

Research on Public Participation in Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection in Ethnic Minority Areas

-- Based on Italian Model

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Abstract: At present, public participation has become an important foundation for cultural heritage conservation, inheritance and sustainable development. The practice of cultural heritage conservation in Italy proves that successful heritage conservation must give full play to the power of the people and rely on extensive public participation. This paper analyzes the necessity of public participation in cultural heritage conservation in minority areas and examines the implications of the Italian model of "public participation" for the conservation of the intangible cultural heritage in minority areas in China. Conclusions: to enhance conservation awareness by leveraging folk power; to introduce social capital and establish incentive mechanisms; to cultivate inheritance talents and improve the art echelon; to create a conservation atmosphere with digital empowerment; and to revitalize the intangible cultural heritage and enhance interactive experiences.

Keywords: Ethnic minority regions, Public participation, Intangible cultural heritage, Conservation; Italian model.

1. Introduction

Cultural heritage is an important witness of a nation's long history, carrying a special channel of contact and communication with its ancestors, and is of high value in history, culture, science and art, and is a non-renewable and valuable resource. It plays an important role in fostering national cohesion, promoting national economic and social development, and satisfying people's cognitive upgrades. The protection of cultural heritage is to protect the historical lineage of the nation, to protect the cultural roots for the sustainable and healthy development of society, and to construct a cultural consensus and way of life for the harmonious development of multiple cultures and the reshaping of the national spirit. The Interim Measures for the Declaration and Evaluation of Representative Works of National Intangible Cultural Heritage issued in 2005 clearly defines intangible cultural heritage, which refers to various traditional cultural expressions inherited by people of all ethnic groups for generations and closely related to the life of the masses, such as folklore activities, performing arts, traditional knowledge and skills, as well as the apparatus, objects and handicrafts related to them [1].

As of 2022, China has 43 items on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List (Roster), ranking first in the world, of which 15 items belong to minority cultures. The State Council has announced five batches of national intangible cultural heritage projects in 2006, 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2021, with a total of 1,557 national intangible cultural heritage representative projects, of which 617 are national intangible cultural heritage projects of ethnic minorities [2]. Minority culture is an important part of Chinese culture, reflecting the style and historical life of minority groups and having distinctive ethnic characteristics. It can be seen that the intangible cultural heritage culture of ethnic minorities occupies an important position in the traditional Chinese culture.

2. Research on the Public and Public Participation in Cultural Heritage Conservation

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereinafter referred to as "the Convention") was adopted at the 32nd session of the General Conference of UNESCO in October 2003. "Article 15 of Chapter III of the Convention explicitly stipulates that: "In carrying out activities for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, States Parties shall endeavor to ensure the maximum participation of the communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals that create, perpetuate and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively participate in the management thereof [3]."

X. Chen, J. Chen et al. (2008) considered that the public in the broad sense refers to various subjects other than the government, including inheritors, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, community masses and individuals directly involved in intangible cultural heritage projects, and the public in the narrow sense refers to the social masses [4]. Y.S. Ruan, F. Ding (2006) believed that public participation is a new direction of modern urban management and a symbol of social democracy. The intervention of folk forces is a new impetus to promote heritage protection [5]. It can not only alleviate the shortage of government funds and manpower, but also help to improve the public's understanding and recognition of cultural heritage. C.H. Wang (2021) studied the institutional system of public participation in cultural heritage conservation in Singapore and made suggestions for shaping a city with collective memory, regional characteristics, and national identity through the preservation and living of urban history and culture [6]. X. Wang, W.Y. Zhang (2022) studied public participation in cultural heritage conservation in rural areas, taking Maojiaping Village of Tianshui City in Gansu Province as an example, and proposed a popular model of "public

archaeology and cultural heritage conservation" [7].

In some countries and regions, public participation has become increasingly influential in administrative legislation, policy making, and environmental protection as an important means of regulating market imbalances and policy failures. Public participation in the protection of intangible cultural heritage means that the government should strive to ensure that individuals, legal persons and other social organizations enjoy the maximum right to know, participate and supervise in the protection of intangible cultural heritage, and absorb them to actively participate in the relevant management. Public participation in the protection of intangible cultural heritage is the key to the sustainable protection and development of historical and cultural heritage.

