had absolute authority in the handling of clan affairs. According to Weber's, a clan or family was the most autonomous organization in traditional Chinese society, and it was one of the few forces that can resist the domination of the patriarchal system of justice. It not only had the power to transcend the law to its members, but also had the power to resist the laws of the state on issues such as religious habits. Its ideal judging standard was substantive justice rather than formal law, thus completely

hindering the emergence of legal rationalization brought about by the western kind of judicial procedures pursued by capitalist business and the rationalization of the national public service system (Weber, 2010a ).

Such a powerful organization like a clan will inevitably have an impact on economic operations. Weber believes that although the clan had formed a profit-making community to a certain extent through public property, it had not become a rational management community like the West. There are two main reasons for this. From the external environment, the imperial examination system broke the privilege of the powerful class to monopolize bureaucratic positions. Therefore, cultivating outstanding members to become officials had become the goal orientation of the clan for-profit community. It could not make the clan make capital investment as an economic community. The value of life these scholars pursue was not to enter the world and ascetic like the Puritans, and present a tense relationship with the world (Weber, 2010a ), but to unconditionally affirm and adapt to the world on the basis of pursuing the ultimate rationalism. In terms of internal factors, Weber believes that the family ethics derived from Confucian ethics actually dominates the interpersonal relationship of the entire Chinese society, which is reflected by *the Pattern of Difference Sequence* described by Fei Xiaotong. The trust relationship that exists between Western merchant guilds and trade guild groups (Weber, 2005), also only exists within clan organizations in China.

In summary, the ancestral hall culture, as the core of Chinese traditional culture, embodies what Weber calls the irrational factors in the modernization process. In Weber's view, the traditional Chinese culture represented by the ancestral hall as the core force in shaping the "world image" of the Chinese, has become a major obstacle to the transformation of traditional Chinese society into a modern capitalist society. However, the facts we see today seem to challenge Weber's view to some extent. The ancestral hall has not disappeared in the process of China's modernization, but has been preserved in large quantities based on a powerful force, and constitutes an important force in the modernization transformation of southeast China.

#### **4. ANCESTRAL HALL AND MODERNITY: REFLECTIONS ON MAX WEBER**

In the research on Chinese society and religion, Weber used his consistent "ideal-type" approach to discuss the reasons why China did not develop capitalism in the first place. This rough research method was first criticized by some scholars. Yu Yingshi believes that Weber did not pay attention to the historical changes in Confucianism and the emergence of new ideologies caused by it. In my view, another limitation of Weber's research on Chinese society and religion is that almost all of his references on lineage organization come from J.J.M.de Groot, a sinologist who studies the lineage organization in southeast of China. Therefore, regarding the relationship between lineage organization and Chinese modernity, I think we can reflect on Weber's theory through the following aspects.

Firstly, Weber paid insufficient attention to lineage organizations as "corporation". David Faure, Maurice Freedman, Zheng Zhenman and others have all paid attention to the important role of clan property in their studies on the lineage organizations in Southeast China. In this sense, David Faure refers to the lineage organization as a "corporation" (David Faure,2016). The main component of the clan property is the clan field. As a common property of a clan, it is cultivated or leased in rotation among several house-branches (sub-lineage). In the late Qing Dynasty, clan field in some areas of Fujian may had approached or exceeded the scale of private field (Zheng,1992), which constituted the center of the regional land economy. The role of the clan field is not only to satisfy the various public expenditures and to maintain the social connections after the separation, but also to provide the clan members with the capital guarantee for investment. Due to the large-scale development of clan property, the economic function of lineage organizations has increased day by day, and has gradually evolved into an economic entity whose main purpose is for profit. For example, the member of the Huang clan in Min County in the Qing Dynasty established an agreement that the annual benefits of public property were managed by the five houses on a rotating basis, and each house was responsible for one year (Zheng,1992). In this case, the lineage organization is actually a joint-stock company operated by a partnership, and the leaders of each house branch are the shareholders of this company. When clan property shares are transferred between different lineages, it may lead to the formation of the township common economy and the township organization.

On this basis, the combination of local lineage organizations and the country's basic administrative system (Lijia-system) makes the lineage organization become an important entity that controls the local economy. This is the second point of reflection on Weber's theory, that is, he exaggerated the control ability of the state and bureaucracy, ignoring the autonomy of the lineage organization in the locality and the important role of economic development. On the one hand, clan leaders have established inter-village relations through township agreements with the nature of company law (David Faure, 2016). The county magistrate recognized the power structure of the local community. On the other hand, in the economic sense of community relations, several local communities have formed a certain regional market structure around ancestral halls or temples. Shi Jianya pointed out that the government's control of the municipal economy is limited, and the lineage organization plays an important role in the control of the grassroots market.

In Weber's argument, the city north of the Alps in the late Middle Ages, dominated by handicraft guilds and trade guilds, is the sociological basis for capitalism to occur. Traditional Chinese society failed to break through the shackles of clan ties, and thus could not completely separate family and business (Weber,2010). However, looking at the experience of southeast China, it is not difficult to find that the adaptation to modernity in the southeast is based on the lineage organizations. Lin Yaohua's description in *Golden Wing* is the evidence of this conclusion. The protagonist of the story, Huang Donglin, relies on the strength of his brother-in-law Zhang Fenzhou to partner in business, and then

actively adapts to the impact of the modern world-system (Lin,2015). In the process of social capitalism in Taiwan, the family, as a powerful organization group, inevitably plays the role of the leader (Kang Le, 2010). In these companies, the leadership is still mainly composed of family members, and the pure business relationship has been melted into a kind of family blood relationship.

Zheng Zhenman further pointed out that in the Ming and Qing dynasties various social organizations were actually based on lineage organizations. It developed into cliques among the upper-class scholar-bureaucrat, and into guilds among industrial and commercial workers and farmers (Zheng,1992). Some have surpassed the barriers of traditional kinship relations, providing more possibilities for the development of social and economic relations. Among these, the commercial group is an important manifestation. It is a group of businessmen spontaneously connected with the region as the center, blood marriage and friendship as the link. According to Zhang Yanxing, the commercial groups that appeared in Zhejiang during the Ming and Qing dynasties played a fundamental role in the formation of the modern Zhejiang economic model (Zhang, 2012). Yu Yingshi used the Shanxi merchant's buddy-system to illustrate how Ming and Qing merchants used the resources of traditional culture while transforming the old clan relationship into a new business combination. This is exactly a way for China to transition from tradition to modernity. The new type of capitalists in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China still took this path (Yu, 2001).

In summary, in terms of economic significance, the above-mentioned scholars' research poses a challenge to Weber's theory. The economic relationship between the family and the society established around the clan property, the powerful guarantee provided by the clan members for individual actions, and the ethical and moral constraints of the clan are all characteristics displayed by the clan organizations in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. These factors make the lineage organization may not be a barrier to hinder the development of traditional Chinese society, but to some extent constitute the organizational basis for the development of capitalist economy.

## **5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Lineage organization has become an important representation of the traditional culture of southeast China through two processes of integration. The first process is the integration from the local characteristic culture into the national cultural tradition, and the second is from the traditional society into the modern society. As far as the first point is concerned, researchers including Freedman and scholars from the South China School have extensively addressed these issues. They asserted the role of lineage organizations in maintaining national unity and the autonomy of lineage organizations under the leadership of local squires. Regarding the second point, although Weber believes that in the process of modernity transformation, the efforts made by lineage organizations are far from sufficient. However, through the reflection and criticism of later scholars, we can easily see what Weber has overlooked.

Throughout the evolution of civilization experienced by the West, the traditions of rationalism and intellectualism in the ancient Greek era, and the spirit of enlightenment that developed into the late Middle Ages, have shaped the knowledge and spiritual character of Westerners. Together, they have shaped the Westerners' emphasis on the individual as well as the duality of the material world and the spiritual world. Christianity further strengthened people's emphasis on individualism from the aspect of religious belief, which can also be seen from Weber's argument. But these cultural characteristics are absent from the Chinese tradition. They even have never appeared together in other regions beside the West. The knowledge and cultural character of Chinese society has always been different from that of the Western world. There has never been a Protestant religious belief in Chinese society, nor has it been separated from the world image of witchcraft monism, but it also has phenomena that cannot be seen in the West.

In fact, the lineage organization with blood relationship as the core constitutes the organizational basis for the development of modern capitalism in China. The lineage organization in this sense seems to be in opposition to the guilds that appeared in the late Middle Ages in the West. The difference is that the formation of Western guilds is based on a completely open and equal brotherly relationship, while the family for-profit community based on blood relationship is limited to relatives. But as Yu Yingshi said, in China, nothing is more powerful than close relations between relatives (Yu,2001). The kinship that surrounds the common ancestor is an important force that can be used wisely in Chinese society. On the other hand, the clan economic relationship formed around the clan property, and the modern enterprises generated on this basis, also basically conform to the legal form of the rational bookkeeping-system and modern company law that Weber said. The philosophy of life and ethical virtues contained in the clan precepts became important business principles respected by some merchants during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The virtue of advocating thrift is also a manifestation of secular asceticism. In addition, the affinity between witchcraft and traditional society is not absolutely undesirable. Although Weber's modernity is a process of disenchantment, in southeastern China, the reconciliation of witchcraft, modernity, and capitalism reflects another form of modernization. In China, no region is more enthusiastic about worshiping ancestors and gods than the Southeast, such as the fanatical worship of God of Wealth, Mazu and Guan Gong. And there is no doubt that the Southeast region is one of the most developed regions in China's modern economy.

Through the above limited reflection, the following conclusions can be drawn. The formation of modern industrial capitalism caused by the affinity between Protestantism and capitalism discussed by Weber may be just a special form of capitalist development. The lineage organizations in southeastern China are not purely barriers that hinder the development of modernity and capitalism. It formed a unique economic ethics on the basis of lineage relations, which is different from the economic form of modern western industrial capitalism advocated by Protestant ethics.

In the process of urbanization, many villages have become empty nests, and the basic social structure of the villages is facing collapse. But the existence of ancestral halls has eased this phenomenon to a great extent. It played a role in maintaining interpersonal relationships and preserving the collective memory. The Chen Clan Ancestral Hall in Jimei shows us an example of the perfect integration of ancestral hall and the process of modernity. The Chen Clan Ancestral Hall, which was built in the Ming Dynasty, has now multiplied to the 28th generation, with tens of thousands of people living all over the world. The famous patriotic leader Chen Jiageng came from this clan. On festivals, weddings and funerals, people of the clan gather in the ancestral hall to feel the affection between members of the same clan through continuous reciprocity. Many entrepreneurs who came out of the Chen clan set up public industry foundations in their hometowns to fund outstanding students in the clan. In cities with limited space, the ancestral hall constitutes one of the few public spaces available to community members. People gather in the ancestral hall on grand festivals and also watch opera performances on a quiet night. Interestingly, since the outbreak of the COVID-19, many communities in Fujian where nucleic acid testing has been performed turned out to be ancestral halls.

The lineage organizations linked with the ancestral halls played an important role in the modernization process of southeast China. It constitutes the organizational basis for the economic development of modern Chinese capitalism, and to a certain extent makes the development of Chinese capitalism present a form different from the industrial capitalism promoted by Western Protestant ethics. Lineage organization has always occupied a place in the process of the transformation from traditional society to modern society. The process of its adaptation to the modern world is also the process of modernization and development in the southeast. At the same time, based on the collective memory and the continuous reciprocity between members, it weakened the negative impact of urbanization on the village during the rapid progress of urbanization. The development of the modernization should pay attention to and protect the ancestral halls.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Cai Fengming, Dou Changrong. 2002. Chinese Ancestral Hall. Chongqing: Chongqing Press.
- Cai Fengming, Dou Changrong. 2002. Chinese Ancestral Halls [M]. Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing House.
- David Faure. 1999. "Stare and Rituals: the Integration of Local Society into the Chinese State in the Pearl River Delta from Northern Song to Mid-Qing", Journal of sun yatsen university (social science edition). 39(05):65 -72.
- David Faure. 2016. Society and Rituals in Ming and Qing Dynasties. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Publishing House.

- David Ke. 1999. State and Rituals: National Identity of Local Society in the Pearl River Delta from Song to Qing Dynasty [J]. *Journal of Sun Yat-Sen University (Social Science Edition)*, 1999(05):65-72.
- David Ke. 2016. *Society and Etiquette in Ming and Qing Dynasties* [M]. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press.
- Friedman. 2000. *Clan Organizations in Southeast China*[M]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- Lin Yaohua. 2015. *Golden Wing: A History of a Chinese Family*. Beijing: Life Bookstore Publishing Co., Ltd.
- Lin Yaohua. 2015. *The Golden Wing: A Family Chronicle*. Beijing: Life House.
- Maurice Freedman. 2000. *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China*. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- Max Weber. 2005. *Domination of Injustice—City Typology* [M]. Translated by Kangle and Jian Huimei. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press.
- Max Weber. 2005. *The City*. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press.
- Max Weber. 2010. *Chinese Religions: Confucianism and Taoism*. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press.
- Max Weber. 2010. *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* [M]. (US) English translation by Stephen Kalberg. Translated by Su Guoxun and others. Beijing: Social Science Literature Publishing House.
- Max Weber. 2010. *Religions in China: Confucianism and Taoism*[M]. Translated by Kangle and Jian Huimei. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press.
- Max Weber. 2010. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press (CHINA).
- Wang Mingming. 2005. *Social Anthropology and China Studies*. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press.
- Wang Mingming. 2005. *Social Anthropology and Chinese Studies* [M]. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press.
- Yu Yingshi. 2001. *Religious Ethics and Merchant Spirit in Modern China*. Hefei: Anhui Education Press.
- Yu Yingshi. 2001. *Religious Ethics and Merchant Spirit in Modern China*. Hefei: Anhui Education Press.
- Zhang Yanxing. 2012. *Ancestral Halls and Churches: A Study on the Zhejiang Model under Weber's Proposition* [M]. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.
- Zhang Yanxing. 2012. *Ancestral Halls and Churches: Research on Zhejiang Model under Weber's Proposition*. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.
- Zheng Zhenman. 1992. *Family Lineage Organization and Social Change in Ming and Qing Fujian*. Changsha: Hunan Education Publishing House.
- Zheng Zhenman. 1992. *Family Organization and Social Change in Fujian in Ming and Qing Dynasties*[M]. Changsha: Hunan Education Press.

# Study on Inheritance and Protection of Ling Qu: A World Heritage Site in Guangxi

Su Qian <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH20

---

## ABSTRACT

Ling qu, located in Xing 'an County, Guangxi Province, is one of the oldest canals in the world. It was built by Emperor Shihuang Qin in 214 BC to unify the Ling nan Region and is known as the "pearl of ancient water conservancy architecture in the world". In 2012, Ling qu began to apply for the world cultural heritage. On August 14, 2018, Ling qu applied for the world cultural Heritage successful. Today Ling Canal not only still plays an irrigation role, but also as an important part of Guilin's tourism and cultural circle. Ling qu attracts more tourists after its application for world cultural Heritage successfully. However, Is its protection and inheritance contradictory to its tourism development? Is it the dividends and achievement that the local government is most concerned about? In contemporary society, how can we make that applying for the world cultural Heritage plays its original intention, let application for world cultural Heritage really have "culture" and "temperature"? How to continue the protection of cultural heritage after its application for world cultural heritage successfully? Ling qu as an example, allows to address the application process to World cultural Heritage, and puts forward the importance of truly turning cultural heritage into "culture".

