

THE ISSUES OF SURVIVAL AND INHERITANCE OF YUNNAN ETHNIC MINORITY FOLK SONGS IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Yunnan Province is home to many of China's ethnic minorities, with 25 ethnic groups living in an area of 394,100 square kilometers. Chinese ethnic minority music is an art form created by ethnic minority groups in their daily life and widely spread among the folk. As an indispensable part of people's lives, it condenses the daily life, labor, production activities, and folk habits of all ethnic groups, and is a true portrayal of the normal life of ethnic minorities. The diversity of ethnic groups has contributed to the various styles of ethnic folk songs. The diverse ethnic folk songs serve as an important part of traditional Chinese culture. However, the development of the social economy, the acceleration of modernization, and the strong impact of foreign music culture led to the unprecedented survival crisis faced by Yunnan minority folk songs. The author will analyze the reasons that lead to the survival crisis of minority folk songs in Yunnan in terms of its self-development and social factors and put forward relevant thinking on the future development of minority folk songs, hoping to provide some references and theoretical basis for contemporary composers and researchers.

Keywords: Yunnan minority folk songs, Chinese heritage, folk songs

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Chinese ethnic minority folk songs generally refer to those old musical forms that have not been processed and are combined with art forms such as musical instruments and dancing. Extracted and created from the life and work of all ethnic groups, the original tone is an important part of the life of ethnic minorities. In the process of historical development, different ethnic minorities have created different styles of ethnic folk songs with profound cultural backgrounds, which are the artistic masterpieces of Chinese national culture. Meanwhile, the folk songs of ethnic minorities were born in the original musical soil and were less influenced by external music. They maintained the original characteristics of music and showed the most primitive forms of life and local culture of ethnic minorities (Wu Mingze, 2016). However, the advance of globalization and the continuous influx of strong foreign cultures have exerted a continuous impact not only on traditional minority music but also on the identification and heritage of traditional music by ethnic minorities. Therefore, it is of great significance to deeply analyze and explore the reasons behind the survival crisis of minority music, to carry out sustainable protection and inheritance of minority music.

In this paper, Yunnan Province are chosen to analyze the reasons leading to the survival crisis of minority music, and feasible suggestions are expected to be put forward.

2.0 REASONS BEHIND THE SURVIVAL CRISIS OF ETHNIC FOLK SONGS

2.1 The Artistic Characteristics of Ethnic Folk Songs are Limited

Folk songs, also known as folk ballads, are the earliest vocal music art. They are spread among the folk mainly by word of mouth. Folk songs are dialect songs with a strong local style created and performed by people in their life and labor (Wang Lili, 2015). Ethnic folk songs have their unique charm and unique characteristics, but these characteristics have become an important reason to hinder their development.

2.2 Regionality

The famous Chinese folk music composer Liu Xiaogeng once said, "Yunnan minority music grows out of the soil. If it leaves the soil on which it lives, it will be meaningless." (Chen Huihui, 2021). Yunnan Province is in the plateau area. Relatively gentle mountains only accounted for 10% of the total area. Twenty-five ethnic minority groups scatter among the complicated mountains and valleys. Regional differences determine people's different ways of production and life, thus creating distinctive folk music cultures under different regional cultures (Shi Yifeng, 2018). For example, weaving is the main mode of production of the Dai people who live near streams. Thus, the music of the Dai people is gentle and soothing, showing their introverted and tender personalities. In recent years, with the gradual acceleration of modernization, high-rise buildings have been built in ethnic minority areas near cities, in result in the destruction of the original ecological environment. At present, the intact original ecological environment can only be seen in remote ethnic gathering places. The destruction of the ecological environment led to a change in production and lifestyle, and the music originally sung in labor gradually disappeared.

2.3 Dialect

Ethnic minority music in Yunnan is mostly composed and performed in local dialects, which is one of the important reasons that hinder the development of folk songs in contemporary times. In the theory of symbolic social interaction proposed by Mead, Bruno, and other scholars, it is believed that the "common meaning space" between the two teaching parties is an inevitable premise for the smooth exchange of symbolic meaning. The so-called "common meaning space" mainly includes two aspects: (1) common language or appellation symbol system. (2) Similar life experiences or shared experiences (Sun Guangyu & Dai Yu, 2017).

The minorities in Yunnan have their own different languages, characters and cultures. Therefore, the communication of Yunnan minority music is cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication refers to the process of transferring cultural elements such as information, knowledge, skills and values between different cultural contexts. It covers the mutual understanding, exchange and integration between different cultures, and is a leap and interaction between cultures. (Edward T. Hall, 1959). So it is necessary to use the universal "language symbols" to rewrite ethnic folk songs. Only in this way can the sustainable protection and inheritance of ethnic folk songs be realized. Therefore, the author believes that giving contemporary significance to ethnic minority folk songs with contemporary composition techniques and a new deductive form is an important way to protect and inherit ethnic minority folk songs.