3. The Necessity of Public Participation in Cultural Heritage Protection in Minority Areas

C. Zhang (2019) believed that the protection of cultural heritage in China's ethnic minority areas is similar to that of most international cultural heritage protection, which is mainly based on government and relevant institutions, supplemented by social participation. The public's participation in the protection of intangible cultural heritage has attracted more and more attention from domestic and foreign academic circles and heritage practitioners [8]. Public participation in the protection of the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities means that residents can directly participate in the protection of the cultural tradition of the nation, and inherit and carry forward the national culture in the protection.

3.1. To improve protection awareness, inherit national cultural heritage

Despite the rising standard of education in ethnic minority areas, there are still some areas where it is difficult to attend school and where information is not well disseminated. Some ethnic minority areas are remote, economically backward and have a low level of knowledge. Ethnic minority people are constrained by their literacy level, and their awareness of cultural heritage protection is relatively weak. The cultural heritage of the ethnic minorities themselves is the essence of the culture left behind by the ethnic minorities in the course of their development and is closely related to their production and life, and a complete traditional culture can be seen continuing in the ethnic villages. Ethnic minority compatriots can directly participate in the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage in their daily production and life, and raise their awareness of the protection of their own ethnic culture.

3.2. To play the local advantages, show the characteristics of national culture

Intangible cultural heritage is the essence of the continuation and inheritance of national traditional culture for ethnic minorities. In protecting their own national culture, ethnic minorities themselves have a great advantage, because only the people of the nation can truly understand the true meaning of traditional culture. Minority people directly participate in the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage culture, which can better give the connotation of national traditional culture. Therefore, public

participation in the protection and inheritance of traditional culture is the necessity of the integration of traditional culture and modern culture, and is an important means to show the authenticity of our national culture.

3.3. To excavate the cultural essence, promote the transmission of national culture

Some ethnic minorities only have languages but no characters, and some languages are complete but only be used by their own ethnic groups, with a narrow popularity. Many intangible cultural heritage projects often adopt the way of oral transmission and mentoring, which has great limitations in inheritance. Since the beginning of the 21st century, many traditional ethnic villages have become history, and along with them, the ancient customs and sparkling cultural heritage have disappeared. The local government should formulate a cultural protection system for intangible cultural heritage, take measures to attract young migrant workers to return and work in corresponding positions, encourage the public (especially young people) to actively participate in the management and protection of their own folk culture, and create vitality for cultural inheritance and protection. As local people who have been contaminated by the intangible cultural heritage of their own nation, they can refine the essence of their own culture and spread traditional culture.

4. Interpreting the Italian Model of Public Participation in Cultural Heritage Conservation

Italy is a country with a long history and multicultural coexistence, which has retained a large number of rich cultural heritage. As of July 2021, Italy has a total of 58 cultural heritages, which have been approved by UNESCO to be included in the World Heritage List, including 53 cultural heritages (including 5 transnational cultural heritages), ranking first in the number of world cultural heritages. As of 2022, the Italian Republic has 17 items of intangible cultural heritage inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List (Roster).

The Italian government has invested a great deal of effort in the protection of cultural heritage and has developed a proven method of conservation. After years of exploration, Italy has gradually developed a vertical management model with four levels of management: central, regional, provincial and municipal. The core content of the 'Italian heritage protection model' is 'public participation', that is, to achieve extensive public participation in heritage protection, and to use cultural heritage to carry out education and activities is the purpose of Italian heritage protection. The advanced conservation measures of Italy have contributed to the unique cultural atmosphere that still emanates from Italy's cultural heritage today.

