

Study on the Value and Communication Strategies of Butterfly Song in Cross-cultural Communication

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Abstract

Butterfly Song, as an important part of China's intangible cultural heritage, possesses profound cultural heritage and unique artistic value. In cross-cultural communication, Butterfly Song not only shows the charm of Yao culture, but also promotes mutual understanding and respect between different cultures. With its distinctive duet choral form, pleasant melody and simple and plain lyrics, Butterfly Song demonstrates the unique charm of music of nationality and enriches the treasure trove of world music. However, the inheritance and development of Butterfly Song are facing numerous challenges. This paper focuses on the national-level intangible cultural heritage Butterfly Song in Fuchuan Yao Autonomous County. It first studies the artistic characteristics of Butterfly Song, including the performance features and lyrics characteristics. Based on the value of Butterfly Song, it further studies the current status of its dissemination to develop effective communication strategies. It is hoped that the study will enhance cultural awareness of the local people, draw attention to the Butterfly Song and its inheritors, so that more people will be able to realize the importance of the Butterfly Song.

Keywords

Butterfly Song; Cross-cultural Communication; Inheritance and Protection.

1. Introduction

In the wave of globalization, the exchanges and interactions between different cultures have become increasingly frequent, making cross-cultural communication an important trend in contemporary cultural development worldwide. As a shared spiritual wealth of mankind, cultural exchange and dissemination can not only enhance mutual understanding and friendship among nations, but also foster cultural innovation and development. Music, as a common language that across regions, plays an irreplaceable role in cross-cultural communication with its unique artistic charm and emotional expression.

Spread in the Fuchuan Yao Nationality Autonomous County of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Butterfly Song was added to China's intangible cultural heritage list in 2008 with its unique singing style and symbolic lyrics [1]. More than a musical art form, it serves as an important carrier of local folk customs, historical legends, and cultural spirit. In addition, Butterfly Song is often closely linked to local festivals, celebrations and folk rituals, carrying the emotional sustenance and cultural memory of the local people.

However, in the process of globalization and modernization, Butterfly Song also faces many challenges. With the acceleration of urbanization and the impact of modern culture, traditional folk activities are gradually decreasing, and the inheritance and development of the Butterfly Song is facing a serious dilemma. Many excellent butterfly singers and inheritors are aging, and the younger generation's interest and participation in Butterfly Song are gradually decreasing, resulting in the risk of the inheritance of Butterfly Song. Meanwhile, due to cultural disparities

and linguistic obstacles in cross-cultural communication, the artistic value and cultural connotation of Butterfly Song have not been fully explored and displayed.

This paper takes the Butterfly Song as the research object, and discusses its value and the strategies of dissemination in cross-cultural communication. By analyzing the value and artistic characteristics of the Butterfly Song, as well as its present situation and challenges in cross-cultural communication, this paper aims to provide new ideas and methods for the inheritance and development of the Butterfly Song, and to promote the dissemination and in-depth communication of Butterfly Song in cross-cultural communication.

2. Introduction of Butterfly Song

2.1. The development of Butterfly Song

The Yao people of Fuchuan have been fond of singing since ancient times. They use songs to record things, offer sacrifices to their ancestors, and convey friendship. During the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, the cultures of different nationalities continuously integrated in social practices, giving rise to the Butterfly Song—a special duet folk song of Fuchuan Yao Nationality Autonomous County [2]. Butterfly Song is popularized in Fuyang, Gucheng, Lianshan, Baisha, and Liujia Town, Fuchuan Yao Nationality Autonomous County. It gets its name from the padding syllable “蝴的蝶” and “黄的蜂” in the lyrics [3].

It is impossible to verify when Butterfly Song began to circulate. It is known that in modern times, dating back to around the 1960s, Tang Daizhen and Tang Yucui, Yao female singers from Heishan Village, Fuchuan County, brought attention to the Butterfly Song with a pleasant song called *Welcoming Guests with Joyful Songs* (《流水欢歌迎客来》). With its distinctive national characteristics and unique rhythm form, Butterfly Song has won the popularity and praise of experts and scholars at home and abroad. It has become one of the scheduled broadcasts of the Central People's Broadcasting Station and has been included in university music textbooks by relevant art colleges.

