

The String Song Will Not Drop Out — The "New Business Card" of Xihe Opera Increases the Colourful Rural Revitalization

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ABSTRACT

With the development of rural revitalization strategy, the protection and innovation of traditional culture have become an important hand in promoting rural revitalization. Taking Xihe Opera in Xingzi County of Jiangxi Province as an example, this paper discusses the interactive relationship between intangible cultural heritage and rural revitalization. This paper expounds the historical origin and artistic characteristics of Xihe opera, analyzes its positive contributions in enriching rural cultural life, promoting the construction of township civilization, promoting the integration of culture and tourism, and driving the increase of economic income, reveals the important value of its national intangible cultural heritage for rural revitalization, and puts forward corresponding solutions to the problems in the process of development, so as to provide beneficial cultural development ideas and practical references for rural revitalization.

Keywords: Xihe opera, Rural revitalization, Intangible cultural heritage, Live state inheritance, Digital protection, Cultural inheritance, Cultural and brigade fusion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The strategy of rural revitalization is the inevitable requirement of solving the main social contradictions in the new era, realizing the goal of "two hundred years" and promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In 2018, the Central Committee put forward the general requirement of "industrial prosperity, ecological livability, township civilization, effective governance and rich living," emphasizing that cultural revitalization is the soul of rural revitalization. In the great journey of rural rejuvenation, cultural rejuvenation is an important cornerstone to provide spiritual impetus and intellectual support for rural development. Xihe opera, a traditional opera popular in Xingzi, Dean and Jiujiang counties of Jiangxi Province, was listed in the third batch of national intangible cultural heritage list in 2011, carrying rich historical and cultural connotation and unique artistic charm. As a national intangible cultural heritage, Xihe opera carries the gene of Hill culture in northern Jiangxi and has the potential to activate

rural cultural ecology. Under the background of the new era, Xihe opera is integrating into the wave of rural revitalization in its unique way, which plays an active role in rural cultural prosperity, economic development and social progress.

2. HISTORICAL ORIGIN AND ARTISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF XIEHE OPERA

2.1 Historical Origin

The history of Xihe opera can be traced back to the Qing Dynasty during the Qianlong reign, the Nanchang area in the lower reaches of Ganjiang River and the "Xihe" basin in the main tributary of Ganjiang River, Yiyang cavity, Yihuang cavity, Qingyang cavity and Hubei Han opera. During the Jiaqing reign of the Qing Dynasty, all cavities converged, forming chaos in Nanchang, with wide influence. During the Guangyen reign of the Qing Dynasty, famous artist Tang Dale organized the Tang family opera class in his hometown of Tangjiaban, rehearsed the yellow skin opera, then

went to the Xingzi teaching opera, set up the first playing chamber opera class in Xingzi County, and performed more than 30 plays. In 1874, Xingzi Artist Zhou Zixiu was appointed as the leader of the class, and the class was named "Qingyang Princess Xingyi Yi and Class", abbreviated as "Yi and Class". At this time, Yi and Class had abundant performances and performed frequently in Xingzi's local and surrounding areas. Since then, a large number of artists such as Liu Guoyuan, Tang Zaishu, Wanzheng Bang and so on returned from other places to join the Yihe class, bringing new drama and singing reformation, making the Xihe opera art greatly enriched. Taking the clan opera class as the carrier, the special regulations of "passing men and not women" are formed through oral communication and heart teaching. At present, there are more than 200 kinds of traditional plays, which are dominated by historical romance and folk legends. In 1910, the Yihe class was divided into two classes: The south and the north. In the heyday, many artists won the prize and were listed. In the course of development, although Xihe opera experienced the difficult twists and turns during the War of Resistance Against Japan and the War of Liberation, the activities were restricted and even faced difficulties, but after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the rural amateur performances flourished, and Xihe opera recovered and developed, becoming an important part of the cultural life in the countryside.