4.1. Emphasis on cultural heritage education to motivate people to protect their heritage

The Italian government attaches great importance to education on cultural heritage, which is used to raise public awareness of heritage conservation and to mobilize public participation in heritage conservation. In order to maximise the benefits of heritage, the Italian government has taken a number of measures to create an environment and atmosphere in which "everyone knows about the heritages and everyone

cares for them". The government implements a preferential ticket policy for heritage sites, organizes regular visits for students, and actively plans various forms of publicity and promotion of cultural relics to increase public participation.

Since 1997, the Italian government has been celebrating "Culture and Heritage Week" in the last week of May every year, opening all national cultural and natural heritage sites to the public freely and encouraging people to visit. Hundreds of historic sites in 150 cities across the country, which are normally closed to the public are open to the public. Every year during this period, the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage organizes hundreds of activities related to history and culture through various forms, aiming to enrich young people's knowledge of history and improve their artistic accomplishment.

4.2. Focus on the construction of laws and regulations to enhance public participation in heritage conservation

In Italy, a law passed in 1996 provides for eight per cent of lottery revenues to be used to fund heritage conservation, which means that €1.5 billion is invested annually in the preservation of cultural heritage. In 2000, Italy enacted the Law on 'Preferences for Financing Cultural Industries', which allows companies not to pay taxes on the money invested in cultural resource industries. 'The General Provisions of the Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code', enacted in Italy in 2004, clearly state that "the Italian Republic encourages and supports the participation of nationals, individually or in the form of organizations, in the enhancement of cultural heritage". The law also stimulates private capital investment in cultural heritage conservation through the abolition of the cultural heritage inheritance tax, the exemption of VAT on restoration materials and the granting of tax incentives to organizers of cultural heritage projects. The government encourages enterprises and individuals to invest in the conservation of cultural heritage by offering tax incentives to enterprises or individuals who invest in the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage, for example by allowing direct tax credits for corporate sponsorship of various social and cultural activities [9]. The initiative of sponsoring heritage conservation projects is both financially rewarding and serves to promote the image of the company, greatly stimulating the enthusiasm of companies and individuals for the preservation of cultural heritage.

4.3. Establishing a "heritage adopter" system to broaden the channels for public participation in heritage conservation

Since 1994, in order to ensure sufficient funding for cultural relics, Italy began to implement the inheritance adopter system [10]. In other words, the government retains the right to ownership, development, conservation and the right to appoint and remove important personnel and to set admission prices, while delegating the right to use and manage the heritage to its adopters (the public, associations or enterprises that can afford it) for a maximum of 99 years. Under the premise of not changing the appearance of the original building and undertaking daily maintenance and management, the adopter of the heritage can use part of the site of the ancient building to carry out cultural tourism and profit. In conclusion, it is particularly important that the implementation of the heritage adopter system has given the

cultural heritage a fixed maintainer and a stable financial guarantee, which has created a sense of ownership of the cultural heritage among the public and fully mobilized the public to participate in the protection of cultural heritage so that the cultural heritage can be better protected and reasonably used.

4.4. Focus on multi-industry integration development and fully exploit the benefits of intangible cultural heritage projects

Many intangible cultural heritage projects in Italy are concentrated in the economically underdeveloped southern regions, and the Italian government has also incorporated intangible cultural heritage into the overall layout of the overall national economic development [11]. The protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage items is a whole process of discovering, displaying, educating and utilizing cultural values, which is closely related to the development of other cultural undertakings. The Italian government attaches great importance to the integration of cultural heritage protection and multiple industries such as modern art, new buildings, museums, movies, sports, and tourism; and this has led to the development of other industries, such as transportation, construction, catering, antiquities restoration, audio-visual and publishing etc. It not only improves the employment level, but also produces huge economic and social benefits. The Italian government attaches great importance to the connection between material heritage and culture, the perfect combination of intangible cultural heritage and the tertiary industry, and promotes the tourism highlights of intangible cultural heritage projects. This is also an important inspiration that Italy's intangible cultural heritage policy brings to China's intangible cultural heritage protection.

The practice of cultural heritage protection in Italy has proved that successful heritage protection must give full play to the power of the people and rely on extensive public participation, rather than only relying on the government or a few people such as experts.