*Keywords: Ling qu; world cultural Heritage; "culture"; sustainability.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEMS

There is the great wall in the north and the Lingqu in the south. Lingqu, located in Xing'an County, Guangxi Province, was chiseled in 214 BC. It is one of the oldest canals in the world and is known as the "Pearl of ancient water conservancy buildings in the world". In 221 AD, in order to unify the Lingnan area, Qin Shihuang ordered Shi Lu to build an artificial canal connecting the two major water systems of Xiangjiang River and Lijiang River, Yangtze River and Pearl River. Shi made use of the favorable terrain of the river channel of Shi'an which is a tributary of Lijiang River, to dig the Lingqu in the most reasonable place in a most convenient and economical way. Lingqu embodies the advanced water

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 15617681152@163.com;

conservancy technology in ancient China and the wisdom of the ancients. In August 2018, the Lingqu was listed in the world cultural heritage list. In 1973, the Lingqu was opened to outside. In 2009, Xing'an County government handed over the Lingqu to Guoyue Enterprise Investment Company. There are still some villagers living in Nandou village in Lingqu scenic area. The government has coordinated the residents in the scenic area to move out. However, due to the lack of agreement between the two sides, most of the remaining residents make a living by operating farm hotels in the scenic area. The author visited Lingqu in 2016. There are some problems in the scenic spot, such as imperfect infrastructure, poor environment, lack of overall planning, serious damage to cultural relics and high project fees in the scenic spot. The success of Lingqu's World Heritage application has brought greater popularity to Lingqu scenic spot and attracted more tourists. However, from the current situation of Lingqu, although the above problems have been improved, there are still many problems. In Lingqu, there are tourists, residents of Nandu village, Guoyue Enterprise Investment company. and the government. Lingqu is not only a cultural heritage, but also an existence of "things". In the past, our thinking about "things" is often based on the ideas of "human center" and "things serve people", even the traditional "animism". It also contains the idea of people-centered thinking about things. Cultural heritage is more like a tool for people. It can bring people interest value, artistic value, aesthetic value and so on. It is the people-centered perspective and way of thinking that makes the protection policies and implementation of cultural heritage more formalistic, poor operability, and can't be truly recognized by the general public. We should break this "human centered" thought and rethink the protection and utilization of cultural heritage. Only managers and the general public realize that cultural heritage is a "thing". The existence of "cultural heritage" has life meaning. It itself affects our life, consciousness and thinking. It is a community of common destiny with us. Only then can we truly realize the importance of cultural heritage protection and improve our consciousness in action. So how can people realize that cultural heritage as a "thing" can interact with us? How can Lingqu cultural heritage really coordinate protection and utilization, rather than utilization greater than protection?

The protection of cultural heritage is not only the responsibility of the government and relevant parts, but also the real protection of cultural heritage must be popularized to the people. Improving the awareness and sense of responsibility of ordinary people is necessary. However, according to the author's investigation, even though many local people in Xing'an County only have a simple and superficial understanding of the historical story and significance of Lingqu cultural heritage, they do not really understand its deep significance. Compared with understanding the historical and cultural significance of Lingqu, local residents are more concerned about the "World Heritage Application" of Lingqu, because local people know that the successful application of Lingqu's World Heritage will bring more tourists and more considerable income. Lingqu scenic area is free to local residents. Local residents who walk and rest in Lingqu scenic area will often be seen in the scenic area. Through talking with them, the author did not have an inner respect and a value to the Lingqu cultural heritage. When talking with them about their understanding of Lingqu, they would say a few words casually, such

as the world cultural heritage, or it established by Qin Shihuang. The residents of Nandou village who operate boat ferry in the scenic spot can also talk about the components of the Lingqu such as hua zui, Da tian ping and Xiao tian ping, but just only this. From the conversation, and contrasting the current situation of Lingqu, I think popularizing the local people's deep connotation and valuing significance of Lingqu cultural heritage is an urgent task for Lingqu cultural heritage protection.

So what can we do? first of all I think the government should strengthen the publicity and education of local people's Lingqu cultural knowledge, and can cooperate with local schools and cultural institutions to hold regular activities. For example, primary school students and staffs can be selected from schools and institutions to act as voluntary commentators, and carry out publicity activities in Lingqu or local communities on a regular basis. According to the historical and cultural stories of the Lingqu, games, performances, knowledge guessing and other activities are regularly carried out in the local area, so that the local people can feel the cultural connotation and value of the Lingqu through education and entertainment. The story of Lingqu should become a well-known story in the local area. The school can add lingqu's history and culture into daily subject. What the government should do is how to make the cultural value and cultural connotation of Lingqu familiar to every Xing'an people and realize that only in this way can culture be transformed into action, and the work of protecting Lingqu cultural heritage starts from changing the local people's attention to Lingqu cultural value. Once the ordinary people realize Lingqu is a part of Xing'an, its inner historic cultural value, they are more emotional and respect when they see the Lingqu , and they will more value it.

## **2. WHAT SHOULD WE DO?**

In addition, UNESCO recently released "the cultural heritage management skills Framework", which proposes to promote and implement education and interpretation plans at the heritage site level. And the heritage sites should implement the heritage protection based on rights and conform to ethics. Therefore, it is imperative to continue to strengthen the popularization of local people's cultural knowledge about Ling Qu and protection awareness. In book "How society remembers", Paul Connerton puts forward that social memory is constructive, which plays a role through the repeated practice of ritual activities and then embodied into physical habits, so as to enhance group cohesion. Therefore, managers take the initiative to build group memory through rituals. For example, they can increase the participation of local people by holding public activities on the theme of Ling Qu culture, and improve people's awareness and perception of Ling Qu cultural knowledge 's significance through residents' self-participation in the activities, so that they can maintain this memory in their daily life after the activities, and turning it into physical habits. And then maintain a purpose of respecting, valuing and cherishing Ling Qu cultural heritage in life.

Secondly, Ling Qu cultural scenic spot is open to the outside world, and countless tourists come to visit every year. Especially after the successful application for the world heritage of Ling Qu, which combined with the Ling Qu Museum opposite Ling Qu scenic spot, it has become a necessary project for local tourism routes. Most tourists come to Ling Qu because the tour route of the travel agency covers this content. Of course, it is natural and encouraging for travel agencies to plan Ling Qu scenic spot into local tourism projects. On the one hand, it increases the local tourism income, on the other hand, it also promotes the dissemination of knowledge of Ling Qu cultural heritage. Ling Qu scenic area is a field, in which it connects the local people of Xing'an with the outsiders, and spreads the local folk culture, food culture, clothing culture and religious culture of Xing'an to the outsiders. At the same time, the culture and thought of the outsiders are also spread to the consciousness of the locals. At the same time, many outsiders will tell their friends what they see, hear and feel when they return to their place of residence. At this time, the Ling Qu can be regarded as a medium for the exchange of local culture and foreign culture. Therefore, how can Ling Qu media better play its role? What the managers of Ling Qu scenic spot, the local government and local residents should do is how to make the local culture more vivid and warm to foreign tourists?

Managers should give full play to the charm of Ling Qu scenic spot. The cultural value and historical significance of Ling Qu should show more vividly. Specifically, through the interesting and vivid narration of experienced commentators, combined with the experience and display of science and technology, the real person interpretation of historical stories, the interpretation of local folk activities, the establishment of award-winning questions and answers projects about the Ling Qu historical and cultural knowledge, and send tourists the gift of Ling Qu culture commemorative products and manuals. In addition, food shops can be set up in Ling Qu to sell local food. However, at present, there are only two farmhouse restaurants operated by residents of Nandu village in Ling Qu scenic area, with high fees and few local specialties, which does not make tourists fully feel the local food culture, and the sense of experience is very poor, which is more like a helpless consumption of tourists forced by hunger. Xing'an is a relatively leisure county-level city full of folk customs and local feelings. There are not many too modern buildings, especially the streets in the block. You can still find buildings full of sense of time, eaves made of wood, walls painted with cement, and no solid and exquisite reinforced cement buildings in big cities, but they are full of a sense of time and history, with more flavor and memory. This kind of old house is generally full of old shops and small restaurants. Shops which more like rural fairs, sell some small items needed in daily life and some local snacks. These snack bars are generally operated by local residents, and some have even been operated for ten years. They learn skills from their parents and then inherit them. These small restaurants make local food, such as rice noodles and wonton. Delicious but not expensive. Most customers are local residents. Why can't the architectural style and business characteristics of such shops and small restaurants appear in Ling Qu scenic spot, because the scenic spot is aimed at tourists, and the architectural style is

generally modern. However, the reality is just contrary. More tourists prefer to experience such shops and small restaurants full of folk and local feelings. They make tourists feel more distant. When they enter the store, they can chat with the operator about local customs and learn a few local languages. The operator asked the tourists where he comes from. In this more casual and relaxed atmosphere, culture has been exchanged. Tourists feel the local folk customs and nostalgia. Entering this kind of store gives tourists the illusion that they have been integrated into the local people's life. At the moment, it seems that they are already local people. This sense of experience and feeling may be what tourists want to get when they choose to travel. According to the current situation, after a tour, tourists can only see a river, some water conservancy buildings, some pavilions everywhere, some stone tablets, some words that write the historical origin of the Ling Qu, and charging items everywhere after paying the tickets. The display of Ling Qu cultural heritage brings visitors a "dead" experience without temperature and emotion. The cultural value of Ling Qu has not been transmitted effectively, and the local culture has not been effectively disseminated to tourists.

### **3. HOW TO PROTECT FOLK ACTIVITIES**

Third, we should give full play to the value of folk activities in the protection and utilization of cultural heritage. Xing'an County belonged to Baiyue in ancient times. During the Warring States period, the king of Chu mourned "Nanping and Beiyue", and Xing'an area belonged to the state of Chu. The Yue people who originally lived in Xing'an were forced to move south because of their defeat. People from the Central Plains moved south one after another, and some settled in Xing'an. After Qin unified Lingnan, a large number of immigrants from the Central Plains garrisoned in five mountains and lived together with the Yue people. Most of them are Han people, who live in plain areas; Yao and Miao basically migrated from Jiangxi and Hunan in the Song, Yuan and Ming Dynasties, mostly living in remote areas. After liberation, more and more ethnic groups settled in Xing'an. There are 18 ethnic groups in the county, such as Han, Yao, Zhuang, Miao, Hui, Dong, man and Mulao. Therefore, the folk customs of Xing'an have a long history and are rich and colorful.

#### *Marriage customs*

After the worship and dinner, relatives and friends surrounded the groom in the main hall and sang Helang songs. Congratulations are also made with banter and humorous words. Relatives and friends sing a song and the groom drinks a glass of wine. Sing until midnight and send the bridegroom into his bridal chamber. The female singer closed the door and waiting. The men and women sang "open the door song" to open the door. After entering the door, they sing songs in a noisy, drinking wine from the first cup to the tenth cup to congratulate the bridegroom, and the bridegroom also drinks wines from the fist cup to the tenth cup in turn. Then they sing "jiaohuan wine" and the new couple drink the same cup. Finally, the singer slammed the door and singing "slam song" to end the wedding.

### *Eating rice noodles*

The people on both sides of Lingqu especially love rice noodles. They can eat them all year round. In the past, when young men and women fell in love, they liked to go on blind dates in the streets. If you see it right, the man must invite the woman to eat rice noodles in front of the matchmaker. After the woman eats rice noodles, she will pick up snails with three fingers and be sure of it. On the contrary, if the man doesn't want to invite the woman to eat rice noodles, or if the man invites the woman and doesn't want to get the love, eight or nine out of ten marriages are "blown". Xingan people often say that "a bowl of rice powder will last a lifetime". This custom has been followed by the older generation. Young people in rural areas now fall in love freely without matchmakers, but when they meet in the street, they must eat Xing'an rice noodles. Share four heads of meat. In ancient times, Baiyue people made a living by reclaiming land and planting. During the slack season, they crossed the mountains to hunt and protect the crops. The mountain people have a rule that whenever they hit their prey, they would be cut the head off to worship the God (land Bodhisattva), and then reward the gunmen who hit the prey. The rest will be distributed to the mountain people, whether young or old. In the evening, the hunters who won the first prize arranged a banquet to entertain other gunmen. The ancients called it eating "four mountain meat". Sharing "four mountain meat" together is an ancient custom for mountain people to protect their homes and live in harmony.

### *Xing'an Baba*

There were 36 steep gates in the Lingqu of Song and Ming Dynasties. The steep gate is an ancient ship lock. Through the opening and closing of the steep gate, the steep gate needs manual lifting to provide services for passing ships. Therefore, a special group of steep guards was born, which is also called the steep army. Doujun settled down and multiplied by the Lingqu canal, and the living habits and folk culture also took root here. Xing'an Baba is regarded as military food by doujun because of its good taste and easy preservation. The qinghelang song brought from the North attracted the folk song forms of the two lakes areas, and integrated with the folk customs of Lingnan to form a unique style.

### *Dragon Boat Tune*

It is an ancient ballad spread on both sides of the Lingqu. It was originally called by the crew on the Lingqu Road, and later gradually evolved into a unique rhythm. Dragon Boat Tune has no music score and lyrics, but it is spreaded only by word of the mouth. With the strong rhythm of drums, the team members tried their best to move forward bravely, with neat and uniform movements and the wood pulp flying up and down. The Lingqu is filled with a passion for unity and progress.

The interpretation of folk activities has also been carried out in Xing'an. In 2016, a traditional marriage custom of "Lingqu people asking for daughter-in-law" was performed for tourists at the three meters post station in Jiangxi Ping Village,

Yanguan Town, beside the greenway along the Lingqu River in Xing'an County, Guilin. Bursts of firecrackers sounded, and two small boats from far to near, waiting for the people on the shore to see the bride in a red cap standing in the bow. Before the bride goes ashore, a sacrificial ceremony will also be held. Pig heads, rice wine and other tributes will be placed on the red table, chicken will be slaughtered and incense will be offered to pray for the peace and auspiciousness of the new couple. After the ceremony, the bride was welcomed into the sedan chair. The bridegroom rode on his horse to lead the way. The welcoming team beat gongs and drums all the way to the three meters post station. Along the way, the team blessed by everyone came to the three meters post station.

#### **4. CONCLUSION: FOLK CUSTOM**

After they were married, the villagers would sing blessing songs and come to congratulate the two newcomers one by one with gifts such as rice wine, rice flour, Ciba, rice candy, tofu brain, tea, Luan Feng and Ming plaque. The whole process was full of traditional folk customs and lively celebrations. Under the leadership of the host, the new couple will visit their relatives and friends' door to door and thank their neighbors in order to live a harmonious life. After that, in the laughter of everyone, the team sent the new couple to the bridal chamber, and the whole ceremony was completed. The whole ceremony is ancient and traditional, full of local folk customs in northern Guangxi, which makes tourists from all directions very interesting. In addition to experiencing this unique custom, tourists can also taste Xing'an characteristic traditional handmade food at the three meters post station.