The systematic study of Butterfly Song began in the 1980s. In 2006, the Fuchuan Yao Nationality Autonomous County government applied to Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region for the designation of Butterfly Song as an intangible cultural heritage. In 2007, Butterfly Song was included in the district level intangible cultural heritage list, and since then, Butterfly Song has been more widely recognized and concerned. In 2008, Butterfly Song was added to the state level intangible cultural heritage list. To pass on and protect Butterfly Song, the Fuchuan Yao Nationality Autonomous County government has invested more than 600,000 yuan in the construction of the base in Liantang Village. It has increased investment in the organization, inheritance, and development of Butterfly Song from various aspects such as manpower, material resources, and financial resources.

With the stepping into the digital era and the all media era, Butterfly Song has ushered in a new opportunity. In 2010, Butterfly Song represented Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in the 14th CCTV Youth Singer Television Grand Prix, where it garnered an Excellence Group Award. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, under the well organization of the professional staff of the Fuchuan County Cultural Center, Butterfly Song featured in recordings for CCTV programs including Chinese Folk Song (《中国民歌大会》), Chinese Forest Tourism Festival (《中国森林旅游节》), Charming Chinatown (《魅力中国城》), and went out on television at prime time during the National Day. In 2019, a Butterfly Song called *Welcoming Guests with Joyful Songs* (《流水欢歌迎客来》) was selected and participated in the Chinese Native Folk Song Festival performance [4]. In addition, Butterfly Song has also been popular around the world. In 2019, it was invited to participate in the cultural exchange performance of the Folk Art Festival in Slovakia, and in the same year, it participated in the tourism promotion performance of Hezhou in Singapore.

2.2. The characteristics of Butterfly Song

Since its formation, Butterfly Song has undergone the convergence and integration of diverse cultures, forming some distinctive features. Diversity: it integrates the characteristics of Han, Zhuang and Yao cultures, presenting a diversified feature. Ritualistic nature: the Yao people in Fuchuan are very fond of singing. Butterfly Song must be sung in ritual activities such as festivals, weddings, celebrations and sacrifices, reflecting its ritualistic nature. Cheerfulness: with strong rhythm and pleasant melody, Butterfly Song is filled with the Yao people's yearning and pursuit of a better life, which is relatively rare in Chinese Yao folk music. The following will analyze the artistic features of Butterfly Song from its singing and lyrics characteristics.

2.2.1. Sing characteristic

Singing is one of the essential activities of the Yao people. For thousands of years, the Yao people in Fuchuan have created rich folk songs, developed a unique singing style, and formed their own unique aesthetic taste of singing. Butterfly Song has its unique singing characteristics.

Butterfly Song is performed in a native duet choral form. This folk song has only four tones and is usually improvised by singers. Its artistic characteristics have attracted domestic and foreign artists, ethnic art enthusiasts, and tourists from all over the world. The love songs of Butterfly Song are mostly sung by singers of the same gender. Butterfly Song emphasizes harmony, so singers are required to start and end at the same time [5]. Therefore, singers who sing Butterfly Song must have a tacit agreement to work well together. Due to the similar rhythm of the two parts in Butterfly Song and the rich and varied padding syllables, singers must pronounce the lyrics quickly, accurately and clearly. Generally, the singers who sing Butterfly Song have not gone through formal and systematic learning. During the performance, one sings the main melody while the other is responsible for the harmony and accompaniment, which is also the characteristic of Butterfly Song.

2.2.2. Lyrics characteristic

Butterfly Song is a precious treasure of the folk literature of the Fuchuan Yao people. Throughout Yao civilization, their mythology, folklore, religious beliefs, moral laws, life experiences, and folk customs have been passed down orally from generation to generation through folk songs. Yao folk songs were typically improvised by Yao people during their production and labor, with few dedicated lyrics and compositions [6]. The same goes for Butterfly Song, which later began to have handwritten lyrics with the help of Chinese characters. The lyrics of Butterfly Song are mostly created by farmers with limited education, yet they possess a high level of linguistic artistry. The lyrics of Butterfly Song are mostly improvised, simple and beautiful, with a harmonious melody. There are many padding syllables such as “hú de dié” (蝴的蝶) and “dié de dié” (蝶的蝶). Butterfly Song belongs to duet choral form folk song, which is sung in a local dialect called Wuzhou dialect and mostly are love songs [7].

Butterfly Song is divided into four lines, with lyrics mostly consisting of seven words. Singers sometimes add a five word phrase after the third sentence to emphasize their main point. According to the length of the lyrics, it can be divided into two categories: short Butterfly Song and long Butterfly Song.

3. The value of Butterfly Song in cross-cultural communication

Butterfly Song functions as a living fossil of the history, culture, and folk customs of the Yao nationality. It is the basis for Yao people to establish a sound worldview, philosophy of life, and ethical values. Inheriting and protecting Butterfly Songs carries profound cultural, academic, media, and socio-economic significance.