5. The Enlightenment of the Italian Model on Public Participation in the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Minority Areas of China

The history of historical and cultural heritage conservation in China is different from that of Italy, as it is not a history of alternating between public campaigns and laws, but rather the result of continuous appeals by experts and governmental approval. It is basically a top-down, one-way administrative system, and the corresponding legal and financial protection systems are inadequate.

The mode of heritage protection and utilization in China is mainly 'government-led, social participation'. Since the 1990s, the Chinese government has recognized the importance of social participation in the practice of cultural heritage, encouraged cultural heritage as an important resource for local development, and clarified the public rights and obligations to protect heritage. At the beginning of the 21st century, China has repeatedly issued laws and regulations on heritage and protection research, emphasizing social participation in heritage protection and sharing of protection results. The society can participate in the identification of heritage protection objects, value research elaboration,

publicity, daily management, supervision and protection status detection and rational use [12].

Over the years, public awareness of the protection of intangible cultural heritage in China has increased significantly, but it is important to see that cultural heritage is characterized by professionalism and strong knowledge, and in general, public awareness of intangible cultural heritage is still relatively superficial [13]. How to inherit national culture based on regional characteristics is an important issue for cultural inheritance, promotion and development in minority areas. Therefore, the ethnic minorities closely focus on ethnic elements to carry out multiple initiatives to protect cultural heritage, with the help of various policies and measures to deepen public awareness of intangible cultural heritage protection, improve inheritance capacity, and promote effectiveness with characteristics.

5.1. To enhance protection awareness with the help of civil forces

Emphasize the construction of heritage protection civil organizations. With their unique credibility and affinity, civil organizations can become an important organizational form for public participation in cultural heritage protection. These civil organizations and members actively participate in various heritage conservation activities and penetrate into communities and families, influencing and motivating people around them to strengthen their awareness of cultural heritage conservation and invest in the field of cultural heritage conservation, forming a good situation of active participation of the private sector in cultural heritage conservation. With the help of civil power to protect minority intangible heritage culture, combined with the construction of beautiful villages and cultural halls, the government can take the lead in the construction of ethnic intangible cultural heritage exhibition halls (rooms), private museums of intangible cultural heritage, workshops of intangible cultural heritage inheritors, intangible cultural heritage workshops and other group halls to actively promote the excellent traditional culture of ethnic groups.

5.2. To introduce social capital and establish incentive mechanism

Accepting social donations to absorb funds or other support is an important aspect of intangible cultural heritage protection. Such as: providing material rewards or honorary titles to the public who make financial donations for the protection of cultural heritage projects, donating artworks to museums, repairing cultural relics, investing in the protection of intangible cultural heritage projects, and giving tax deductions or preferential loans to enterprises etc. The government attracts the interested investors or enterprises to invest in intangible cultural heritage projects, introduces social capital, and collectively organizes villagers to buy shares, so as to give full play to the role of social capital. Explore the development path of "company + intangible cultural heritage project", "intangible cultural heritage workshop + farmer", "intangible cultural heritage workshop + cooperative + farmer" and other models, so that villagers can participate in the work of intangible cultural heritage. From the perspective of economic benefits, it helps the rural revitalization and poverty alleviation in ethnic minority areas. The surplus rural labor force can achieve home employment and become rich, and the investors get economic benefits;

From the perspective of cultural benefits, it protects and inherits the national culture and enhances the cultural confidence of the people; From the perspective of social benefits, it is to accumulate talents for rural revitalization and inheritance of national culture.

5.3. To cultivate inheritance talents and improve the transmission echelon

In 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012, and 2018, the national cultural authorities successively announced five batches of representative inheritors of representative projects of national intangible cultural heritage, with a total of 3,068 persons. Under the dynamic management and withdrawal mechanism of representative inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, 11 people have successively lost their qualifications as national representative inheritors. As of November 2022, there are a total of 3,057 representative inheritors of national intangible cultural heritage [14].