Lingqu people's "three meters post station" is located in Jiangxi Ping Village, Yanguan Town, Xing'an County. It is a typical ancient village beside Lingqu. In the rural construction, it focuses on the ecological restoration and transformation, deeply excavates the history and culture, and creates three areas: Folk experience, melon and fruit picking and flower viewing. At the same time, as a series point, the post station has formed a sightseeing belt focusing on tourism and ecological leisure, providing tourists with riding fitness, rural vacation, cultural experience, etc. The village makes full use of the clean water resources of Lingqu south canal, introduces the ecological water system into the village through artificial transformation of the terrain drop, builds an ancient market square, and creates an original ecological rural market, so as to provide a place for characteristic festivals such as dikes or rice flour festivals. During the "March 3" period, villagers dressed in traditional clothes at the "three meter post station" made rice wine, rice flour, rice flower sugar and Ciba on site to welcome tourists from all directions, display Xing'an's characteristic food, traditional folk customs and historical culture, and reproduce the prosperity of Lingqu Wharf in Xing'an's history. In addition, Lingqu scenic spot will carry out Lingqu duet festival in Nanqu, and tourists can take antique wooden boats to participate in folk song duet.

Today, Xing'an County is building a series of cultural brands related to Lingqu, such as Qin and Han architecture, ancient bridge, Doumen and doujun culture, Lingnan customs and so on. The ancient streets and alleys once flourished due

to Lingqu shipping, and today they exude unique cultural charm due to the of precipitation of Lingqu's history.

For the protection of Lingqu cultural heritage, the government and managers should do a good job. In addition, they should actively carry out work to strengthen the education and popularization of Lingqu cultural and historical knowledge among the local people, so as to improve the local people's cognitive awareness and emotional awareness of Lingqu. Carry out activities to encourage local people to participate personally and improve people's sense of experience and feeling. By simulating and performing local customs and activities full of ethnic characteristics in the scenic spot, it not only constructs and strengthens the collective memory and cohesion of the local people about the Lingqu, but also enhances the interest, culture and appreciation of the Lingqu scenic spot, and enhances the tourists' sense of experience and memory about the Lingqu.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Arjun Appadurai. (1986). *The social life of things*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- He Weidong et al., "research on the development of Guangxi dragon boat folk culture history - Taking Guilin dragon boat as an example", *Guangxi Social Sciences*, No.10,2018.
- Liu aixiong, "research on marketing strategy of "March 3" folk activities of Guangxi Zhuang nationality", *foreign trade and economic cooperation*, No. 7, 2020.
- P Harvey, C Krohn-Hansen, and K G. Nustad. 2019. *Anthropos and the Material*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Paul Connerton, translated by NARI biligo. (2000). *How societies remember*. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- Su Qian: "Research on the Protection, Utilization and Declaration of World Cultural Heritage of Lingqu" [D], Guangxi Normal University, 2017.
- Tang Xiaolin, "life by color": Research on wedding color words of Huajiang Guoshan Yao in Xing'an County, Guangxi, Guangxi Normal University, 2018.

# Liangcha-Commercialized Intangible Cultural Heritage

Huilin Zhou <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH21

---

## ABSTRACT

Liangcha is a kind of Chinese intangible cultural heritage and a ubiquitous drink. However, additional considerations enter the scene when an intangible cultural heritage is transformed into industrial streamline production. Will its cultural value change? Is Liangcha that contemporary Chinese enjoy every day as beverage or medicine, a commodity or a craft? To address these connected issues, I plan to work on a paper which will be divided in several parts. Overview and research method are shown in Introduction. This article mainly adopts the method of literature analysis thus most of the materials are obtained from literature. A few are derived from personal experiences, traceable social media and network platforms. Part 1 will distinguish it from other herbal tea. Part 2 will discuss the reasons and process of gaining three identities (edible material, commodity and intangible cultural heritage) through the origin and several transitions of Liangcha. Next section talks about that scholars focus on its side effect and unknown ingredients in current study when it is treated as the edible material. In part 4 the author put forward that commercialization is beneficial to the development of Liangcha based on personal analysis. Final conclusion is a whole definition or description of Liangcha.

*Keywords: Medicine; food; commodity; intangible cultural heritage.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Liangcha, also called Chinese herbal tea, is a common thing in Chinese people's life that can be bought from large supermarkets to commissaries and is worthy to be researched. When inputting Liangcha or herbal tea on CNKI, hundreds of publications about Liangcha appear, in which Chinese literature is the main one. I glanced over dozens of articles, most of which involve culture of LingNan region (roughly covering Guangdong, Hainan, Guangxi, parts of east Yunnan and southwest Fujian), diet and ecological environment, the curative effect and side effect of herbal tea, etc. Besides, some scholars regard it as an enterprise product to study marketing strategy. Luckily, there is a summary of the research

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 1435299799@qq.com;

on herbal tea. The authors concluded the classification, raw materials, various formulas and side effects of herbal tea till now. Finally, some suggestions on the management of herbal tea were put forward, such as regulating qualities, distinguishing function and subdividing the taste. A report published in an international conference suggested that the usages and safety issues of herbal tea should attract attention, too.

I am glad that many researchers have done such detailed research on Guangdong herbal tea. I am convinced that anyone who roughly looks through these papers could obtain some basic ideas about Liangcha. But here come the problems. Researchers tend to study Chinese herbal tea from only one aspect: medicine-efficacy, food-nutritive value, beverage-commerce. Nevertheless, Liangcha is a complex that integrates diverse identities or addresses. It must be considered from multiple dimensions, including macroscopic, microscopic, or historical perspectives. More significantly, the relationship between an intangible cultural heritage and its creators should not be separated, but re-integrated. This is one of the purposes of this composition.

This article mainly adopts the method of literature analysis thus most of the materials are obtained from online documents and historical books. As a country that embraces the longest history all over the world, China acquires abundant historical materials, in which I can search for useful messages about Chinese herbal tea. Considering that the information that I need is probably reserved in some antique books written in classical Chinese, I will not translate them literally, and paraphrasing is more or less inconsistent with general translation. A few are derived from personal experiences, traceable social media and network platforms. As herbal tea shops are not so common in Fujian as in Guangdong and the influence of covid-19, fieldwork may not be effective and reliable as expected. Still, I will apply it if possible.

## **2. LIANGCHA: A SPECIAL HERBAL TEA**

How do you feel about Chinese herbal tea ? Black and unpalatable medicine? Or various uncharted herb plants? When you ask a Chinese: do you know Liangcha? He or she will nod his or her head. Liangcha is so ubiquitous in China that it can be bought from a large supermarket to a commissary. To some extent, there is no Chinese who knows nothing about it. Some may believe that they have never tried it before but beyond their imagination, they undoubtedly do know two famous sweet beverage brands that belong to Liangcha: Wang Laoji and Jia Duobao.

Liangcha (凉茶, Chinese pronunciation) is the translation of Chinese herbal tea. Particularly, it represents the herbal tea in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao in contemporary China. As a type of traditional craft, Liangcha was rated as a Chinese intangible cultural heritage in 2006.

So, what is Liangcha-Chinese herbal tea? I prefer to distinguish it from herbal tea in other areas, instead of giving an exact definition here. It is more rational to summarize after reading the whole paper. As the name implies, Liangcha takes the herbal medicines as raw materials. Therefore, it can be reasonably concluded that Liangcha is essentially a kind of traditional Chinese medicine. Herbal tea is not rare all over the world. Europe, North Africa, South Asia and East Asia also have a history of drinking tea, which is made from boiled water and herbs.

But Chinese herbal tea is different from the herbal tea in other regions due to its own characteristics. The biggest similarity between them is that they can be used as a kind of medicine, because both of them are made of various herbs. However, in the cultural changes of thousands of years, Chinese herbal tea is not only medicine, but also can refer to a type of sanitarian food or beverage. In other words, it has become daily.

Thus, reviewing the process of its evolution and transition are supposed to be the foundation before offering a concrete and panoramic definition.

### **3. TRANSITION AND IDENTITIES**

*Origins: Born as a medicine*

Liangcha originated from Lingnan, an area with a harsh environment, which seriously affected the physical and mental health of the local people. As an authentic Cantonese, I can empathize with them. Lingnan area contains tropical rainforest climate and subtropical monsoon climate, both of which are characterized by heat and humid summer. Sometimes I prefer water or cool drinks to solid food due to the bad weather. It is normal that one will lose appetite even if staying in a room equipped with air conditioner.

High temperature and humidity not only reduce people's appetite, but also make them sick. As stated in the All Chinese volume 12: "Summers in the south (Lingnan) are hot and humid. The lifestyle of being exposed to water and the infested vipers result in many diseases. Two or three out of ten fell sick or dead without any weapons or bloodshed". The destruction of local plague is obvious.

The struggling Lingnan people finally found their savior, a famous Taoist, alchemists and pharmacists, GeHong. GeHong lost his father at the age of 13 and lived in poverty. But he never gave up. Because of his enthusiasm of reading, he changed the cut firewood into paper and pen. GeHong travelled to Lingnan in 306 AD (according to his life story). Because of the prevalence of subtropical infectious diseases, he was able to carefully study all kinds of febrile diseases drugs in Lingnan at that time. Taking herbal tea formula as the carrier, he created professional terms that matched its function, guided people how to drink it and laid the theoretical foundation of it.

*First change: From medicine to food*

Strangely enough, Chinese herbal tea went by the name of Liangcha, which consists of two Chinese words: 凉 and 茶 but not an English traditional phrase.

One can find out several kinds of explanations about the word-Liang (凉), which can represent the meaning of cold skin sensation, depressed emotion inside or a period in Chinese history. Why they pick up an adjective 凉? Considering that the drugs are made from boiled water and raw herbs and that there was no refrigerator hundreds of years ago, theoretically herbal tea may be too hot to be taken or at least not a cool drink in subtropical areas. How can it clear heat? And in ancient China, herbal tea was usually produced in liquid or semi solid types, why water and paste can resolve dampness?

One is also familiar with the other word - tea. However, the tea that we usually know is not the “cha” here because tea is a common liquid drink while Liangcha is actually a liquid medicine. They are essentially different.

Certainly, inadequate translations reflect the differences between Chinese culture and English culture. That is why it is necessary to analyze the ideology behind the lexeme Liangcha. Some scholars deem that the symbolic signs, cultural appearance and practical responses represent people’s cognitive schema and thinking structure. Affected by such an opinion that is replete with symbolism, cognitive anthropology, structuralism, medicine and anthropology, medical anthropologists analyze folk medicine and the cultural model behind it. And from this point of view, we can explain the formation of “Liangcha”.

The origin of “Liang” can be traced back to the concept of health preservation of Lingnan people. Ancient Chinese inveterately believed traditional Chinese medicine, which is a huge folk medicine system that dominates over Chinese people thousands of years. Many contradictory concepts, such as Yin and Yang, Up and Down, Inside and Outside constitute its fundamental cognitive system. Hot, Cool, Damp and Dry are undoubtedly included. Generally speaking, hot and damp belong to Yang, while cool and dry belong to Yin. From the perspectives of Chinese people, health is a phase of balance between Yin and Yang. And getting sick means the state of balance is broken, while it is diagnosed as organic dysfunction or dysregulation in bio-medicine. In the traditional Chinese medicine system, terrible living conditions directly disrupt the concordance of our body and spirit. Discordance can be divided into two kinds. The first type is a state of normal one side with the weaker other side. The other situation is a state when superfluous one subdues the other one. To rehabilitate the balance, people need to tonify the lacking side or attenuate the stronger one.

This set of cognitive models can be applied to interpret the cultural notions and actions of Lingnan people. Taking the characteristics of subtropical monsoon climate into consideration, people tend to be in second unbalance status. Therefore, more cooling elements and less thermal sensation are needed. In

other words, people are supposed to clear heat and resolve humidity. In order to satisfy themselves and magnify the magic function of herbal tea, local people finally choose a word 凉, which equals “cool” that contrary to “hot”.

*Cha* is translated into *tea* in English. Tea is one of the most representative signs of China. It even exerts great influence on other continents and countries. But when it comes to Liangcha, the true meaning of cha of this phrase is not the tea that we commonly know.

Imagine that you have always been troubled by a harsh environment in the past. Now you get some ideas to deal with it. That should be great news if those were not medicine. Only patients will be regarded as a group of people who take medicine daily as normal behavior. That is to say, if you take drugs everyday, you must be ill. No one will like to be viewed as a patient, nor do Lingnan people. To some degree, medicine is a taboo for Cantonese. However, the drugs are really effective, and people want to drink them every day and be treated like normal people at the same time. Smart Lingnan people finally dealt with this problem through giving a shared and acceptable name.

Guided by the thought of harmony between human and nature, Chinese people gather that medicine and food are homologous, or so called medicinal diet in modern medicine. To some extent, people deem that medicine derives from food and food equals medicine. This theory has led local people to establish their cultural cognition of herbal drugs. Liquid food can be addressed by multiple names, including soup, sauce, juice and tea, etc. Soup contains meat or vegetables, and sauce is used to relish or has various taste, and juice is extracted from food with high water content. Compared with these types, herbal drugs seem to fall out as it has no fat, no flavoring and herbs with high water content are unusual.

What about tea? You see, a tea tree is a kind of plant, the leaves are picked out, sun-dried, baked, fried and fermented, and finally, they are brewed with hot water. The quasi procedure and eating way between herbal drugs and tea look like a coincidence. Due to the popularity of tea, no one will suspect why a man drinks tea all the time. Hence, tea, or “cha” could be a suitable address.

The formation of Liangcha depicts its changing process from medicine to food. This is the result created by Lingnan people under the influence of Chinese medicine, combined with regional characteristics.

#### *Second change: A brand beverage*

It is said that Chinese people started drinking Liangcha in Tang (a dynasty founded in 618AD and ended in 907AD). A few herbal prescriptions were recorded in ancient medical classics at that time. Due to its simplicity and efficiency, Liangcha was highly valued and extensively used since the Song and Yuan Dynasties (nearly 1000 years ago). In 1828, Wang Zebang, a folk pharmacist, set up the first Liangcha shop in Jingyuan Street, the thirteen-hong,

Liwan District of Guangzhou. Later in 1840, Wang successfully cured Lin Zexu, a famous national hero and his soldiers when they were destroying opium in Guangdong. Learning from Lin's advice, Wang created and sold Liangcha powder and bags for customers to carry out on long trips. Lin sent Wang a big copper gourd pot which was engraved with three gold Chinese characters "Wang Lao Ji" - as everyone called him Wang Laoji.

From then on, Liangcha became a beverage. Wang Laoji Liangcha shops have been expanded more than one hundred over several ten years. Not only was it rife in Guangdong and Guangxi, but also attended brand exhibitions abroad. In response to the requirements of socialist transformation, Wang Laoji was separated into two parts in 1950s. One was annexed in to Guangzhou Pharmaceutical Holding's Limited, a stated - owned enterprise, which is what we called Wang Laoji now, selling domestic Liangcha. The other was managed by Wang's descendants and finally staked by JiaDuobao company, engaging in business overseas. The trademark dispute between them garnered public attention, lawyers and economists in particular.

Wang Laoji Liangcha faced a lot of problems in marketing in early stage. It was bitter initially and mainly prevalent in Guangdong and Guangxi, thus it was embarrassing the in beverage industry. The group has adopted some targeted measures, such as repositioning the drink brand, expanding market and selling channels, engaging with customers and promoting through online and offline advertisements. They even established an experience hall and a museum about Liangcha. Among these strategies, the most essential thing was that they merge the history and story, the marrow of this brand into the product. In this case, Liangcha is not only a profitable goods, but also a cultural sign.