3.1. Cultural value

President Xi Jinping emphasized that strengthening the unity of the Chinese nation is, in the long run and fundamentally, a matter of enhancing cultural identity, which is the root of national unity, the soul of national harmony, and the ideological foundation for cultivating the strong sense of community for the Chinese nation [8].

To cultivate the strong sense of community for the Chinese nation, it is necessary to deepen cultural identity, gather national strength. We should vigorously promote the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation and that of all ethnic groups. In respecting differences and embracing diversity, we should achieve the integration and harmonious development of the cultures of all ethnic groups, and form a powerful spiritual bond that makes all ethnic groups share a common fate.

The cultural identity in the dissemination of the Butterfly Song mainly manifests as cultural identity recognition and cultural symbol recognition. In the process of the dissemination of the Butterfly Song, the first step is the spread of symbols, such as the lyrics, rhythms, melody. Butterfly Song is sung in Wuzhou dialect, and its lyrics are related to different aspects of people's lives and social development, including history, hometown, emotions, customs, labor, love, and blessings [9]. The language symbols have specific historical sentiment, and in the process of using, people constantly understand and recognize these cultural symbols, which can enhance their sense of cultural identity.

3.2. Academic value

Many experts and scholars have always paid special attention to and valued folk songs. In world's music history, western multipart folk music was formed in the 9th century and reached a new peak in the 7th century. However, western multipart folk music flourished with the involvement of composers, while Chinese multipart folk music was developed by folk singers. The unique musical style of Butterfly Song was felt in the beautiful melody, rigorous structure and the distinctive music characteristics. With these advantages, it has spread far overseas, reflecting the high artistic level of our Chinese multipart folk music and fully demonstrating the intelligence and wisdom of our Chinese nation in the field of folk music. Butterfly Song is a symbol of the diversity of Yao culture, developed from the traditional social and historical culture of group living, collective labor, song based mate selection, and extramarital affairs. It holds academic value in music, literature, culture, history, and folk customs.

3.3. Socio-economic value

Culture is the soul of tourism, and tourism is the carrier of culture. The two seemingly unrelated terms, culture and tourism, are actually closely linked. The government can, through modern transformation methods, create tourism performance with strong appeal based on the Butterfly Song symbols, and transform them into tourism products and services that are favored by today's cultural tourists. Gradually, a folk song culture brand with local characteristic will be formed, thereby achieving economic and social benefits. Butterfly Song will enhance its production capacity in the process of tourism interaction, thus increasing its market competitiveness and achieving a virtuous cycle of industrial closed loop. In the process of cultural and tourism integration, the government can enrich the type and way of supply of tourism and cultural products and services to further enhance the attractiveness and influence of Butterfly Song, which is conducive to the promotion of the cultural heritage of the Butterfly Song.

4. The present situation of Butterfly Song in cross-cultural communication

The emergence of intangible culture heritage must be people carrier, and its expression must be based on objective elements such as human concepts, knowledge, skills, and living environment. Therefore, the most crucial aspect in the protection of intangible cultural heritage is the protection of the inheritors. At present, there is still a shortage of representative inheritors Butterfly Song. Since 2008, under the guidance of the county-level leadership department, the Fuchuan County Cultural Center has done a lot of work on the inheritance and protection of Butterfly Song, gradually moving towards a normalization and standardization of the development process.

4.1. Popular in class

Inheriting Butterfly Song has a positive guiding significance for education. Meanwhile, teaching students the values of Butterfly Song also promotes the inheritance and development of Butterfly Song. In 2007, Fuchuan Yao Autonomous County compiled Butterfly Song into primary and secondary school music textbooks, and carried out pilot teaching of Butterfly Song in the central school of Lianshan Town. In 2008, schools in Fuchuan Yao Autonomous County experimented with teaching materials of Butterfly Song, and encouraged young people to inherit Butterfly Song. In 2009, the teaching of Butterfly Song in relevant schools was institutionalized and standardized, and professionals were organized to conduct in-depth research on Butterfly Song. In recent years, Fuchuan Yao Autonomous County has invested about 1 million yuan annually in the protection and inheritance of local intangible cultural heritage. So far, Fuchuan Yao Autonomous County has established Butterfly Song inheritance bases in 7 schools including Daliantang Village, Heishan Village, Lianshan Middle School, and Fuchuan Yao Autonomous County Ethnic Middle School [10].