2.4 Improvisation

Improvisation is the difference between folk music and professional music performance. It is mainly featured by oral transmission (Wang Lili, 2015). Because there is no text notation, different performers can interpret and perform the same work in different ways, resulting in different versions of a work. Although that is where the interest in ethnic songs lies, fixed and stereotypical ways of learning and performing are more suitable for both mass communication and music teaching. Hence, the improvisation of folk songs has become an obstacle to the learning and singing of ethnic folk songs.

2.5 Multifunctionality

Ethnic minority folk songs are multi-functional. As mentioned above, ethnic minority folk songs are a true portrayal of the lives of ethnic minority people and a necessity for their lives. In addition to self-entertainment, they also have many practical functions, such as mutual expression of emotions, that is, "conveying emotions with songs". In labor, songs are used to express the scene of labor and the joy in the heart. In addition, folk songs are also used in sacrificial ceremonies, weddings, funerals, and medical treatment (Wang Lili, 2015). However, its multifunctionality has gradually disappeared with the development of society and the change in the lifestyle of minority people. Driven by network information technology, ethnic minority people have been assimilated into their ideas and ways of life. They have gradually shifted from believing in ghosts and gods to believe in science. Many ancient rituals are no longer held, so the music used in rituals has lost the space for survival and development in the gradually assimilated social environment (Helen Rees, 2016).

3.0 THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL POPULAR CULTURE WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF TIMES

Usually, pop culture is relative to high culture. Pop culture refers to entertainment that is widely enjoyed by ordinary people, i.e., a general way of life that ordinary people practice and follow. This popular culture has a great influence on the tradition of ethnic folk songs.

3.1 Change of Music Aesthetics

In the development of Chinese modern music history, western music culture and music education system have been introduced since 1920. Since the reform and opening up, we have further taken the initiative to connect with the world and embrace cultures from all over the world. In recent years, such trendy music as "Korean wave music" and "European and American music" has been widely spread among the public with the help of smartphones and advanced internet technology. Over the years, under the continuous influence of foreign pop music culture, the public's aesthetic ideas gradually changed. For example, contemporary young students prefer contemporary pop music that is easy to sing, energetic, and unrestrained to outdated and old ethnic folk songs. (Zhang Jing, 2021).

3.2 Lack of Recognition of Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is to interpret the meaning of the music they choose from the insider's perspective, which emphasizes the insider's self-awareness. Cultural identity makes the hidden

and invisible things visible and explicable. A scholar cited an example in his study of Jewish music: "If I tell a Mongolian who does not know that I am a Mongolian, maybe he does not believe me, all I have to do is to sing an authentic Mongolian song, and he will know that I am a Mongolian." The chant is nothing short of cultural identity. (Yang Xifan, 2018)

With the accelerated modernization of contemporary society, the social structure has undergone important changes, and national culture and traditional cultural values have been strongly impacted by individualism and market rationality. In this process, people's sense of identity and cultural consciousness of folk music has gradually weakened. (She Xiaowei, 2014) Nowadays, the ethnic folk song is one in a million. Young ethnic minority people lack the conscious awareness of self-protection of ethnic folk songs. For them, ethnic folk songs are no different from popular songs in the market. Both of them are objects that can be appreciated. Its special feature is nothing more than that the language and form have been acquainted since childhood. (Sun Guangyu, Dai Yu, 2017)

3.3 Lack of Folk Music Education: The Impact of Western Music Education System

In the macroscopic view, the present educational system adopted by our country is borrowed from the West. From the perspective of the development history of the conservatory of music, the first institution of higher music education was established in 1927 modern times—National Music Conservatory (the predecessor of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music) adopted the western music education system. Many conservatories of music that have been established since then adopted the western education system. So far, all the music schools have not treated instrumental music or vocal music of a certain nationality or a certain region as an independent musical art form. Some people even believe that ethnic minority music is a simple primary form of art and cannot be taught in the classrooms of higher arts education.