After 2006 being rated as an intangible cultural heritage in China, Liangcha retrieved its cultural card. Combined with the previous text, I come to a conclusion that Liangcha has now acquired three types of symbolic identities: as a material that can be taken, a commodity and an intangible cultural heritage. These dimensions are the hottest spots of Liangcha's research, which are helpful for us to discuss its present situation and future.

#### **4. RESEARCH OF AN EDIBLE ITEM: TYPES AND PROBLEMS**

Edible item is the initial identity of Liangcha. It has escalated into a huge system to juggle with more situation. With the passage of time, the terms and formula GeHong left behind were inherited and perfected by the younger generations. An article suggested that Liangcha can be classified from multiple angles. It can be divided into solid, semi-solid and liquid types. Solid Liangcha usually contains granules, instant tea, tablets and chewing gum. Semi-solid Liangcha are sold as paste and jelly. Liquid types mainly refer to beverages packaged in cans, polyester bottles, Tetra Pak cartons and composite films, etc. Apart from these, we can separate Liangcha as single or compound prescription based on the number of plants. The most significant opinion is that regarding Liangcha as

medicine, sanitarian food or food according to the purposes of use and curative effect.

Medicine, the primitive attribute of Liangcha, is limited to patients and prescribed by doctors. Times and dosage of taking medicine Liangcha are provided thus it can only appear in hospital and pharmacy.

Sanitarian food Liangcha, to some extent is a transitional thing between medicine and food whose definition is blurry. It is a non-toxic and harmless product which aims at regulating the body function, not treating diseases. This kind of Liangcha can only be taken by a specific group of people, and the time and dosage are stipulated. Therefore, it is rare in the supermarket.

And pay attention to “food”. It contains daily diet and beverage. The Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China gives a specific definition of food: it refers to all kinds of finished products and raw materials for people to eat or drink without therapeutic purposes. At present, most Liangcha fall into this category, generally not limited to people, taking time and dosage.

In theory, all three have their own production standards. However, in reality, the chaos of non-standard production and cross-class mixing of Liangcha is common. Currently scholars pay more and more attention to its components and side effects no matter what kind of item it is. For instance, the production of Sanitarian food Liangcha. Notice of the Ministry of Health on Further Standardizing the Management of Raw Materials for Health Food ([2002]No.51) listed the items that can be subsumed as food and medicine, and can be utilized and prohibited as sanitarian food. Following the given prompt, from Chart 21.1 to illustrate.

**Chart 1. Raw herbs that can be used to produce different prescription of various**

<b>Types</b>	<b>Prescription</b>	<b>Raw herbs(examples)</b>
Food Liangcha	Exterior resolving	Mint
	Heat clearing	Fresh reed rhizome
	Aromatic dampness resolving	Ageratum
	Diuretic and dampness infiltrating	Coix seed and red bean
	Digestion promoting	Hawthorn and malt
	Phlegm resolving	Laminaria japonica
	Cough and asthma relieving	Almond (sweet or bitter)
Sanitarian food Liangcha	Exterior resolving	Wild chrysanthemum
	Heat clearing	Cortex Moutan
	Aromatic dampness resolving	Magnolia officinalis flower
	Diuretic and dampness infiltrating	Plantain seed
	Energy tonifying	rose

As shown in Chart 21.1, herbs that can be utilized to produce food Liangcha quite differ from those used to make sanitarian food Liangcha. (Sure, some formulas and herbs have been omitted because there is no need to elaborate on them in great detail.) Producers should abide by the document to select specified raw herb plants to produce corresponding formulas. But actually, plenty of people or drugstores cook and sell it by themselves randomly without any permission and without being punished.

Another example is an essay published in 2018 claimed that they found 10 illegally added substances in every kind of the selected thirteen Liangcha samples.

Exactly, when people treat it as an edible material, safety is paramount. Because of this, these literatures are highly concerned with the production standards and usage specifications of different types of Liangcha. The distinction between drugs, sanitarian food and food Liangcha should be more detailed. The safety of raw materials for various types, especially sanitarian food needs to be emphasized, whose composition and efficacy must be obtained in clinical medicine; Moreover, merchants and shops that sell this kind of Liangcha should be supervised or banned. Food security rules and selling standards to regulate the use and the restriction of different types of edible Liangcha are lacking in.

## **5. COMMERCIALIZATION AND INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

### *Relationship between commerce and culture*

Commodity and intangible cultural heritage are the derivative identities of Liangcha, whose images behind are contrary for some people. Traditional economists adhere to the principle of maximizing benefits. They regard the economy as a single constitution that dominates other areas of human society. Capitalism and streamline management have greatly improved the productivity and production efficiency of human society.

Nevertheless, some extreme intangible cultural heritage protectors totally rejected the intervention of modern procedure and industrial streamline, which will contaminate the purity of substance from their points of view. Intangible cultural heritage is an integral part of human culture. Concrete formation and abstract emotion, modern human and distant past are connected through these skills, customs and rituals. They have accumulated the historical imprint in the long years vicissitude. They shape and present our culture and also be molded and represented simultaneously. Therefore, inheriting is crucial. And most of them were inherited by generation or apprenticeship, which acquire persistent immersion. Traditional consanguineous relationship and emotional inheritance are disrupted by globalization, modernization, industrialization or whatever that stand for division and machine. That is the root of what the protectors are afraid of.

It seems the other way around. Reviewing the history and transition of Liangcha, the two are closely integrated after the adjustment of marketing of WangLaoji group. WangLaoji set a successful example proves that modern industrial production is not a threat, but a booster if we capitalize on it properly. That is a fundamental opinion of this essay: commercialization is an advisable measure to inherit and carry forward an intangible cultural heritage and a cultural construction from the angle of keeping pace with the times. Instead of lingering in the old model, it is better to take on a new look in the new scheme. At least there is hope for the latter method.

People will consider the price and taste at first when purchasing Liangcha beverage. More customers mean more windows of propagation. The invisible space behind promotion poster and slogan is infiltrated by Liangcha culture. When people drink a beverage, they also drink an intangible cultural heritage and a craft. The contemporary Liangcha market is rife of with various herbal tea brand brands thanks to its promising prospect. And we need to be alarmed whether the severe competition will lead to an interest - oriented so that we neglect the cultural significance behind or not.

#### *Extended question*

In the final paragraph, a few extended issues should be posed. First of all, is the scheme that coexists with business universal for all kinds of intangible cultural heritages? Another question is: If modern industrial production and media propagation are boosters, how helpful can they be? I am afraid it is not. Take the Cai's Lacquer Line Carving and Fujian Nanyin as examples, commercialization does a little favour to their inheritance because of the limitation of their category. And the content seems to not fit public interests. At first glance, Wang laoji seems to be a non-replicated success. I do not mean to stress the contingency, but hope that scholars can capture some awareness and skills that can be learned from, such as integrating cultural heritage into commodity sales, a rattling practical consciousness.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Now I shall offer a personal definition of the leading role. In the narrow sense, Liangcha specifically refers to the medicine created by Lingnan people under the guidance of traditional Chinese medicine theory and combined with the local natural environment. In a broad sense, it covers three identities: an edible material (medicine, sanitarian food, daily diet and beverage), a commodity and an intangible cultural heritage. It was born as a medicine then transform to a daily diet, a kind of beverage with time going by. Liangcha shaped Lingnan people collective memory day by day. In return, its cultural meaning was enriched by people step by step. Its derivation reflects the regional medicinal cognitive ideology which emphasizes harmony between human and nature and balance of Yin and Yang of Lingnan people.

When mentioning Liangcha, people associate it with medicine cans in the past while it is associated with diverse drink now. And it reminds some scholars of commerce, economy or intangible cultural heritage. Doctors may connect the prescription and curative effect in mind. The impressions are quite diacritical between different groups. So every one can interpret it by himself or herself. There is no standard definition.

Undoubtedly it will obtain more symbol or identity in the future, but no one can make sure of what kind it is. What will it be in the future? It remains to be seen.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Ding Hongwu. Ge Hong Chronology[J]. *Religious Studies*, 2011(01):10-16.  
Edited by Yan Kejun. *The Three Dynasties, Qin, Han and Six Dynasties* [O].  
Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1958.12:189.
- Gao Riyang. Discussion on regional cultural characteristics of Lingnan traditional Chinese medicine[J]. *Chinese Journal of Basic Medicine of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2008(07):547-548.
- Herbal Tea-Intangible Cultural Heritage Website.  
[http://www.ihchina.cn/project\\_details/14440/](http://www.ihchina.cn/project_details/14440/)
- Jiang Qi, Wang Qiu, Luo Dan. Simultaneous determination of 10 illegally added chemicals in herbal tea by high performance liquid chromatography[J]. *Guangdong Chemical Industry*, 2018, 45(09):225-227.
- Luo Youhua, Huang Yiqi, Yang Hui. An overview of the research on Chinese herbal medicine herbal tea [J]. *Strait Pharmacy*. 2006(05).95-98.
- Luo Youhua, Huang Yiqi, Yang Hui. 2006.
- Yao Fu, Jin-chao Yang, Anthony B. Cunningham, Alexandra Maria Towns, Yu Zhang, Hua-ying Yang, Jian-wen Li, Xue-fei Yang. 2018. A billion cups: The diversity, traditional uses, safety issues and potential of Chinese herbal teas. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, Volume 222, 217-228.
- Zhang Ying, Sun Minggui. Value-added of Chinese time-honored brand assets—  
—A case analysis of the combination of innovation and nostalgia[J]. *Contemporary Economic Management*, 2010,32(04):21-25.
- Zhang Youchun. *Medical Anthropology*[M]. Beijing: Renmin University of China Press, 2011.10:48-50.

# **A Stone Captured History and Society: Shoushan Stone**

**Ma Yeung Ho <sup>a\*</sup>**

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH22

---

## **ABSTRACT**

Shoushan Stone is a precious stone which only mined in Shoushan village in Fuzhou City Fujian Province. It was the first-tier Intangible Cultural Heritage in China and also known as “the top grade-coloured stone for carving”. With the anthropology aspect, it is a topic over traditional Chinese culture, material culture and art anthropology. Shoushan stone carving can be traced back as far as the Southern Dynasties and have a continuous development in the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. Emperors of these dynasties always own the most precious kind which enjoy the reputation of “the king of stone: Tianhuang stone (田黃石)”, and using Tianhuang as the only material of their royal seal. Carving made by Shoushan stone is a traditional chinese art which need a superb craftsmanship from the subjects range to human figures, animals and landscapes, to flowers and birds. Top craftsmen are able to create wonderful images by using the natural contours and fine streaks of colours in the stone and carving also following the silk road travelling over the world. So, people who participated in the life process of Shoushan stone carving would be a precious anthropological materials.

*Keywords: Shoushan stone; carving; material culture; dynasties; Silk Road.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION OF THE ORIGIN**

Fujian, Fuzhou the only Shoushan stone producer in the country, has a long history. It is located in East China, East Fujian, the lower reaches of the Minjiang River and coastal areas. It is an important coastal city in southeast China, the first batch of coastal cities to open to the outside world, and a marine economic development demonstration zone. Maritime Silk Road and part of the China Pilot Free Trade Zone are one of the first five trade ports opened in modern China.

The written history of Fuzhou can be traced back to 202 BC. Fuzhou has become the capital of the Minyue Kingdom: Yecheng (冶城), and has been around 2200

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: [timtimck8@163.com](mailto:timtimck8@163.com);

years ago. Fuzhou is a city where the north and south peoples have melted. From the perspective of the history of ethnic changes, Fuzhou is a history of the integration of the Central Plains culture and the Fujian culture. The Min people were the pioneers in the early development of the Fuzhou area. Later, the Yue people in Jiangsu and Zhejiang lived together in Fujian and melted to become the Minyue people.

Among the current 37 ethnic minorities in Fuzhou, the largest population is the She ethnic group, followed by the Hui, Man, and Zhuang. According to data from the Fuzhou Statistical Yearbook in 2020, Fuzhou has a permanent population of 39.73 million in 2019. The tertiary industry is the most important in the industrial structure, with 13.227 million people, followed by 9,096,500 people in the secondary industry, and 548.85 people in the primary industry. (2020 Fuzhou Bureau of Statistics Statistical Yearbook). According to unofficial statistics, in 2017, the number of Shoushan stone practitioners in Fuzhou has reached more than 200,000.

The history of Shoushan stone is the history of Fuzhou. In Fuzhou, Shoushan stone is not only a stone in the material sense, but has become a local and even a global "cultural stone". On the road of studying material cultural life, Igor Kopytoff (*The Social Life of Thing*, 1986, p74) used the example of cars to point out that car performance records are also part of his biography, because the company that produces cars is in a larger institutional background and industrial environment. In addition, the social biography of a car is also an important part of its complete life: for example, who owns and uses it, and for what purpose? Family car or business car? In a broader sense, what kind of culture can our car use reveal? In Shoushan stone study, the theory is established.

## **2. FUJIAN'S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: SHOUSHAN STONE**

Any art contains skill and the understanding perspective of skill is diverse. It is related to social development changes, knowledge constitution, world experience of art people, their strategies for living, their application on their physical skills and their skill inheritance ways. Handicrafts as a type of art are the most important power mode and production method in the agricultural civilization period. The cultural operation mechanism surrounding the handicrafts is also local and rural. This is one of the core contents of traditional culture. Therefore, when industrial civilization replaces the agricultural one, the first consequence is the change of power model with the substitution of mechanization to manual labor. Handicraft has become a symbol of low productivity in China for nearly a century, and it is also one of the objects that will inevitably change in the process of modernization of the country. Finally, it has to turn to arts and crafts in order to survive in today's society.

Tradition and change are opposites, custom and reason are also binary opposites. Traditional handicrafts have withdrawn from people's living spaces and turned to artistic development. Under the impact of more advanced culture

from outside, it is an inevitable law that new culture replaces old culture. The country's economic reforms have also affected the development, rise and fall of traditional handicrafts. The market is the most important twist between consumers, skills and inheritors. There is a market for that type of skill, which means that it can adapt to the development of modern society and be accepted by everyone, and therefore has the possibility of survival. The final outcome of traditional handicrafts can only be preserved through the protection of intangible cultural heritage.

The protection and attention to traditional folk culture has gone through three stages in our country for more than half a century. The first stage was in the 1950s and 1960s. In the early days of the founding of New China, Chinese folk culture attracted people's attention. The second stage is the sorting, excavation and rescue work carried out around the ten integrated chronicles since the new period. The third stage is the protection and research work carried out in recent years with the initiation and implementation of the protection of intangible cultural heritage. Since most of the objects of intangible cultural heritage protection are classified as art, these arts integrated into traditional life are not only a kind of artistic skills and knowledge, but also an important carrier of culture, and they belong to the research object of art anthropology. The advantages of art anthropology lie in its open perspective and diversity to have a new perspective to examine the existence of Shoushan stone carving.

At the same time, while the country is vigorously developing the national economy, it also pays attention to the development of the "soft power" of the cultural industry. Especially in the traditional national culture, and introduced various intangible cultural heritage protection policies; the traditional handicraft skills of Shoushan stone carving was selected as a national "Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection" in 2006.