4.2. Go on screen

As early as 2010, Butterfly Song had participated in the CCTV 14th Young Singers Grand Prix on behalf of Guangxi and won the Group Excellence Award. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, under the well organization of the professional staff of the Fuchuan County Cultural Center, Butterfly Song participated in the recording of Chinese Folk Song, Chinese Forest Tourism Festival, Charming Chinatown and other programs, and went out on television at prime time during the National Day. In 2017, it participated in the recording of One on One on CCTV. In 2019, Butterfly Song was selected and participated in the Chinese Native Folk Song Festival performance. In 2019, 2020 and 2021, it has participated in the recording of CCTV programs such as Tracing Heritage, The Local Records in China, The Ocean of Music [11].

4.3. Go abroad

Butterfly songs have not only won honors domestically, but also been sung overseas. In 2019, the Fuchuan Art Troupe from Guangxi, China was invited to participate in the 29th Folklore Year Art Festival in Slovakia. The Fuchuan local band achieves a mix of Chinese and Western instruments, and also incorporates the living scenes of the Yao people, showcasing Yao culture from different perspectives. In addition, they also sang with Czech singers on the spot, fully demonstrating the strong inclusiveness of our national culture. In the same year, Ou Yumei and Li Manfeng, the representative inheritors of the Butterfly Song, went to Singapore to participate in the Hezhou tourism promotion performance. These activities not only show the artistic charm of Butterfly Song, but also promote mutual understanding and respect between different cultures.

5. The challenges and strategies of Butterfly Song in cross-cultural communication

The protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities are generally in a weak state. In recent years, although efforts to protect and pass on the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities have been gradually strengthened from the central to local levels, it is still have a long way to go. As a unique intangible cultural heritage of the Yao people, Butterfly Song is not only a historical proof of their self identification, but also the foundation and source for the development of their excellent traditional culture. It bears the dual responsibility of maintaining the uniqueness of Yao culture and preserving the diversity of national culture. It is the most precious national cultural wealth of the Yao ethnic group and an important component of the cultural heritage of the Chinese nation. There will be various problems in the development and protection of Butterfly Song. In order to protect the butterfly song and prevent this traditional culture from disappearing in the society, the dissemination and development of the Butterfly Song is an issue worthy of consideration.

5.1. Challenges

With the development of society and globalization, the inheritance and development of Butterfly Song has encountered unprecedented challenges, such as language and cultural barriers, the decrease of transmission carriers, and the impact of modern culture.

5.1.1. Language and cultural barriers

One of the major features of Butterfly Song is that it is sung in Wuzhou dialect. With the integration of ethnic groups and the loss of dialects, fewer people can understand and speak Wuzhou dialect. For people from other language backgrounds, it is difficult to understand the lyrics, which has become a dilemma for the development of Butterfly Song. In addition, Butterfly Song is rich in historical and cultural traditions, customs, and emotion of the Yao ethnic group. For people who are not familiar with Yao culture, it is difficult to fully understand these cultural connotations.

5.1.2. The reduction of disseminator

The traditional music of the Chinese nation is not preserved in the form of musical scores, it is passed down orally among the people. Nowadays, many young people go out to work for a living, or lack of interest in folk music, the transmission carriers of Butterfly Song have become less and less, and even in danger of dying out.

5.1.3. The impact of modern culture

With the swift development of the society, there are also many new challenges for music. As the society is developing constantly and the impact of foreign cultures, the aesthetic standards of young people are also changing. Most of the younger generation nowadays are no longer enthusiastic about folk songs such as butterfly songs, but are enthusiastic about popular songs. Traditional music is rarely popular with young people. When ethnic music lacks recognition, and is gradually forgotten by people, it will be a dilemma on the verge of disappearance. Due to the lack of young successors to participate in protection work, the inheritance of Butterfly Song has become increasingly difficult.

5.2. Strategies

For cultural inheritance, the most important thing is that someone knows it, uses it, and learns it. The inheritance and protection of intangible cultural heritage Butterfly Song requires the joint efforts of individuals, governments, society.

5.2.1. Cultivating cultural awareness and cultural confidence

The people are the creators, inheritors and protectors of the intangible cultural heritage. Without the participation of the people in the protection of Butterfly Song, no matter how attractive the idea is, it will be a dead letter. Therefore, the protection of the butterfly song is not only the responsibility of some departments and some people, an important mission for the whole society to participate in. The local government and ministry of culture and tourism should pay emphasis on cultivating local people's awareness of their own ethnic culture, understanding of the Yao culture, and building up their cultural self-confidence. They can compile manuals on local Yao culture, the cultural connotation, cultural value, music characteristics of Butterfly Song, and distribute it to people. In this way, people will have a comprehensive understanding of Butterfly Song, understand the importance of protecting Butterfly Song, and create a culture of protecting Butterfly Song in the town or even the whole district. Everyone should take pride in having such a rich and diverse cultural heritage locally, and consciously cherish it.