2.2 Artistic Features

2.2.1 Sound Cavity and Music Characteristics

Xihe opera main sound cavity is skin yellow, also known as "play cavity opera", at the same time there is Qingyang high cavity, fishing songs, folk minor, etc. Its melody is exuberant, thick and simple, singing as a plate body, with the west skin and the second yellow as the basic tone, with a flexible plate body, such as guide board, slow board, fast board, loose board, etc. The dragging cavity is relatively short, and there are lining characters in the middle. The singing words are mostly seven-character sentences and ten fields, which are divided into three types with the voice of "Shen, Dan and Jing." The unique sound cavity and melody have regional characteristics and can express rich emotions.

2.2.2 Lines and Performances

The lines read the local slang, used the Gan (Xingzi dialect) singing, the language is witty and lively, close to the people's life, the local charm is strong, so that the audience is easy to understand and produce resonance. The style of performance is simple and exaggerated. The action of "Struggle Hand" in martial arts is vigorous and graceful. The antiquity of costume accords with the historical characteristics of opera, which further strengthens the artistic appeal of performance.

2.2.3 Drama Content

Most dramas are historical robes with dramas, mostly from historical stories, concentrated in the Three Kingdoms, Sui and Tang Dynasties, Song Dynasties and other dynasties. Traditional dramas are mostly from historical romance and folklore such as "Three Kingdoms", "Water Margin", "Yang Jiagang", etc. Part of the play reflects the country life, language humor, the plot is popular, such as "Cherry", "Waterbook", etc., and is deeply loved by farmers. Part of the drama is integrated into the blessing of exorcism, and the performance is often combined with the folk sacrifice activities. The content of Xihe opera advocates loyalty, righteousness, honesty and filial piety. The traditional values of the Chinese nation are transmitted through the opera performance, which has a subtle educational effect on the audience.

3. ROLE OF XIHE OPERA IN RURAL CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION

3.1 Enriching Rural Cultural Life

In rural areas, cultural and recreational activities are relatively scarce, and the existence of Xihe opera provides villagers with rich and colorful cultural enjoyment. The annual festival, temple fair, happy events, etc., the countryside will employ theatre classes to sing Xihe opera, becoming an important local cultural activity. Villagers support the old and young, gathering in front of the stage, and are immersed in the wonderful performance of the opera. The performance of the Xihe opera not only brings joy and relaxation to the villagers, but also breaks the monotonous life of the village and made the villagers have spiritual support while working. For example, in Jiaotang Town of Lushan City, many performances of Xihe drama are organized every year to attract villagers from surrounding villages to watch, forming a lively

cultural atmosphere and becoming a bright cultural landscape in rural cultural life.

3.2 Inheriting and Carrying Forward Traditional Culture

As a national-level intangible cultural heritage, Xihe opera carries rich historical and cultural information and regional cultural characteristics, and is an important carrier of traditional culture. Through the way of oral transmission, the skills and the plays of Xihe drama are transmitted from generation to generation in the countryside, so that the descendants can understand and feel the wisdom and the cultural tradition of the ancestors. The historical stories, characters and traditional values in the drama, such as loyalty, patriotism, honesty and friendship, will help to inherit and carry forward the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation and enhance the villagers' sense of cultural identity and national pride. For example, in some villages, the old artists will teach the young generation the singing, performing skills and drama knowledge of Xihe opera, and cultivate a group of young inheritors who love Xihe opera, so that this traditional culture can be continued and developed.

3.3 Promoting the Construction of Rural Civilization

Good rural civilization is the important content of rural revitalization. The moral concept and value orientation propagandized by Xihe Opera have a positive effect on promoting the construction of township civilization. The positive characters and deeds in the drama set up a moral example for villagers and guide them to set up correct values and behavioral standards. At the same time, the performances of Xihe drama are usually participated by the whole village, which strengthens the communication and interaction between villagers and promotes the harmony of neighbourhood relations. During the performance, the villagers obey the order, helping each other, displaying a good spirit, and helping form a civilized and harmonious countryside. For example, in Zerquan Township, a communist city of Qinghai, the content of changing customs and preventing drowning has been reorganized into Xihe opera, which has been propagandized to the villagers in the form of opera performance and achieved good social effects and promoted the construction of township civilization.

4. INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF XIHE OPERA AND RURAL CULTURE BRIGADE

4.1 Creating Rural Cultural Tourism Brand

The combination of Xihe opera and rural tourism can create a unique cultural charm of rural cultural tourism brand. Taking Jiaotang Town of Lushan City as an example, the planning and construction of Xihe Opera Town was started with the theme of non-heritage exhibition of Xihe Opera, and the reconstruction and upgrading of opera gate building and the construction of Xihe Opera Cultural Square, People's Opera Stage and Opera Gallery were completed. These cultural facilities combine with the surrounding natural scenery and countryside to form attractive tourism landscape. Tourists come here to not only enjoy the performance of Xihe opera, but also experience the tranquility and simplicity of the countryside, experience the life of the countryside, taste the delicious food of the farmers, and realize the deep integration of culture and tourism. For example, every holiday, Xihe opera town will attract a large number of tourists to visit tourism, to watch Xihe opera performance, driving the development of local tourism.

4.2 Promoting the Development of Culture and Tourism Industry

The integration of culture and tourism of Xihe opera can drive the development of a series of related industries and promote the growth of rural economy. With the increase of tourists, catering, accommodation, agricultural sales and other industries welcome opportunities. Local villagers can increase their incomes by offering farm and household entertainment, residential accommodation and selling special agricultural products. Meanwhile, the costumes, props and musical instruments required for the performance of Xihe opera can also drive the development of the local handicraft industry. For example, in some villages, the handicrafts made by villagers with the characteristics of Xihe opera, such as Facebook and costumes, are loved by tourists and become tourist souvenirs, bringing extra economic income to villagers. In Lushan Scenic Spot including Xiufeng, Bailu Cave Academy and other popular scenic spots, normal performance venue of Xihe opera have been set up, the "daytime landscape, night

opera" tourism route has been design, and the stay of tourists has been extend. The local make use of Lushan Ancient Village or historical buildings to build a live theatre, and combine classic plays such as "Three Kingdoms" and "Yang Jiagang" with local historical scenes, so as to enhance tourists' sense of substitution. In addition, the development of culture and travel industry can also attract migrant workers to return home to start a business and inject new vitality into rural development. Through the path of "culture-enabled tourism, tourism feeds back to culture", it can not only activate the local culture and travel economy, but also realize the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage.

4.3 Enhancing Rural Visibility and Influence

Developing the integration industry of Xihe opera and rural culture and tourism can improve the popularity and influence of the countryside, cooperate with the non-heritage projects such as Qingyang cavity and Hukou grass dragon in Jiujiang, launch the "North Jiangxi non-heritage tour," and share the source of tourists and propaganda resources. With the help of Internet, social media and other platforms, the promotion of Xihe opera and rural tourism has been expanding, attracting more people to pay attention to the countryside. For example, select typical villages (such as the birthplace of Xihe opera or the ancient village with good preservation), repair traditional theatre, ancient houses, arrange opera frescoes, facebook sculpture, etc., to form an immersive cultural space of "one step one rhyme." Cultivate local villagers (such as young actors and handicraftsmen) to become shaky/fast-handed, release interesting content such as "Xihe Opera Background Daily" and "Village Changguang Gaochang", and mold the "Opera Countryside". Some villages became an internet-famous site because of the Xihe drama, attracted tourists from all over the country to experience. For example, the drama is transformed from a stage performance into a rural cultural symbol that can be experienced, disseminated and consumed. Through "scene construction + villagers' participation + new media communication + regional linkage", it can not only attract foreign tourists, but also enhance the confidence of local culture, finally realize the virtuous circle of "drama Xing Village," and make the traditional art become the "soft power" engine of rural revitalization.

5. XIHE OPERA HELPS INCREASE RURAL ECONOMIC INCOME

5.1 Promoting Employment and Entrepreneurship

The development of Xihe opera provides many opportunities for rural employment and entrepreneurship. In the performance, actors, bands, stage workers are in demand, providing job opportunities for local villagers with a background in opera. At the same time, the development of cultural and tourism industry also needs tour guides, catering service personnel, residential operators and so on. For example, in some villages, villagers become Xihe opera actors after training, not only achieve employment at home, but also inherited the traditional culture. In addition, some villagers who have business-minded grasped the opportunity of cultural and tourism development, set up peasant-family recreation and residential accommodation, realized independent entrepreneurship, and promoted the growth of family income.