Shoushan Stone is a complex that integrates different identities. It must be considered from multiple dimensions, including macro, micro, and historical perspectives. More importantly, the relationship between intangible cultural heritage and its creators should not be separated. This kind of local knowledge should be emphasized and reorganized. This is one of the purposes of this article.

In the previous part, some information and overview about Shoushan stone and its crafts were introduced. Finally, an overview of the main research methods of the research. Affected by covid-19, the field survey may not be as effective and reliable as expected. This article mainly uses the method of document analysis and online interviews. Most of the information comes from online literature and historical books, but also the online fieldwork from the predecessors in the Shoushan stone carving field.

The next part will focus on the origin of Shoushan Stone. We will have some basic understanding of its classification, craftsmanship, genre, folk tales, etc.

### 3. WHAT MAKE SHOUSHAN STONE SPECIAL?

The art of Chinese stone carving can be traced back to the early Neolithic Age. It is an important element in the history of China's five thousand years of civilization and has formed a unique and complete aesthetic system. At the Fucangshan cultural site in Fuzhou the archaeologist found the earliest Shoushan stone product which is a pair of stone arrow and stone chisel at the end of the Neolithic period about four thousand years ago. During the Southern Dynasties, Shoushan Stone began to carve artworks by hand.

Shoushan stone is an amazing stone which extremely rich in quality, color, shape and pattern with the crystal clear and moisturizing texture. The ancient book "Guanshilu" (《觀石錄》) by Zhao Gao classifies Shoushan stones into water pits, field pits, and mountain pits in total of 123 kinds of Shoushan stone. It has a wide variety of hardness between 2.5 and 2.7 moles. The Shoushan stone, which has the characteristics of fine, moist, greasy, warm and condensed are called "Stone Emperor" and "Stone Queen" by the folks, and there is a saying that "precious stone and cheap jade". In folk stories, the Shoushan stone is a sky-filling stone, also called a Nuwa stone, and it first appeared in "Huainanzi . Lan Mingxun" (《淮南子·覽冥訓》). After Nuwa smelted the five-color gems in the back garden of the Jade Emperor, she used the five-color gems to repair the sky and bridge the ruined living environment of primitive society. Nuwa healed the breaking reality and bring a happy life to human being by using the magic stone—Shoushan stone.

Shoushan Stone carvings with independent shapes has a history of 1,500 years. In the Southern Song Dynasty, the Shoushan stone was quarried from mines. After the development of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, an independent Shoushan stone carving industry was finally formed. The emperors such as the emperor of the Qing Dynasty used Shoushan stone to make the seal. Among the Shoushan stone, Tianhuang stone (田黃石) was the most valuable. (Qing) Chongyi mentioned in "Said Tianhuangbu", "The stone of 70 grams (Tianhuang) is worth two hundreds and fifty yuan." From the speech, Tianhuang stone is much more worthy than gold in Qing.

Emperors love Tianhuangs stone mainly in its magnificent yellow and fine texture. In ancient China, yellow was an auspicious color, representing nobility and overweening, as well as imperial power and supremacy. In the pre-Qin period, yellow was not necessarily noble. As the first emperor, Qin ShiHuang's dragon robe was mostly black. However, after the Sui and Tang Dynasties, yellow gradually received attention, especially when the emperors accepted the "Yin and Yang Five Elements Theory". In the balance of water and fire, the color of soil is "yellow". Therefore, the emperor must admire and use yellow, and the dragon robe must be yellow, and yellow was gradually monopolized by the Imperial family. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the imperial power was further strengthened, and only emperors, princes, and empresses could wear yellow

gowns and skirts. Therefore, the yellow noble and delicate ornamental stones have always been favored by people.

During the Tongzhi and Guangxu reigns in the Qing Dynasty, Shoushan stone carvings formed their own unique styles, appearing in two major schools, Dongmen and Ximen. The Dongmen(東門) faction represented by Lin Qianpei and Lin Yuanzhu are good at round carvings of figures, landscapes, and animals, while the Ximen (西門) faction represented by Pan Yumao and Pan Yuquan has created a traditional Chinese-style button-pressing technique with the characteristics of thin art. Later, Lin Qingqing created the thin sculptures, which brought Shoushan stone sculptures into a realm of poetic harmony with sinology and made a huge enhancement on its cultural grade.

Moreover, in the process of marketization, Shoushan stone carvings are similar to those described in "The Social Life of Things" by Arjun Appadurai. In the following chapters, our core concern is to trace the life course of Shoushan stone, to focus on the commercialization and de-commodification process of Shoushan stone, the ways and methods, and the social and cultural motivations behind them. Shoushan stone sculpture embodies social and historical changes, and its meaning is not entirely given by people. We can try to treat things as having the same social life as human beings.

#### **4. THE SOCIAL LIFE OF SHOUSHAN STONE**

In this chapter, we will focus on describing and analyzing the social life of Shoushan stone carvings, starting from the discovery and processing of Shoushan stone by ancients into handicrafts.

In the Tang Dynasty, the monks of Guangying Temple in Shoushan Village had had begun to use Shoushan stone to sculpt Buddha statues and utensils, and some of the Buddhist supplies were presented as gifts to pilgrims from all over the world. This laid the foundation for the collection of Shoushan stone carvings.

In the Song Dynasty, Shoushan stone carving achieved great development. Civilians quarry holes to collect Shoushan Stone, and the government takes the stone to make tools like seal and funeral goods. The prototype of a Shoushan stone carving workshop began to appear, and at the same time a large number of poetry records about the Shoushan stone were circulating.

In the Yuan Dynasty, the literati Wang Mian (1287-1359) initiated the use of "flower milk stone (Ophicalciturum)" for making stamp seal, making metal or jade no longer the only material for engraving a seal. Shoushan stone is widely loved because of its warm texture, colorful, and easy to carve. Shoushan stone became the stamp material and ascended the hall of elegance.

In the Ming Dynasty, the quarrying and carving of Shoushan stone had already taken a large scale, and the government set up a factory for quarrying in

Shoushan. The content and form of Shoushan stone carvings have changed: from funeral goods to seals and then to decorations. In market terms, the first Shoushan stone store was born in the Qing Dynasty which named "Qingzhitian (青芝田)". Moreover, shoushan stone have been travelled over the world by the silk road to the western country and eastern country like Japan.

In the Qing Dynasty, Shoushan Stone was extremely popular for a while, and was highly sought after by emperors and generals. The emperor's seals are countless, and the most precious one is the Tianhuang three-chain seal, which is now in the Palace Museum. In the research of Shoushan stone carving, "GuanShiLu (觀石錄)" and "HouGuanShiLu (後觀石錄)" was born, which provide a theoretical basis for the research.

During the period of the Republic of China, Shoushan stone carving craftsmen come out in large numbers. Not only did the carving skills advance by leaps and bounds, but the theory also made further developments. Two factions of east and west were created in the carving style, which further promoted the development of diversified Shoushan stone carving styles.

After the founding of New China, the country and people's lives became stable. The prosperity of culture has promoted the revival and development of Shoushan stone carving, and the carving techniques and theoretical research was also blooming by the time. For example, in 1970, the Fuzhou Sculpture Factory was established, and a large number of outstanding arts and crafts masters emerged. Shoushan Stone has become a symbolic work of art that promotes Chinese traditional culture to the world. Thanks to the establishment of the Fuzhou Sculpture Factory, Shoushan Stone has become one of the gifts given to foreign heads of state, opening up a channel for international communication.

After a preliminary understanding of the history of Shoushan stone found in archaeology and recorded, we can begin to discuss the social life of Shoushan stone carving. We can follow the lead of "The Social Life of Things" by Appadurai to summarize the social life of Shoushan stone carving. In the first stage, Shoushan Stone was discovered as a natural resource by the ancients. Because of its natural five-color spots, the ancients described it as a gift from the heavens and a treasure left by the gods. The ancients admired this natural sacred stone very much and making Shoushan stone become a glorious, gifted, sacred item. As a symbol of sacredness, according to South-Song Dynasty Literati Liang Kejia (梁克家)'s "Three Mountains (三山志)", Shoushan stone was processed by ancients into stone servants, who lived in the tomb to protect the respected master. In the second stage, according to the records of Gao Zhao's "GuanShiLu (觀石錄)" of the Qing Dynasty, he described the mining activities of Shoushan stone in the Song Dynasty. The government force the people to mine Shoushan stone. The mining process is dangerous even causing quarry workers death. This is a manifestation of the imperial government's de-marketing of Shoushan Stone. As described in Malinowski's "Argonauts of the western Pacific," the

exchange of items stems from prestige. Shoushan stone as a symbol of power and wealth, Shoushan Stone cannot flow into the hands of the people but was instead privatized by those in power. During the Yongzheng period of the Qing Dynasty, Shoushan stone products were included in the scope of government tariffs. Shoushan stone carvings only as a royal gift shifting in royal family or the lucky capable man picked by the royal house until the Qing dynasty. In the third stage, which is in the founding of new China, Shoushan stone start to be totally commercialized by the principles of market economy. The government has actively controlled the mining activities of Shoushan stone, but does not interfere with the marketization of Shoushan stone carvings. Many Shoushan stone practitioners appeared in the market, including merchants, sculptors, calligraphers, and even collectors. Shoushan stone has become the new darling of the Chinese traditional art market. In the 1970s, stone carving factories of various sizes were established to promote Shoushan stone products internationally, and Shoushan stone carvings followed the Silk Road to ocean Japan, the United States, France, Italy, Chile, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and other regions and countries. In 1965, the Fuzhou Municipal Government's report stated: "Shoushan stone carvings have great potential for export, and the international holding capacity can be about 600,000 yuan a year." The influence of Shoushan stone in the overseas collectibles market has continued to expand and has become a label of traditional Chinese culture. The heads of state of many countries have visited the Fuzhou Shoushan Stone Carving General Factory many times, opening a window for international communication.

Through online fieldwork, I interviewed two Shoushan stone industry leaders, including Mr. Ma Yongxiang, the first director of Fuzhou Shoushan Stone Carving General Factory, and Wang Yifan, a master of Chinese arts and crafts.

Mr. Ma Yongxiang said that when he took over as the first factory director, the local market of Shoushan stone in Fuzhou was already very prosperous, and the development of the industry was valued by the local government, and a lot of public resources were tilted. He said that he unified the separation of the eastern and western factions, combined the skills of the two different sects, and gave birth to a batch of first-generation craft masters. He shared a story with me. It was a scene where he introduced Shoushan stone carvings to the President of Malaysia. The president loved Shoushan stone and ordered a TianHuangs seal with its name. Later, they continued to keep contact with letters. Director Ma believes that Shoushan stone carving is amazing medium to make friends and he said art is a power that can shock the heart.

Mr. Wang Yifan was born in a peasant family. His father resolutely sent him to the Dongmen faction for apprenticeship training. He studied under the Dongmen faction masters Wu Lue and Zhou Baoting. I reached him at the recommendation of director Ma of the factory. He was the second deputy director of the Fuzhou Shoushan Stone Carving General Factory. Director Ma said that he has leadership skills and is an artist standing at the forefront of Shoushan stone carving and knowledgeable scholars. Mr. Wang Yifan said that he faced many

difficulties in the process of learning Shoushan stone carving since he was a child. Financially, it is difficult for him to maintain a living with a meager salary. In terms of skills, it is difficult for him to surpass the masters of the Eastern Faction. He told me that he suddenly realized a truth when he was 30 years old. He found that creating a good work requires not only ingenious skills, but also meticulous design. He introduced me to the characteristics of each kind of stone. He said that shoushan stone is a gift from the god. We must respect the extraordinary craftsmanship of nature and carry out carving according to the prompts given to us by each unique stone. He also said that when artists are faced with carving Tianhuang stone, they will first perform some worship rituals, let the Buddha stay on the Tianhuang stone, and make the carved figures more dynamic.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Looking at the Shoushan Stone from the perspective of the social life of the thing and the biography of the thing, we will find that the development of the Shoushan Stone does not exist as a mere object:

First of all, Shoushan stone carvings were mass-produced and excavated by ancient people. It was a cultural and cognitive process that people regarded Shoushan stone as a potential commodity. Shoushan stone was attached to culture and existed as a commodity from a very early time, condensing the cultural cognition of the ancients. According to ancient folk story, Shoushan Stone was already been realized as a sacred substance in the Minyue Period because it was given by the heavens. The earliest shape of Shoushan stone in history was a burial object, because the ancients hoped to carve a sacred substance into a carrier (snake), so that the ancients could be blessed after death and not be disturbed by ghosts.

In the second stage, the form of Shoushan stone as a commodity was broken by the imperial government. Because of the Shoushan stone is a kind of high plasticity stone, it can be a material of different themes, and it can also become a favorite material for seal by the emperors. Shoushan stone has different colors: Pure yellow represented the supreme imperial power and dominance at the time. The lard white represented the elegance and nobleness of the literati. Therefore, the imperial power decided to monopolize the Shoushan stone and realized the "de-commodification" of the mining and carving of the Shoushan stone.

In the third stage, the cultural connotation of Shoushan stone was discovered by people and "re-commercialized". At the time that People's Republic of China was established, the imperial monopoly disappeared, and the trade between countries was opened up. More people have devoted themselves to the trading circle of Shoushan stone, and the culture of Shoushan stone blended with court art and became a symbol of money and status. The favor of domestic and foreign collectors and artists has also made Shoushan stone culture accepted by the public. Shoushan Stone has once again shown new vitality in the free market, and has become a first-tier intangible cultural heritage, linking with traditional Chinese culture on a larger world stage.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## REFERENCES

- Chinese Shoushan Stone Culture Grand View[M]. Chen Ji. People's Publishing House.
- Daniel Miller ed. 1998 Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter[C]. London: UCL PRESS.
- Edited by Meng Yue and Luo Gang, Material Culture Reader, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2008
- Edited by Wang Wenzheng and Zhou Shilei. Chinese stone analyses[N]. Gao Zhao. Guanshilu;
- Fuzhou Local Chronicles and Seal Compilation Committee, "Fuzhou Shoushan Stone Chronicles", Haichao Photography Art Publishing House, 2005.7
- Research on Stone Appreciation Literature and Aesthetic Spirit in Ming and Qing Dynasties[R]. Wang Meili. Shandong Normal University. 2011
- Royal Majesty and Literati Interest in Shoushan Stone Sculpture Art in Qing Dynasty [J]. Dong Yin. Art Market. 2019(12).
- Shoushan Stone Carvings-Intangible Cultural Heritage Network. Available:<http://www.ihchina.cn/Article/Index/detail?id=14012>
- Technology Inheritance and Social Development[J]. Fang Lili. Journal of Jiangnan University. 2011(6)
- The Sinicization of Art Anthropology Theory[J]. Fang Lili. Foreword Forum. 2017
- The social life of thing[M]. Arjun Appadurai. 1986. Cambridge university press
- Tim Dant 1999 Material Culture in the Social World[M]. Buckingham: Open University Press.