In recent years, although the status of ethnic minority music in professional music education has been gradually promoted, its importance has not fundamentally changed. In the field of music education, the basic course structure is "major courses plus basic courses". Though the major courses are mostly about ethnic minority music, the modern education mode is still adopted for the basic courses. From music theory, solfeggio, harmony, and musical form analysis to polyphony, all of them are European music theories. In other words, modern European music fundamentally negates the form, content, and cultural ecology of ethnic minority musical culture, but school music education has never stopped "homogenization". (Zhao Zhiyang, 2015)

4.0 DISCUSSION ON THE HERITAGE METHODS OF YUNNAN ETHNIC FOLK SONGS

4.1 Strengthen the Guidance of Mainstream Culture from the Official Perspective

Cultural identity is an important support to maintain social order and a form of social members' belonging. The formation of musical cultural identity requires the identification of musical historical continuity among people, which not only points to the past but also the future. (Jin Honglian, 2021) But as mentioned above, based on the history of modern music development in our country, our economy and cultural life develop rapidly since reform and opening up, as well as the western music input and the formation of the western education system in our

country, triggered the crisis of cultural identity, caused the loss and fall of the cultural value, and then affected the social harmony. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the promotion and guidance of national music culture and enhance the sense of identity of ethnic folk songs. The main body of implementation must start with the government. The protection of a culture depends on the support of the system. The government needs to introduce relevant policies and implement favorable policies to protect ethnic minority folk songs in Yunnan, stimulate the young generation of ethnic minorities to actively learn and inherit ethnic music, and make them consciously assume the responsibility of cultural inheritance. First, it is imperative to establish and improve various guarantee systems, such as incorporating them into the protection objects of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Law, as well as a series of legal protection systems for Yunnan ethnic folk songs. Secondly, the subsidy and reward mechanism for folk song inheritance and innovation talents should be established and improved. Western opera is still widely accepted in society today, which cannot do without the preservation and performance of generations of inheritors. Talents are the first resource, and the inheritance subject of folk songs is still people. Only when people are willing to inherit and innovate folk songs can they glow with permanent vitality. Meanwhile, it is necessary to introduce, encourage and reward talents who innovate in the inheritance of folk songs. Thirdly, cultural venues should be established to hold the corresponding cultural activities, so that folk song lovers and professional singers can communicate with each other to achieve the purpose of wide dissemination. Fourth, supportive funds should be raised to improve the living environment of ethnic minority areas and improve people's quality of life. For example, in 1998, the Yunnan Provincial government invested RMB 3.1 billion in the construction and improvement of residents' lives. (Chun-Shing Chow, 2005) On February 19, 2019, the "2019 Yunnan • Jinning 22nd Baofeng Spring Tune Festival" folk song activity held in Baofeng National Culture Square, Baofeng Sub-district, Jinning, Yunnan, attracted more than 40,000 audiences from the surrounding areas. Folk song activities have become a highlight of the local people's lantern festival on the 15th day of the first lunar month and have also become a local cultural brand. (Zhou Wei, 2021) Only in this way can Yunan folk songs be accepted by the public. To sum up, the economy and politics determine the development of culture. Therefore, with the guarantee of the government, culture can be further developed vigorously, and the culture of Yunnan ethnic folk songs can be inherited from generation to generation.

4.2 Encourage Talents to Inherit Folk Songs

As mentioned above, talents are the basis for the further development of folk songs. The first step of inheritance is the collection, which requires a large number of folk literature scholars and grassroots workers to collect folk songs of ethnic minorities. At the same time, the government should pay more attention to the support and training of folk song creation and inheritance talents. In addition to rewards, attention should be paid to the selection of local folk songs talents (Zhou Wei, 2021), relevant inheritors should be cultivated locally in Yunnan, especially the descendants of famous folk songs creators and singers so that the folk songs of ethnic minorities in Yunnan can be inherited in a more "original" form. Besides, external musical talents and outstanding contemporary young composers should be introduced and encouraged to integrate folk songs with advanced music culture to make folk songs glow with new luster and usher in more audience. In this way, all kinds of new and old works can be better preserved and spread through modern technological means. In recent years, the rediscovery and innovation of traditional culture have gradually attracted more and more

people's attention. The dance work "Banquet in Tang Palace" performed in the Spring Festival Gala of Henan Satellite TV to revive the music culture of the Sui and Tang Dynasties is a typical case in point. Inspired by the music and dance terracotta figures of the Sui Dynasty, the creator created the work. As soon as the work was performed on TV, it aroused relevant discussion in society. Yunnan folk songs also develop in the era of internet development. In 2013, Gong Linna performed a brand-new song "River Dripping Water", which combined the seaweed dialect of the Yi nationality in Yunnan with professional singing skills, that is, integrating bel canto singing with folk style singing. The above examples can serve as references for creators to combine old and new cultures. Also, it proves that talents are an important carrier of cultural creation and should be paid more attention to. What's more, in terms of the lyrics of Yunnan folk songs, attention can also be paid to current social hot issues and the combination of current popular terms, which is conducive to the acceptance of folk songs by young people. (Sheng Xinyuan, 2019)