5.2.2. Using modern scientific technology

With the popularity of the Internet, the development of 5G technology and the arrival of the We Media era, the dissemination of Butterfly Song has ushered in unprecedented opportunities. We can utilize artificial intelligence, virtual reality technology, augmented reality technology, and mixed reality technology to reshape the original environment of Butterfly Song and provide an immersive experience for network users. Through new media platforms such as Tik Tok(Douyin), Kuaishou, Micro-blog(Weibo) , Wechat and Study and Strengthen the Country, the history and culture of Butterfly Song can be disseminated to the world. Festivals and folk activities can also be broadcast through the we-media platforms, making every viewer a disseminator and participant in the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage.

5.2.3. Fusing tradition and innovation

As a folk intangible culture, Butterfly Song has been deeply loved by the people and valued and protected by the government. However, the contradiction between inheritance and innovation has never been completely settled. To inherit and develop these traditional folk songs, modern elements should be integrated instead of blindly rejecting and remaining stagnant. The development and innovation of traditional folk songs require take modern culture and art into consideration, so as to preserve tradition in reform. The creative transformation of traditional folk songs is to reorganize the cultural form and the excellent traditional ideas, values, and behavioral patterns of ethnic minorities with modern culture, so as to integrate traditional folk music into modern culture.

5.2.4. Cultivating inheritor

The people are the creators of history and wealth, and they also share its fruits. Due to the peculiarity of intangible cultural heritage, it must be disseminated by the inheritors. It is important to establish and improve mechanisms related to inheritors of intangible cultural heritage. In the inheritance genealogy, it can be seen that the current inheritors have tended towards aging and feminization. If this goes on, it will be difficult to maintain the original ecology of Butterfly Song. The government should increase economic support, establish incentive mechanisms and encourage more boys to participate in the inheritance of Butterfly Song. The government can consider building an ecological cultural tourism base, creating employment opportunities, so that the inheritors of Butterfly Song can receive some material security, and aware of the spiritual and material value that Butterfly Song can bring, which can enhance their cultural subjectivity, and guide them to join the protection of intangible cultural heritage.

6. Conclusion

Butterfly Song, as a traditional folk culture, is a reflection of the profound cultural heritage of the Yao people. It is a product that has been preserved in the long-term practice of the Yao people, a crystallization of their wisdom, and also a way for the Yao people to entertain and express their thoughts. In this paper, we have deeply discussed the value and dissemination strategies of Butterfly Song in cross-cultural communication. Through a comprehensive analysis of the artistic characteristics and present situation of Butterfly Song, we have drawn a series of valuable conclusions and inspirations.

Butterfly Song is not only a form of music, but also a carrier of culture. It contains rich historical information, national traditions and regional characteristics, reflecting the lifestyle, emotional expression and values of local people. Its unique lyrics and singing form provide a vivid and specific cultural symbol for cross-cultural communication, allowing people with different cultural backgrounds can feel each other's cultural charm through the music. It has rich cultural value, academic value, media value, and socio-economic value.

In terms of communication strategies, we have proposed various innovative methods to adapt to the communication environment of modern society. First, the use of modern media technologies, such as the Internet, social media and digital platforms, which can effectively expand the spread of Butterfly Song and attract more attention from the younger generation. Secondly, cultivating people's cultural awareness and confidence, such as compiling manuals on local Yao culture, cultural connotations, musical characteristics and cultural values of Butterfly Song, and distributing them to people. In addition, reorganizing folk songs with modern culture to integrate traditional folk music into modern culture. Finally, strengthening the training and protection of inheritors to ensure the inheritance and development of Butterfly Song is also a key factor in achieving effective dissemination.

Butterfly Song plays an important role in cross-cultural communication. It can bridge linguistic and cultural barriers and promote mutual understanding and respect between different cultures. Through the spread of Butterfly Song, people from different countries and regions can better understand and appreciate each other's cultural traditions, and enhance friendship and cooperation between each other, which not only enrich the diversity of world cultures, but also provide new impetus and opportunities for the common development of human civilization.

We believe that with the continuous research and practice, Butterfly Song will shine more brightly on the stage of global cultural exchanges and become an important bond connecting different cultures and promoting harmonious coexistence of mankind.

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