# The Lacquer Thread Carving in Southern Fujia

Zhang Mingli <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH23

---

## ABSTRACT

With 300 years history, lacquer thread carving is one of the first Chinese intangible cultural heritages. As a unique traditional craft in southern Fujian, lacquer thread carving is not only of great artistic appreciation, but also of research value for history, religion and folk belief. The project is divided into three sections. The first part introduces the basic content of lacquer thread carving, the materials used, the process and the various images crafted. The second part analyses the images of lacquer thread carving, which are closely related to southern Fujian folk beliefs, providing a glimpse of the folk beliefs such as that of Mazu and Bodhisattva, which all play an important role in the folk beliefs in Southern Fujian. And finally, the third part addresses the change in the functional meanings of lacquer thread carving as a material vehicle of folk beliefs and symbols. In the early days of its initial stages, the lacquer thread carving was regarded as the embodiment of gods on earth, used to pray for greater happiness. Today, it has been transformed into a tourism commodity and has become a calling card of Xiamen, behind which the religious dimension has gradually been replaced by the entertainment aspect.

*Keywords: Lacquer thread carving; folk beliefs; functionality; change.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the government has paid more attention to the protection of intangible cultural heritage, which is conducive to the long-term retention of intangible cultural heritage. What's more, this is also significant for the inheritance of Chinese outstanding culture. This paper focuses on Cai's lacquer thread carving, an intangible cultural heritage, exploring its development and the changes in its functional significance.

Lacquer thread carving, as the name implies, is the use of lacquer threads to decorate sculptures or to shape artistic images using the lacquer threads themselves. The name means not only the craft skill but also the creatures which

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 1344201341@qq.com;

it shows. According to the names of the craft, its development process can be divided into three stages: makeup Buddha, golden wood carving and the lacquer thread carving, each of which plays different roles.

In the first stage, that is the “makeup Buddha” stage, the craft was mainly a means of decoration for the statues of the gods and Buddhas together with painting and gold foil. During the “golden wood carving” stage, the craft was separated from the Buddha statues and used to show historical and mythical figures. The third stage was the 'lacquer thread carving' stage. Cai Shuikuang, the inheritor of Cai's lacquer thread carving, reformed the technique and made it an independent craft which was used to express artistic images. This craft was named 'lacquer thread carving' and is in use even now. Behind several changes of the name, we can find that the identity of the lacquer thread carving works has also changed, from the superstitious products to handicrafts which involves the social context.

As mentioned above, the lacquer thread carving was called “Makeup Buddha” in its early days as a decorative technique to serve for the Buddhas. In order to further our understanding of lacquer thread carving, we must first clarify the religious context in which it arose. On the one hand, I have summarized two reasons for why this diversified religious belief occurred. Southern Fujian was a hilly and mountainous region with the hot and humid climate, where poisonous snakes and insects were common and miasma was frequent. Under such a harsh living environment, people built incense tables to worship the gods. What's more, as southern Fujian was far away from the Central Plains Culture, what prevailed at that time was the belief in witchery and ghost different from that in the Central Plains. Between 307 and 313, a large number of people were forced to flee to Fujian because of the war. Accompanied by immigrants from the north, there was orthodox religious beliefs such as Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. These foreign beliefs were integrated with local beliefs in southern Fujian which formed the diversified religious belief system in Minnan.

After getting the general understanding of the basic of lacquer thread carving, now we change our perspective to the cultural functional meaning in modern society. I take the founding of New China as the time node and compare the changes in the functional significance of lacquer thread carvings in the two stages. To a certain extent, the state of religious development must have influenced the development of lacquer carving so does the transformation of the identity of lacquer thread carving. Generally speaking, after the founding of New China, the development of religion in China also entered a new phase. In this realistic background, the works of lacquer thread carving have reformed themselves to better meet people's needs. This change has also led to the redefinition of the lacquer thread carving. I believe that the cultural function of the lacquer thread carving in the new era works in two main aspects: art appreciation and cultural research.

In terms of artistic appreciation, as the handicrafts, the works of the lacquer thread carving themselves have the aesthetic characteristics which combines the

magnificent style of Tang dynasty with patterns from various crafts of the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. In terms of its cultural value, the customs, history and religion in southern Fujian over the centuries can be reflected in the works.

In general, the evolution trend of the lacquer thread carving in cultural function is a shift from religious utility to decorative aesthetics, but it should be noted that various cultural functions of lacquer thread carving coexist at different times, but with different emphases.

## **2. THE BASIC CONTENT OF THE CRAFT**

Lacquer thread carving, as the name implies, is the use of lacquer threads to decorate sculptures or to shape artistic images using the lacquer threads themselves. The name means not only the craft skill but also the creatures which it shows (Huang 2009). The lacquer thread carving originated in southern Fujian Province, and was later spread overseas with the people who went to the Southeastern Asia. Nowadays it is widely distributed in Singapore, Malaysia and other Chinese areas in Southeast Asia. The lacquer thread carving has developed for 300 years in which the integral process system has been gradually formed. The craft is now divided into four steps, including material preparation, the lacquer thread rolling, the images shaping and gold decoration. The preparation is to mix raw materials such as lacquer, tung oil and titanium dioxide in a certain proportion, and then mix and beat for two hours to transform them into the lacquer mud; Thread rolling is to use special tools (wood board and washboard) to roll the lacquer mud into lines of different specifications but uniform thickness, and wrap the rubbed lacquer threads on chopsticks. This step is a test of the craftsman's ability and patience, as the threads should not be rolled too hard, but at the same time the threads must be evenly stressed; The third stage is to use the lacquer threads to show images or to decorate the sculptures in which one hand holds the chopstick with the lacquered thread with slowly rotating to release the lines, while in the other hand a special brush is held to press and set the shape, this step is generally the most difficult part of the whole procedure. It is also the key to the success or failure of a lacquer craft, not only in terms of skill, but also in terms of creativity, and it is said that the final product varies from one craftsman to another, with each artwork carrying its own "character". The final step is the application of the gold leaf, which is applied to the lacquer thread pattern with tweezers. The purpose of this step is not only to reinforce the coiled lacquer thread pattern and but also to create the shimmering golden images with long-lasting color. Each of these processes requires a high level of skill that ordinary artists cannot achieve and often only masters can do that (Huang 2009).

Nowadays, the lacquer line carving is a household name as the golden business card of Xiamen and the traditional intangible cultural heritage of Southern Fujian. However, the name "lacquer thread carving" just emerged in the recent past, and has been renamed several times over the course of its 300-year history: "Makeup Buddha", "Golden Wood Carving" and "Lacquer Thread Carving"(Huang 2009).

*Makeup Buddha: from the late Ming Dynasty to 1949*

The lacquer thread craft was formed in the late Ming Dynasty, aroused by the thread carving craft of the Song Dynasty (Huang, 2011), especially the Li Fen skills (just like squeezing toothpaste which extrudes the powder from the mouth of pipe in the patterns as needed), and gradually developed and matured in the late Qing dynasty. Later on, due to the social upheavals in China, it was in the doldrums. During this period, the lacquer thread craft was mainly a means of decoration, together with painting and gold foil, for the statues of the gods and Buddhas, hence it was called 'makeup Buddha'.

*Golden Wood Carving: 1949-1966*

After the founding of New China and the stability of the people's lives, the lacquer thread craft gradually developed again. However, during this period, in response to the call of the government to eradicate feudal superstition, the lacquer thread craft was renamed from "makeup Buddha " to "gold wood carving". As the Buddha image was considered a superstitious object during this period, the craftsmen actively reformed the craft. A representative figure is Cai Wenpei, the eleventh generation of Cai's lacquer thread carving, who first applied lacquer thread carving to historical subjects other than Buddhist images, using it to represent historical and mythological figures. Drawing inspiration from traditional Chinese culture, the lacquer thread craft shifted from the traditional focus on the portrayal of individual figures to reflecting the story and atmosphere, with outstanding works such as Zhang Fei and Ma Chao and The Monkey King. This was the first major change in the history of lacquer thread carving . However, under the influence of "breaking the four old" during the Cultural Revolution, lacquer line crafts were completely prohibited because they involved gods and Buddhas.

*Lacquer carving: 1972 to the present*

At the end of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese arts and crafts gradually warmed up and the lacquer thread craftsmen returned to their old profession. Faced with the new demands of the market, the lacquer thread craftsmen once again made changes to the craft. The main representative was Cai Shuikuang, who expanded the carrier of lacquer thread craft by creating works on eggshells and ceramics, breaking the previous situation where lacquer thread craft was only used for sculptures and greatly expanding the scope of lacquer thread craft (Huang 2009). In addition, he separated the lacquer thread carving from the sculpture and made it an independent craft, using the lacquer thread itself to show artistic images, an act that was a great success and opened up a new chapter in the development of lacquer thread carving. Besides Cai Shuikuang named this craft 'the lacquer thread carving'. This was the second change in the history of lacquer carving. In 2005, lacquer thread carving was officially incorporated into the national intangible cultural heritage, opening a new chapter in its development.

From superstitious object to handicraft, the lacquer thread carving has undergone several setbacks in its development, but as the saying goes, "Nothing is broken, nothing is established", the lacquer thread carving has been reborn in every disaster, and nowadays it has become an modern decoration. It is the combination of traditional craft and modern beauty, with not only commercial value but also heritage value.

### **3. THE RELATED FOLK BELIEFS**

As we all know, Fujian is a place where religious beliefs are well developed, and since ancient times people have built incense tables to worship the gods in order to pray for good fortune and eliminate disasters. The lacquer thread carving, which was born in such special environment, was also called "Makeup Buddha" (Huang 2009) in its early days as a decorative technique to serve for the Buddhas. The diverse religious characteristics of southern Fujian also gave birth to the fourteen major forms of the lacquer thread carving, including Buddha, Bodhisattva, Ma Zu, Bao-Sheng-Da-Di, the Great Sage, Guan Di, Earth God, Xuan Tian, Nezha and so on (Huang 2009). In order to further our understanding of lacquer thread carving, we must first clarify the religious context in which it arose.

Geographically, Minnan covers the three parts of Fujian province, including Quanzhou, Xiamen and Zhangzhou. In ancient times, it was located in the southern frontier region, far from the center of the dynasty, and was regarded as a 'wild land'. Before the Qin and Han dynasties, it had little contact with the Middle Kingdom. In addition, southern Fujian was a hilly and mountainous region with the hot and humid climate, where poisonous snakes and insects were common and miasma was frequent. Under such a harsh living environment, people built incense tables to worship the gods and pray for blessings from a very early age. What's more, as southern Fujian was far away from the Central Plains Culture, what prevailed at that time was the belief in witchery and ghost different from that in the Central Plains (Peng 2007) [3]. After Qin Shi Huang unified the country, he established the county of Minzhong, but at this time the central government adopted the policy of self-government instead of substantial governance. During Yuanfeng period (1078-1085), Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty destroyed the Min-yue state and introduced a county system in Minzhong, and adopted a policy of internal migration and assimilation of the Min-yue, accelerating the integration of Min-yue culture with that of the Han. In the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties, the north being at war. Between 307 and 313, a large number of people were forced to flee to Fujian, known as the "eight surnames into Fujian". At the same time, accompanied by immigrants from the north, there were production technique and production tools in the Central Plains as well as orthodox religious beliefs such as Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. These foreign beliefs were integrated with local beliefs in southern Fujian which formed the diversified religious belief system in Minnan.

Now, we can understand why the artistic images presented by the lacquer thread carvings include not only the orthodox religious figures such as Bodhisattva,

Guandi, Buddha and Nezha. Next, I will explain the other part of the artistic images of the lacquer thread carving- the local beliefs - by choosing three examples, Mazu, Bao-Sheng-Da-Di and Kai-Zhang-Wang (Chen Yuanguang).

The first is Ma Zu which is popular among the images. Ma Zu is the god of the sea whose real name was Lin Mo Niang. She was born in the Lin village lying on the island of Meizhou in Putian Fujian Province. She was extremely good at water and often rescued merchants and fishermen in distress at sea. In 987, unfortunately, she died rescuing boat people in distress at sea. In memory of her kindness, people repaired the ancestral hall to worship this goddess. In addition, because of the risks involved in commerce and shipping and military war against pirates, people also worshipped Ma Zu to protect their safety when they went to sea to trade and fish (Shaoqing, 2004).

Another common figure depicted in the lacquer thread carving is Bao-Sheng-Da-Di, originally named Wu Ben. During his lifetime, he was a famous folk doctor in southern Fujian. Southern Fujian is located in a subtropical region with a hot, rainy and humid climate, making it a high incidence area of miasma in China (Shaoqing, 2004). In ancient times, when medical conditions were poor, miasma was a very terrible disease with high mortality rate and strong infectivity. Wu Ben was not only a skilled physician who saved lives, but also had an excellent reputation for his moral integrity and was loved and admired by the people around him. After Wu Ben's death, people remembered the virtue of Wu Ben in saving lives and established temples to worship him. Like the belief in Ma Zu, people commemorate Wu Ben not only for his contribution to the local people, but also as a way of finding spiritual support under bad living conditions.

The last person emerged as a major figure in the development of Minnan-Chen Yuanguang who was also known as the Kai-Zhang-Sheng-Wang (Zheng, 2009). In 669, the reactionaries in Minnan opened rebellion to get rid of the control of the court. Tang Gao Zong ordered Chen Zheng, the father of Chen Yuanguang, to lead the army to calm the chaos. At the age of 14, Chen Yuanguang went south with the army. In 686, after calming the local riots, Chen Yuanguang asked the court to set up counties between Quanzhou and Zhangzhou to strengthen the control of this area. Chen Yuanguang was appointed as the first governor of Zhangzhou. Chen Yuanguang actively restored production and developed the social economy, developing handicrafts and commerce, introducing advanced production methods and farming techniques from the Central Plains to southern Fujian, cultivating rice and cash crops such as hemp, lychees, longan and flowers, which greatly contributed to the development of the region. Unfortunately, Chen Yuanguang died in the war. People appreciated Chen Yuanguang for bringing them civilization, advancement and peace, and built the General's Temple to worship him, honoring him as the "Kai-Zhang-Sheng-Wang".

From the above, we can see that the object of worship presented by the lacquer carving is either to pray for peace or to commemorate the contributions of their ancestors. However, the functional meaning about that has changed in the new era which will be discussed in the next part.

#### **4. THE CHANGE IN FUNCTIONAL MEANING**

In the former parts of the essay, we have gained a general understanding of the basic of lacquer thread carving, including the production process, historical changes, and related folk beliefs. In the third part, I intend to talk about the cultural functional meaning of lacquer thread carving in modern society, the changes compared with the past and the corresponding factors. I take the founding of New China as the time node and compare the changes in the functional significance of lacquer thread carvings in the two stages. As is known to us all, the development of the craft is closely related to the folk beliefs in southern Fujian. To a certain extent, the state of religious development must have influenced the development of lacquer carving so does the transformation of the identity of lacquer thread carving. This is why I have regarded the New China as a point in time. Generally speaking, after the founding of New China, the development of religion in China also entered a new phase.

The first stage took place before 1949. As mentioned above, the lacquer thread carving was born as a craft of 'Makeup Buddha' and was provided for the folk beliefs of southern Fujian. It was regarded as the incarnation of God in the world which was used to pray for help and fulfilment of their wishes. During this period, lacquer thread carvings (means works but not the craft) were used as religious products, developing the social function of religious which can satisfy people's mental need.

