

ABSTRACT

Title: Present Situation And Revival Of Traditional Chinese Opera In Rural Areas' Modernization Process --- A Case Study On Henan Province

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This study aims to describe the decline and revival of traditional Chinese opera in the modernization process of rural China, to discover the factors for its changes and to discuss its inheritance issue. In order to achieve the research objectives, a case study on Henan opera was conducted in Henan province where two counties and villages were selected to do the survey and interviews.

Based on the analysis on the collected data, the decline of traditional Chinese opera was confirmed. Contrasted with the situation before 1990, the number of the troupes and performers has shrunk dramatically in rural areas. The audience declined, and the age group was more concentrated in the elderly. The potential successor of traditional opera industry is worrying and ordinary people do not think learning or engaging in this enterprise is a good choice. In general, traditional opera is much less important and influential in people's lives in rural areas. The declining significance mainly comes from the change of external social environment. Compared with China's traditional agricultural society in the past, more than 70% of the working population aged 20-55 in the modern countryside have chosen to leave their hometown to make a living in larger cities. The invasion of modern culture and entertainment industry has almost completely changed the content and ways of cultural entertainment of farmers.

From the perspective of traditional Chinese opera itself, the past opera innovations

have proved that its strong ancient cultural genes and its classic core make it difficult to adapt to the modern society by making proper changes. In this sense, its decline in modern China is inevitable.

However, it is found from the investigation of this study that in some rural areas of Henan province, due to the combined effect of many factors, such as local traditional folk fair, influential individuals, non-governmental organizations, combination with cultural tourism, government's attention and reasonable guidance, traditional opera shows a trend of revival in rural areas.

Xuchang County is one of the two main case study sites. In the past ten years, remarkable cultural phenomena have taken place in Xingyuanpu village, such as the villagers' spontaneously shooting of opera films, the villagers' establishment of folk opera art troupe, and the self-written, self-directed and self-performed operas. Opera culture here showed a strong revival after a short downward slide of the situation. The coexistence of multiple forms of opera transmission formed by the combination of modern and traditional opera is one of the remarkable phenomena in the opera practice in this village.

Compared with Xuchang County, the investigation in Xun County showed us a more traditional view of opera. Here, opera performance follows the stage tradition that has been abided for hundreds of years. Opera traditions did not fade their power or charm. On the contrary, they are being interpreted by the local people in a new sense. The main reason opera performances flourished in Xun County over the years is that the local area has two regional advantages. One is the 'Xun County Ancient Temple Fair'. Another advantage is that the county has preserved diverse forms of folk art, such as stilt, bamboo horse, back pavilion, land boat, and other folk acrobatic performances. There is a firm and unbreakable symbiotic relationship between traditional Chinese opera and these folk arts.

Based on the investigation and analysis of the present situation of traditional Chinese opera, this study further discussed how to inherit the opera in modern countryside. The inheritance of traditional Chinese opera in rural areas should follow its own characteristics, pay attention to the protection and inheritance of its core cultural and artistic values, and avoid excessive consumption and inappropriate modernization reform. Practitioners should explore local superior resources, actively develop traditional opera tourism and broaden the channel of opera transmission. In addition, the government culture and education departments should introduce effective policies and measures to support the enterprise of traditional opera, opera troupes and practitioners by means of providing financial support, accelerating the infrastructure construction of rural community theaters, conducting classified management according to different current situations of opera types and promoting traditional opera in the context of the basic education to cultivate successors for the opera.

From the theoretical perspective, this research comprehensively uses the multi-disciplinary theories and perspectives of sociology, history, theatre and media. It is an example of interdisciplinary comprehensive research. From a practical angle, this study can help people to have a more comprehensive understanding of traditional opera culture and the artistic value of opera, so as to facilitate the promotion of it in China. In addition, from the perspective of cultural heritage inheritance, the practices and Suggestions drawn from this study may provide some reference value for relevant decision makers.

This study may have some innovations in three points. Firstly, as mentioned above, this study comprehensively applies theories from multiple disciplines to study a complex issue. Compared with the thinking of single dimension, the comprehensive application of the multi-disciplinary theory has made some innovations in the research scope. Secondly, the model of nested case study from whole to part established in the process of data collection makes some innovation. In addition, the concept of the core cultural value of traditional Chinese opera proposed in this study is original. This

concept may present important reference significance for the inheritance and development of traditional opera culture in today's society as well as the future.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese opera, modernization process, decline, revival, inheritance