5.2 Increasing Villagers' Income

With the integration of Xihe opera and culture and travel industry, villagers' income sources have been diversified. Besides traditional agricultural income, performance income, tourism service income and agricultural product sales income have become new income growth points for villagers. For example, in the high season, actors can get a certain reward by participating in Xihe opera. Farming and residential management, let the villagers share the dividends of tourism development; Tourists' love of local agricultural products also makes the sales of agricultural products increase, prices rise, bring more economic benefits to the villagers.

6. CHALLENGES AND COUNTERMEASURES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF XIHE OPERA

6.1 Challenges

6.1.1 Talent Fault

With the development of society, young people's interest in traditional culture is relatively low, and fewer and fewer young people are willing to study Xihe opera, which leads to the fault of talent inheritance of Xihe opera. Older artists are

getting older and older, with an average age of 62 and fewer than 5% under 30, and some skills are at risk of being lost.

6.1.2 *Market Shrinkage*

The popularization of new cultural forms such as film, television and network has brought great impact on Xihe opera, and the audience is gradually reduced and the performance market is shrinking. The traditional performance mode is difficult to meet the needs of modern audiences, the attraction of Xihe opera decreases, and there is a gap between traditional plays and modern aesthetics. Industrial integration is shallow, cultural and tourism projects are homogenous, and cultural added value is low.

6.1.3 *Shortage of Funds*

The inheritance and development of Xihe opera needs financial support, including actor training, drama creation, performance equipment update, site construction and other aspects. However, at present, the funds in rural areas are limited and lack of sufficient funds, which restricts the development of Xihe opera.

6.2 *Countermeasures and Suggestions*

6.2.1 *Strengthening the Talent Cultivation*

The government and relevant departments should strengthen the support for the talent cultivation of Xihe opera, and cultivate the young generation's interest and love of Xihe opera by setting up the interest class of Xihe opera in schools and holding training courses. At the same time, it is necessary to improve the treatment and social status of Xihe opera artists, and attract more people to engage in the inheritance of Xihe opera.

6.2.2 *Innovating Performance Form*

In combination with the needs and aesthetic characteristics of modern audiences, there is a must to innovate the performance form of Xihe opera and set up a cross-field creative team, such as using modern technology to create immersive performance scenes, combining Xihe opera with modern music, dance and other artistic forms, and launching a new theme of rural revitalization new drama and performance forms to enhance the appeal and appeal of Xihe opera.

6.2.3 *Widening the Source of Funds*

The government should increase its investment in the inheritance and development of Xihe opera, include the inheritance of opera in the assessment standards of village cadres, and set up a special support fund to support the protection, inheritance and development of Xihe opera. At the same time, encourage social capital to participate in the development of Xihe opera industry, and broaden the sources and channels of funds through cooperation and investment. In addition, we can attract sponsors and advertisers by holding cultural activities and performing competitions to increase capital income.

7. CONCLUSION

As a national intangible cultural heritage, Xihe Opera plays an irreplaceable and important role in rural revitalization. It is not the "background board" of rural revitalization, but the "active factor" that drives development. It not only enriches the rural cultural life, inherits and promotes the traditional culture, promotes the township civilization construction, but also increases the rural economic income and the rural industrial structure adjustment through the integration development with the rural culture and tourism. However, the development of Xihe opera also faces the challenges of talent fault, market shrinkage and fund shortage. In order to enable Xihe Opera to play a continuous role in rural revitalization, it is necessary for the government, society and rural parties to make joint efforts to strengthen talent training, innovate performance forms, broaden the source of funds, protect and inherit this precious cultural heritage, so that Xihe Opera will show new vitality in the new era, add colorful assistance to rural revitalization, and realize the win-win situation of cultural inheritance and rural development.

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