After the founding of New China, however, this situation changed. First, let us have a break in the text and take a look at Chinese folk religion. As a form of religion in China, folk religion has a long history in China, and its influence on the spirituality of ordinary people, their beliefs in life and their real life has been quite profound. What's more, folk religions form on the basis of the folk beliefs, but not all of them are beneficial to people's lives. Some of the folk religions in China's history were also cult-like in nature, using superstition, illusion and hypnosis to deceive and control believers' thoughts (Shangli, 2001). Unfortunately, some such feudal beliefs existed in China in the early years of the founding of the country. In order to clear the social atmosphere and lead people to actively participate in social construction, the Party and the State take measures to overcome feudal superstitions and emancipate the mind, which impacted the social status of religion to some extent. So, the development of religion was limited in new China due to the loss of official recognition. In addition, with the development of sustainable social and economic stability, religious beliefs lost the support and confidence from the people. We can prove the view from two aspects. The one point is related to the development of material conditions. After the founding of New China, the living standards of the people has been rising year by year with no shortages of goods which cut the risks of being forced to become believers for economic reasons (Yinghua, 2012). At the same time the medical conditions were improved with technological advancements. and people were able to get effective treatment which spared them from illness. The other aspect is credited to the rich spiritual life. The development of education has

improved the quality of the people and their ability to understand things correctly which is helpful for them to use scientific and logical mind to approach problems. At the same time, the development of culture has greatly enriched people's spiritual world and prevented them from easily falling into the superstitious ideas (Yinghua, 2012).

In this realistic background, the works of lacquer thread carving have reformed themselves to better meet people's needs. As we know, traditionally, the works were an essential part of religious ceremonies to meet the needs of people's blessing. What's more, they usually appeared as the form of gods and Buddhas, with serious expressions, in which the utilitarian tendency far outweighed the aesthetic value caused by their form. After the founding of New China, however, the social circumstances that the developments of religion faced changed dramatically under which the lacquer thread carving also reformed itself. Not only the artistic images are greatly enriched, but also the expressions are flexible and natural. They pay more attention to the story atmosphere and the revealing of plots rather than the single character. This change has also led to the redefinition of the lacquer thread carving, with the qualitative change in its artistic style, cultural heritage and religious significance as the old forms change and gradually abandon their original connotations. I believe that the cultural function of the lacquer thread carving in the new era works in two main aspects: art appreciation and cultural research.

In terms of artistic appreciation, as the handicrafts, the works of the lacquer thread carving themselves have the aesthetic characteristics of "the mosaic of colors and ornaments" (Huang, 2011). From the vertical perspective, the lacquer thread carving combines the magnificent style of Tang dynasty with patterns from various crafts of the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. Horizontally, lacquer thread carving is inclusive, incorporating a wide range of other crafts such as embroidery and painting which embodies the beauty of lacquer thread, color and pattern (Wang, 2019). In terms of its cultural value, the customs, history and religion in southern Fujian over the centuries can be reflected in the works. In other words, the works can simply be seen as the specimen of local cultural history which acts as an important clue for exploring the earlier culture of folk beliefs in the southeast of China. It also serves as a vehicle to show the charm of Chinese culture to the world.

In general, the evolution trend of the lacquer thread carving in cultural function is a shift from religious utility to decorative aesthetics, but it should be noted that various cultural functions of lacquer thread carving coexist at different times, but with different emphases.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Today, our exploration of the development of the lacquer thread carving and the change of its functional significance not only enables us to trace the evolution of the craft in the history of Minnan culture, but also reveals the emotion, spirit and psychological quality of the Minnan people in the face of the natural environment

and social development during historical development. Under the condition of extremely low productivity, people were inclined to worship and try to change their state of being by external means when they were faced with the harsh natural environment; after human society had entered the age of civilization and the problem of survival had been solved, people paid more attention to entertainment needs and spiritual pursuits. The change of the cultural function of lacquer thread carving cannot be separated from the natural and socio-cultural environment at that time, that is, the social context. The cultural function of lacquer thread carving has changed from the initial religious dimension to the entertainment dimension.

The various cultural functions of lacquer thread carving coexisted at different times, with different emphases on cultural functions. The actual content of 'mainstream' and 'non-mainstream' are always changing, but the general trend of the lacquer thread carving in cultural function is a shift from religious utility to decorative aesthetics. In contemporary society, the works have become an increasingly modern decorative objects which are the combination of traditional craftsmanship and modern aesthetics, with not only commercial value but also inheritance value.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

- Cai Shaoqing. Guandi, 2004 Goddess or Mercy and Mazu: the character and social function of Chinese folk deity [J]. *Journal of Jiangsu University* (04): 32-35;
- Dai Yinghua, Tang Lili 2012 Research on rural religious issues in China from the perspective of social change [J]. *Anhui Agricultural Science* 40 (05): 3140-3143
- Huang Zengheng 2011 The evolvement, actuality and development of cai's lacquer sculpture [J]. *Journal of Chinese Lacquer*. 30 (01): 48-53;
- Huang Zengheng, Zhuang Nanyan 2009 *Cai's lacquer line carving* [M]. Zhejiang: Zhejiang People's publishing house. 09:1-94;
- Jin Shangli 2001 Folk religion and Chinese society [J]. *Journal of Hainan Normal University* (04): 57-62
- Peng Weibin 2007 From ghost-belief of Baiyue to buddism and Taoism of han nationality: on the historical change of folk religion in south Fujian [J]. *Journal of Fujian Normal University* (06): 251-256;
- Wang Zhiqiang 2019 Appreciation of CAI's lacquer line carving art [J]. *Oriental collection* (24): 52-53
- Zheng Yong 2009 On the characteristics of folk beliefs in Southern Fujian [J]. *Fujian Taiwan cultural exchange* (04): 83-89.

# How to Become a Carpenter in the New Generation

Lin Junjie <sup>a\*</sup>

DOI: 10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-19039-58-6/CH24

---

## ABSTRACT

This paper is aimed at helping the traditional carpenters to become modern carpenters. We will focus on a small town in the northeast Fujian, China, where there are a lot of traditional carpenters but few of them do woodworking nowadays. The paper can be divided into three parts.

In the first part, we will start from two aspects based on life histories of the elder carpenters. Firstly, we wish to find out the status of the traditional carpenters, involving their 'shifu' (masters), material sources, rituals, consumers and so on. Secondly, we assess the influential factors nowadays, such as intangible cultural heritage policies, ecological environment, tools, markets.

Secondly, realizing the huge gap of the 'nowadays' and the 'past', we reveal that the main problem is located at the absence of the 'bridge'. We compare the different ways between the training and the birth of a traditional and new carpenter. This part uses internet to seek more possibilities in the modern time with new tools, making a new market.

*Keywords: Carpenters; traditional; woodworking; masters; Fujian; China.*

## 1. THE TRADITIONAL CARPENTERS

In this part, we will focus on the traditional status of the carpenter. Based on the regional stories of my own interview and the practice of traditional carpenters, we wish to uncover the deep meaning of the existence of the traditional carpenters. The materials are mainly talking about house construction and the rituals of carpenters.

A story of a carpenter in the mountain area of the upstream of the Minjiang River in Fujian Province tells us about the super talent of the carpenter. In the old days, a completion of a new house required a celebration ritual named '扶榭' [pɸuo-sian]. '榭' refers to a large wooden structure of the house. '扶' means when the special day is scheduled for accomplishing the wooden structure of the whole

---

<sup>a</sup> Department of Anthropology and Ethnology, Xiamen University, China.

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 1831176497@qq.com;

house by installing the '榑'. According to legend, there is a carpenter whose fame aroused the jealousy of another carpenter teams. In order to make a shame of the leader carpenter, these jealous masters secretly sawed the '榑' short the day before '扶'. Just on the day of '扶榑', the leader carpenter and his apprentices are sitting in the center of the host's family's house, waiting for the red envelopes from the host family. Suddenly, an apprentice shouted, 'Master, it's too bad! The prepared '榑' is too short.' The master unhurried to measure it again and said 'Long!' It turned out that the leader carpenter had well prepared spare length for the trick of the jealous guys. When the extra wood was sawed off, the size of '榑' was just right. The apprentice's panic and the master's superpower were deliberately shown to audience.

I also heard a native scary story to show the superpower of the carpenter's ruler. On the edge of a small local village, the soul of a grieving woman was hidden here after her death. She often let her coffin stretch out to trip passers-by. Once, a carpenter passed by and encountered this ghost. He took out his ruler and measured against the coffin on the road, then the coffin retracted into the tomb. From then on, the ghost dared not use the coffin to scare people.

More Japanese stories shows the strange nature of carpenters. In the story of Japanese legend, a carpenter promises to trade his eyes with the villain named Guiliu who forbids building a bridge. In the end, the witty carpenter keeps his eyes and builds the bridge successfully for the villagers. What's more, Japanese carpenters have the characteristics of strangers. They represent for the mountain people and they exchange wooden bowls with the people of the plains. Many stories tell stories of witty carpenters fighting against greedy people. Almost all these stories are in the same narrative style.

A practice example can help us to better understand the superpower of the traditional carpenters. Thanks for the modern technology, we may take the same length of a square for granted when we buying a wooden desk. But in the traditional practice of a carpenter interviewed by me, it's a big difference. The first step is to select an area of woods, especially the Chinese fir and pine trees. The second step is cut these trees down and saw them into different-sized pieces. Then these pieces need to dry a year or half. The third step is to cut the dried wood into strips and plates. When making the tabletop, an expert carpenter will notice the special wood grain and may make the square length different in physics but same in vision. And many professional skills are also involved in this process. This is completely different from the furniture made by modern industry. The things pursued by the two methods vary a lot.

In a traditional Chinese society, carpenters often carry a whole tool set full of saws, planes, axes, rulers, shovel, and ink buckets to make a living by making furniture in other people's houses. They are craftsmen with special skills. And the furniture they made carries the beautiful expectations of new houses or newlyweds.

In fact, the carpenter is just one of the various craftsmen in the traditional Chinese society. We wish to show that the carpenter's identity as a rural handicraft is a demonstration of rural society. Many other craftsmen have similar magical powers and stories, such as blacksmith and tailors. The craftsman constitutes the agile side of rural life. On the one hand, craftsmen in various industries are interdependent. The carpenter's tools cannot be separated from the blacksmith and the carpenter's material sources cannot be separated from the saw carpenter. The carpenter also provides specific products for tailors, tofu sellers, chefs and other craftsman. On the other hand, the main identities of these craftsmen in the town are farmers. Just like our reporter, when he was still an apprentice, he learned to be a carpenter during the slack time in the winter, and farming at other times. According to my observation, most of the farmers in the small town have craftsmanship. One of my interviewees has four brothers, who work as carpenter, tailor, cook, and driver. The superpower of the craftsmen in the small town is manifested in specific ceremonies, not in the craftsmen themselves walking on the street. Therefore, the superpower of craftsmen reflects people's respect for handicraft activities.

In general, the carpenter is portrayed as a collective image in folk rituals and legendary stories. The carpenter represents a craftsman with magic power, justice and sense of humor. They play an important role of transforming mountain wood resources into human settlements. They connect nature and human life. They have close ties with their tools. Their tools have 'mana'. They adjust the length and width of the tables and chairs according to the texture of the wood. Their care or malice will be concentrated in the furniture they made, which may affect people's daily life and even the fortunes of the owners.

## **2. THE CONTEMPORARY CARPENTERS**

In the first part, we believe that the status of carpenters in traditional society is the transformation of nature and humans. Their mystery lies in their craft activities, not their character and products. Their existence reflects the interconnection of rural handicraft activities based on agriculture. This rural outlook has changed since the last century, especially after the reform and opening-up, the speed of change has accelerated. After entering the 21st century, the identities of the old carpenters in the small town have undergone rapid changes. The so-called "modern" in the second part refers to this transition and its subsequent state. We will see that under the new market, new products, and new tools, the status of the carpenter as a craftsman has changed. The judgment of this change is mainly based on my interviewees and some papers.

With the development of industrialization, traditional woodworking tools are gradually replaced by mechanical tools. This also happened in history. The development of woodworking tools complements the hardwood furniture of the Ming Dynasty. We also need to look at the "tradition" of traditional carpenters from the same perspective. In the first part of the discussion, their craft is a way of confirming social status. In the new product market competition, the craft is completely at a disadvantage, and the old connection between product and craft

is gradually being stripped. This eventually led to livelihood problems for the old carpenter.

After entering the 21st century, modern mechanical furniture factories often developed in places where there are many carpenters, such as Nankang. In 2004, Nankang had 2,950 furniture products enterprises and 2,300 professional supporting enterprises. It has formed an industrial cluster development pattern integrating R&D, design, processing, manufacturing, sales, distribution, and professional support. This may be related to the local timber resources, marketing market, and technical foundation. Some carpenters or others rely on their original resources to become furniture manufacturers.

My interviewee's hometown did not develop a large-scale furniture factory, but he gradually transformed from a carpenter to a mass-produced furniture manufacturer, and later became the owner of a decoration material shop in the small town. According to his words, he has never left his profession. More carpenters who do not have enough funds to occupy the small-town market can only join the decoration company or take care of themselves everywhere. The key issue is that these transitions in the first ten years were quite profitable. From the perspective of small towns, many rural people have concentrated on building houses in small towns in these ten years.



**Fig. 1. A carpenter's toolkit that is well-preserved but no longer used in the town**

However, in the past ten years, immigration and housing construction have become saturated. Those who work in a decoration company and undertake packaging repair tasks on their own face unemployment. Originally, this group of carpenters could use their own technical advantages to open a decoration material shop and make money from decoration activities. In this process, they increasingly promote the mechanization of tools and the large-scale production of products. The problem is that when this process develops to market saturation, they find that their technological advantages are taken away. In addition, the new generation of young craftsmen use low-tech but fast mechanized production models to crowd out the older generation of craftsmen. In general, the status quo of the older generation of carpenters in the town is that their craftsmanship cannot be used. The old tools have not been used for a long time, and they have been separated from them. Almost no one is engaged in non-mechanical production. Some carpenters who are continuing non-mechanical production are also difficult to make substantial profits. Imagine that the old carpenter can only make the bed frames, cabinets, chairs, tailors, chefs, hairdressers, and other wooden tools needed for traditional weddings. It is completely impossible for them to consume these products on their own. As far as the craft itself is concerned, there are few heirs in the new era.

This situation is also reflected in the "Contemporary Carpenters: A Survey of Woodworking Practitioners in Zhouzhi and Huxian, Shaanxi Province". Traditional carpenters in Shaanxi have turned to foremen, some turned to furniture factory owners, and some insisted on the traditional furniture production mode. After the boom of urban construction has passed, they are now almost free of the advantages of craftsmen. No one has succeeded in the old handicrafts. They all use mechanized production from wood products and have almost no competitiveness. As the original production method, the carpenter's craftsmanship has lost its advantage in the new market. From the perspective of efficiency alone, sticking to traditional craftsmanship is an unwise choice. People further transformed this phenomenon into homesickness and tried to use intangible cultural heritage items to pass on. However, the handicrafts of carpenters cannot be truly protected because they have no regional characteristics. Referring to UNESCO's definition of intangible cultural heritage, carpenters' handicrafts have no regional characteristics and cannot be truly protected. From the perspective of carpenters, they cannot prove that they deserve the attention from these projects.