4.3 Education

Yunnan areas: It is necessary to strengthen the popularization of ethnic culture and history and the guidance of mainstream culture in the Yunnan region to enhance national and cultural confidence and make the young generation spontaneously love and be proud of its ethnic music culture. In terms of the school curriculum, a talent training program should be formulated in line with the teaching of ethnic minority folk songs based on folk song development history, language features, folk style singing methods, and other aspects, and local folk artists can be recruited as mentors to teach ethnic students to learn music history and singing skills. In addition, folk song teaching should be integrated into classroom and campus cultural activities, so that ethnic minority folk songs can be internalized into the daily life of the young generation of ethnic minorities to enhance their cultural identity.

Areas outside Yunnan: The author believes that the reform of Chinese music education should be implemented in two aspects: universal music education for non-music majors and professional education for music majors. Although the "fixed and patterned" music theory system in the western music is not suitable for minority music teaching in China, the popularization of basic music knowledge is undoubtedly the most effective teaching model. For the rich minority music culture in China, it should formulate different talent training programs for different teaching objects. In popular music education, the key points of ethnic minority folk songs (emphasis on characteristics, ethnic musical instruments, and music style characteristics) should be organized and written into textbooks, and ethnic minority music and culture courses should be integrated into classroom teaching as compulsory courses. In addition, various ethnic singing and musical instrument clubs should be set up in schools to integrate ethnic minority music into students' learning and life through extracurricular practice, to enhance contemporary youth's cognition and cultural confidence in Chinese ethnic minority music culture. For music colleges, different majors should be set up according to different national instruments and folk singing methods. For example, Guizhou University set up the "Lusheng Class" in 1982, with the aim of "cultivating a new generation of music workers for Lusheng of Miao Nationality". "In order to carry forward the spirit of the National Symposium on Ethnic Art Education, the university will set up ethnic classes this year to cultivate both socialist-minded and professionally competent ethnic art talents with all-round development of morality, intelligence, and physique," the brochure reads. However, instrumental music or

vocal music of a certain nationality or region has not been treated as an independent musical art form by present music schools (Zhao Zhiyang, 2015). Moreover, for professional music colleges, the teaching should not only be limited to the singing techniques of folk songs but also pay attention to the cultivation of innovative abilities in composing techniques and singing techniques. While preserving the original flavor of folk songs, they should absorb other musical elements for integration and innovation. For example, in composer Liu Xiaogeng's ethnic choral works, he used contemporary composing techniques to rewrite ethnic folk songs, choose chorus as the creation genre, and integrated ethnic dance elements, song elements, and language elements into the same work, thus creating a music work with artistic value, aesthetic value and stage value, which was widely loved and praised by Chinese listeners. Finally, music colleges and schools also shoulder the responsibility of developing and inheriting the music culture of ethnic minorities. Music professional organizations should broaden the channels of publicity and make use of online and offline channels to hold online and offline special concerts, such as "Yi Nationality Special concert" and "Dai Nationality special concert" so that more people can know the unique precious spiritual wealth, and the cultural identity and cultural confidence of the whole nation can be gradually built up (Li Hongcai, 2020).

5.0 CONCLUSION

Yunnan minority folk songs, as an integral part of the unique music culture of all ethnic groups, are the artistic and cultural treasure of the Chinese nation. Therefore, it is of great significance to protect and inherit ethnic folk songs in the contemporary cultural tide. Through literature collection and research, the crisis of ethnic folk songs in Yunnan is attributed to two aspects: the limitations of ethnic folk songs due to their artistic characteristics, and the influence of social popular culture under the development of the times. On the one hand, the characteristics of ethnic folk songs such as regionality, dialect, improvisation, and multifunctionality hinder their development to a certain extent. On the other hand, the change in musical aesthetics, the lack of cultural identity, and the use of the western music education system have caused a fatal impact on the development of Yunnan minority folk songs. On how to inherit Yunnan ethnic folk songs, the author put forward personal views. The author holds that fundamentally speaking, the government needs to directly intervene in the inheritance of folk songs, establish and improve the system and inheritance site, attach importance to talent training, and encourage the creators and singers to create and sing folk songs. Meanwhile, the reform in the mode of music education should be carried out to improve the ethnic music and cultural literacy of the whole nation in an all-round way from both professional and non-professional levels and build the cultural confidence of the whole nation gradually. The author believes that by re-building cultural confidence and cultural identity, Yunnan ethnic folk songs will surely regain new vitality.

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