In addition, the disappearance of carpenters' craftsmanship is indeed precarious. This craft did not evolve with the development of social production tools, but suddenly broke and disappeared. The production of new furniture is not a real development of the carpenter's craft. My interviewee wanted to simply use homesickness and high-end consumption to restore traditional woodworking craftsmanship but found that it is difficult to obtain timber resources.

Woodworking has always been mechanized production, and their working mode is getting heavier and heavier, causing occupational diseases such as asthma, and the crisp sound of logging has turned into harsh machine noise. In the

competition with machinery, a huge number of products are produced, but the carpenter group is not the beneficiary. The human warmth of craftsmanship as a mysterious ritual slowly faded. The old carpenters face unemployment and their craftsmanship will be lost. In the next part, we must explore how to help old carpenters develop their craft in the new era.

### **3. ABOUT A CARPENTER IN THE NEW GENERATION**

In the first two parts of the paper, we compared the different social status of traditional carpenters in the past and present. In the past, traditional carpenters used their woodworking craftsmanship to play a role communicating the society and nature. They help the local agricultural society to become more agile and make a living from the woodworking. In the past two decades, most traditional carpenters are still engaged in furniture production related work and make a living from it. However, after the wave of urban construction, they can no longer practice their craft. Because the disappearance of handicrafts reflects the disappearance of a traditional way of social integration. And the actual situation of the reporter shows that the most realistic problem is the unemployment of traditional carpenters.

Based on this judgment, we need to find new ways for them. We shall no longer stick to the inheritance of traditional forms of traditional carpenters. The advice provided should involve multiple levels, including the government, the social level, and the carpenter themselves. The advantage of the participatory observation method of anthropology lies in directly targeting the small-town cases and providing solutions from the perspective of the carpenter.

The first way is to manage traditional furniture workshops, mainly for old carpenters who have opened furniture factories during urban construction or have other ways to raise enough funds by themselves. Liu Chengxing shut down the panel furniture factory whose business was not as good as before, and began to restore traditional and antique furniture. The second to third floors of the workshop are the collection and exhibition rooms, which contain the carved canopy beds, cabinets, sedan chairs, etc. The first floor is a workshop for traditional furniture, which contains wood to be processed, finished products, and semi-finished products. The transformation from a modern furniture factory to a traditional workshop can enlarge consumer markets.

The second way is to operate an online shop, which is mainly aimed at the old carpenters who have opened a decoration material store. And this may be able to arouse other idle carpenters' enthusiasm. The reporters in small towns are particularly suitable for this plan. During the construction of the new town, one of them made a lot of money by operating a shop for decoration materials. However, the decoration material store market gradually becomes saturated and there are fewer and fewer newly built houses. His decoration material shop slowly went unused, and he transferred the funds to operating restaurants, fruit tree cultivation and sheep raising in the small town. But all lost money. But the experience of fruit tree cultivation enabled them to master a certain electronic

store sales ability. In this case, they can convert funds to create their own brand on the e-shop. While restoring old craftsmanship, they can purchase old products that cannot be sold by other old carpenters in the market town. Existing experience such as "Carpenter Tan" wood comb reminds us that quality-guaranteed products need to be formed during the operation of electronic stores to create a visual brand image. The feasibility of this approach mainly lies in the fact that although these capital investments have certain risks and long return times, the possibility capital losses it generates are not greater than other capital investments such as operating restaurants.

The third way emphasizes the performance, and can use new media such as Douyin to film the old carpenter's working. At the same time, they can also rely on the rural tourism policy to arrange some simple workshops offline. This kind of scheme requires less investment, and it may be an attempt by the old carpenters. In the process of more people participating in this experiment, the old carpenters with better craftsmanship can stand out. It needs to make certain innovations in products, such as making some puppets, toy cars. It can use machinery and equipment reasonably, but each successful case needs its own characteristics. For example, An Xu, a small carpenter from the Guizhou, became popular on Douyin and other platforms. In two years, he gained nearly 9 million fans. His products are some golden bars, high heels, and Chang'e No. 5 models. Known as "Chinese Hand" works, Zhang Xin also makes some unique creative products, such as roses made of wood shavings, TV-style mobile phone holders made of solid wood, and "puppets" made by Lego villains.

The fourth way is to make a living for the wood craftsmanship itself, such as shooting some traditional documentaries, opening craft studios in cities, participating in professional skills competition or striving for the identity of inheritors of intangible cultural heritage. For example, the online promotion and offline support of "Dad's Carpenter's Cabin" are not based on products, but pay attention to people's love for traditional craftsmanship. For example, they will teach the traditional mortise and tenon technique and woodworking knowledge. The fourth option is the most difficult to promote among the old carpenters group. Although it emphasizes the carpentry itself, it is difficult to generate income according to the actual life of the old carpenter. Perhaps this method can be used as an upgrade plan based on the smooth progress of the first three procedures. Its biggest advantage is that once it succeeds, it is easier to occupy a dominant position, and it can well show the craftsmanship of the old carpenter.

In general, our judgment is that the first three ways are basic programs. We must firstly bring attention to the product, so that the old carpenters can gain a new market position, and then gradually restore the carpenter's craftsmanship. This is precisely the process of stripping old carpenters from the market economy. According to the fundraising ability and handicraft level after the town construction, the old carpenter could choose different development methods. These options are not exclusive. The carpenters can explore multiple ways at the same time and adjust their center of gravity if needed. In this way, the carpenters can not only inherit the old craftsmanship, but also make a living by this way.

#### **4. RECONSIDER THE PROTECTION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGES**

Based on the case of carpenter, we further reconsider the study of folklore and folk-art. Then we will reconsider the meaning of the protection of intangible cultural heritages. Finally, we emphasize the perspective of carpenter and this may also help other craftsmen in the countryside all over the world.

**Chart 1. The logic of mine**

	<b>Folklore</b>	<b>Folk-art</b>
carpenter	myth	economic
Intangible cultural heritage	application	aesthetic

The logic of mine is showed in the chart 1.

The first line is the case of carpenter (chart 1). In the first part, we find that the status of the traditional carpenters has two aspects. One is about their alien character that will be showed in local ritual and legend. The other is about their function in local economic. We notice these two aspects are closely combined. As a demonstration of rural society, the carpenters connect nature and human life.

The second line is the practice of intangible cultural heritages. In the second part of this paper, we have discussed about why the carpenters cannot prove their craft deserve the attention from projects of intangible cultural heritages. Undoubtedly, the craft is the object that UNESCO devoted to promoting. On March 12, 2017, the State Council approved and issued the revitalization plan of Chinese traditional crafts formulated by the Ministry of culture, the Ministry of industry and information technology and the Ministry of finance. How could this situation happen? Through reviewing the paper of intangible cultural heritages, we notice that intangible cultural heritages are symbols of power. The intangible cultural heritages in China nowadays are born in the new relationship of the whole world after reform and opening-up.

The first line and second line go against each other. Many craftsmen such as carpenters face difficulties and the effort of UNESCO could not operate effectively. We provided some advice in the third part from the perspective of carpenters. But in a wide-ranging perspective, this kind of job should be done in the study of folklore and folk-art. Unfortunately, the study of folklore and folk-art could not build a bridge between the policy and practice. The study of folklore and folk-art themselves are increasingly separated into tow aspects. In specific case, they use difficult theory. In policy analysis, they provide unilateral advice. Then we will deeply analyze this situation and provide suggestions.

The folklore itself has two aspects of research. On one hand, it studies myths, the legends and ancient text. Just as the father of Japanese folklore, Koo Yanagida, pioneered the study of legends and stories. On the other hand,

folklore has strong application ability, locking its object in the current customs, skills, songs and so on. At the beginning of 1918, under the advocacy of Cai Yuanpei, Shen Yinmo and Liu Fu, Peking University launched the call to collect ballads throughout the country. Its combination with intangible cultural heritage makes it more and more assimilated with administrative power. The folk-art itself also has two aspects of research. According to やなぎ むねよし, the father of Japanese folk art, it can be divided into economic and aesthetic. The aspect of aesthetic focus on the functionality, which is different from the purpose of artist. The aspect of aesthetic is related to studies such as guild economics. In preliminary theory, the study of folklore may focus on intangible cultural heritage and folk-art may focus on material cultural heritage. But because of their construction of tow aspects, they are combined to cooperate with intangible cultural heritage. However, with the separation of their two aspects, they increasingly regard craft as an object of analysis and appreciation.

The study of folklore and folk-art must reintegrate these two aspects. The most effective measure is to use history study, which we provide for carpenters in the third part of our paper. The first thing is to find out the process of the separation. The study of folklore and folk-art become increasingly separated in the cooperation with intangible cultural heritages. The intangible cultural heritages project is related to the new relationship of the whole world after reform and opening-up. And reform and opening-up is a process of social change, which is related to economic. The study of folklore and folk-art themselves have tradition to evaluate economic. The study of folklore regard economic in a substantive theory and the study of folklore pay attention to guild economics. The most important thing they should do is focus on economics, notice the danger of separation of their tow aspects, and dialogue with the study of Economics.

At the philosophy level, the case of carpenters, the intangible cultural heritages, the study of folklore and folk-art are all related to the relationship of person-object. Marx believed that the study of craft reveals the dynamic relationship between people and nature, the direct production process of people's life, and the direct production process people' social living conditions and the resulting spiritual concepts. Rousseau believes that craft has the greatest function, is the combination of people's physical activities and inner experience, and is the oldest and most honest educational method in human occupation. Zhuangzi, a Chinese philosopher, believes that a person cannot be controlled by objects. Let's go back to our case of carpenter. Their status in traditional society is the transformation of nature and humans. Their mystery lies in their craft activities. Their existence reflects the interconnection of rural handicraft activities based on agriculture. They face the livelihood problems and we provide our advice based on the analysis of change. We think they should bring attention to the product, gain a new market position, and then gradually restore the carpenter's craftsmanship. All these show the relationship of person-object.

In general, our paper is aimed at helping traditional carpenters to become a modern carpenter in the new generation. We analyzed the change of their status. Based on this change, we provide advice from the perspective of carpenters.

Then the reconsider of the intangible cultural heritages, folklore and folk-art are for scholars and government officials. Finally, the thinking of philosophy is render carpenters, scholars and government officials a coherent whole, which is the calling of anthropology.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## REFERENCES

- Cao Shu. Brand Culture Construction of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the New Media Era—Taking "Tan Carpenter" Wooden Comb as an Example [J]. *Yihai*, 2020 (09): 176-177.
- Deng Wenxin. Research on the evolution of traditional small wood planer tools [D]. Central South University of Forestry and Technology, 2017. Traditional wood planers and modern wood.
- Li Ruijuan. Yu Chenrui: A Literary Carpenter Who Makes "Mechanical Dolls" [J]. *Zhongguancun*, 2021(06):72-75.
- Liu Yi. Aspects of Contemporary Carpenters—A Survey of Carpentry Practitioners in Zhouzhi and Hu Counties, Shaanxi Province [J]. *Minyi*, 2021(03): 102-106.
- Liu Zhiqiang, Wu Si. "Little carpenter in mountain village" in Guizhou "out of the circle" and praised as "modern Luban" [N]. *Xinhua Daily Telegraph*, 2021-08-11(009).
- Liu Zongyue. Translated by Xu Yiyi. *The Way of Craftsmanship* [M]. Guangxi Normal University Press, 2011.
- Luo Yun. The old carpenter welcomes the "another spring" of the profession [N]. *Chongqing Daily*, 2021-08-12(006), 2016.
- Shi Haiqin. The "Career Journey" of Woodworking Enthusiasts [J]. *Trade Union Expo*, 2021(17):56-57.
- Shinichiro Kurimoto. *Economic Anthropology* [M]. Commercial Press, 1997.
- Yanagida Kunito. Translated by Wang Xiaokui, Wang Jing and He Bin. *Folk Inheritance Theory and Rural Life Research Method* [M]. Xueyuan Press, 2010.
- Yang Xiaoqin. A Brief Discussion on the Image of the Carpenter in the Story of the Jianchuan Carpenter [J]. *National Art Research*, 2004(05):54-59.
- Yu Lan. Woodworking tools and the production of hardwood furniture in the Ming Dynasty [J]. *Journal of Honghe University*, 2009, 7(04): 78-83.
- Zhang Yahui, Zhuang Liu. From Rural Industry to Horticultural Reform—On Fei Xiaotong's Exploration of Rural Revitalization Paths [J]. *Journal of Xiamen University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2020(01):60-68.
- Zhang Yuyu, Zhu Guangya. Rescue research on the skill of making punt poles made of big wood in Fujian [J]. *Ancient Architecture Garden Technology*, 2005(03):5-9.
- Zhou Xing. Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Movement and Chinese Folklore—The Possibility and Danger of "Public Folklore" in China[J]. *Thought Front*, 2012,38(06):1-8.

Zhou Ying. Traditional monsters in Japanese children's literature [D]. Shanghai Normal University, 2011.

Zhu Hongying, Li Jun. From the hometown of carpenters to the demonstration area of "National Brand"—Perspective of the development of furniture industry in Nankang [J]. *Quality Exploration*, 2014,11(10):13-1.

---

© Copyright (2023): Author(s). The licensee is the publisher (B P International).

## **ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS**

Augustin F. C. Holl is distinguished professor at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology and Director of the Africa Research Center at Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, People's Republic of China.

Email: gaochang@xmu.edu.cn

Gao Han is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: hgaoah@foxmail.com

Huang Cuimei is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 1125362307@qq.com

Huilin Zhou is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 1435299799@qq.com

Kong Deyin is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 46984156@qq.com

Li Kaiping is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 2455439230@qq.com

Li Qiu hua is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 275265334@qq.com

Li Yiyang is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 275265334@qq.com

Lin Junjie is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 183176497@qq.com

Ma Yeung Ho is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.  
Email: timtimck8@163.com

Qi Yingrui is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.  
Email: 469637116@qq.com

Shan Duolan is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.  
Email: 13304773757@163.com

Shen Qu is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.  
Email: 10620210156692@stu.xmu.edu.cn

Su Qian is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.  
Email: 15617681152@163.com

Wang Lu is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.  
Email: 719859568@qq.com

Xinyi Luo is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.  
Email: 10620211153129@stu.xmu.edu.cn

Xu Shuang is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.  
Email: 2389763799@qq.com

Xu Wei is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.  
Email: 2561017583@qq.com

Xu Xiaojing is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 15611687920@163.com

Yang Xueting is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 10620211153131@stu.xmu.edu.cn

Yu Jian is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 10620210156695@stu.xmu.edu.cn

Zhao Dandan is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 1203864570@qq.com

Zhang Xingyue is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 1216809414@qq.com

Zhang Mingli is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: 1344201341@qq.com

Zhang Zhonghai is graduate student at the department of Anthropology and Ethnology, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, P. R. China.

Email: zhangzhonghai0623@163.com

## **London Tarakeswar**

### **Registered offices**

**India:** Guest House Road, Street no - 1/6, Hooghly, West Bengal, India,  
Corp. Firm Registration Number: L77527,  
Tele: +91 7439016438 | +91 9748770553, Email: [director@bookpi.org](mailto:director@bookpi.org),  
(Headquarters)

**UK:** 27 Old Gloucester Street London WC1N 3AX, UK  
Fax: +44 20-3031-1429, Email: [director@bookpi.org](mailto:director@bookpi.org),  
(Branch office)