When there are talents in the heritage, there is a future for the non-traditional heritage [15]. S.D. Ma (2020) believes that the core of intangible cultural heritage protection is "people", and intangible cultural heritage projects are a kind of "living culture", a way of life, and a living inheritance[16]. Therefore, whether there are successors of traditional culture is very important, and more efforts should be made to cultivate and protect the inheritors of non-genetic heritage of ethnic minorities.

First, the survival and livelihood of intangible cultural heritage inheritors should be guaranteed by facilitating conditions for intangible cultural heritage inheritors in terms of policies, such as pensions and living subsidies. In particular, intangible cultural heritage inheritors who have changed their original skills from being handed down from their families to being shared by the general public should be given financial or policy support to facilitate their activities, such as passing on their skills, teaching apprentices and performing.

Secondly, the system of inheritors should be improved, and the training program for inheritors of intangible cultural heritage should be implemented to further improve the skills and abilities of inheritors. Form a team of inheritors of intangible cultural heritage and strengthen the construction of the inheritance echelon. Through policy guidance, platform building and financial support, we can carry out the work of "passing on and helping" to attract and train more young talents to become inheritors. The new generation of inheritors can be rooted in ethnic culture, learn traditional crafts, promote the revitalization of intangible cultural heritage, and promote local economic development, forming a virtuous cycle.

Again, minority universities where ICH projects are located can set up relevant majors to conduct basic research on ICH projects and build a theoretical knowledge system and mapping of ICH. The two-way interaction between theoretical support of academic disciplines and the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage is an inevitable way to achieve sustainable protection and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage.

5.4. Digital empowerment to help create a protective atmosphere

Cultural and tourism departments at all levels take the lead to go deep into ethnic minority areas, excavate and rescue endangered intangible cultural heritage items, and combine

multimedia means to protect the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities. Digital technology is used in the identification, documentation, preservation, publicity and other aspects of intangible cultural heritage, combined with virtual technology, three-dimensional multimedia technology, etc., multi-angle and multi-dimensional display of intangible cultural heritage projects, and build an advanced digital protection platform. On the basis of data, documents and pictures, audio, video and other materials are supplemented to build the ethnic "cultural heritage resource database", which is the core of supporting intangible cultural heritage display software and hardware, so as to protect the original ecological traditional culture of ethnic minorities [17]. Departments and organizations at all levels can use the methods preferred by young people, online and offline linkage, and use digital media technology to display ICH culture in all aspects, attracting more young people to focus on ICH, promote and inherit ICH, and maximize the value of sharing ICH resources. It will stimulate the cultural confidence and pride of the whole society, and create a strong atmosphere for the whole society to actively participate in the practice of protecting and passing on ICH.

5.5. To revitalize intangible cultural heritage culture and enhance interactive experience

Culture and tourism departments organize and mobilize minority areas to hold various forms of popular intangible cultural heritage display and experience activities to bring intangible cultural heritage closer to the public, expand the ways for tourists to experience intangible cultural heritage, and explore the road of high-quality integration of intangible cultural heritage and tourism. Taking the "Intangible Cultural Heritage Day" (the second Saturday of June is China's "Cultural and Natural Heritage Day") as an opportunity to carry out a series of activities for the month of intangible cultural heritage, online and offline linkage and interoperability, so that the public can interactively experience the charm of intangible cultural heritage in a comprehensive and close way.

Offline activities: such as holding intangible cultural heritage shopping festival, intangible cultural heritage accompanying gift selection, intangible cultural heritage tourism products promotion meeting and other activities; opening intangible cultural heritage skills training and public welfare lectures, inviting intangible cultural heritage inheritors to explain and demonstrate handicraft making skills on site, teaching the public intangible cultural heritage making skills, and the public can experience and participate in making on site.

Online activities: such as intangible cultural heritage cloud museum, intangible cultural heritage cloud classroom, short video topics of intangible cultural heritage, thematic live broadcast, topic discussion and other activities. Through these interactions and experiences, the public can fully feel the charm of intangible cultural heritage, share the achievements of intangible cultural heritage protection, and enhance their knowledge and love of intangible cultural heritage culture.

6. Conclusion

As an ancient civilization of the world, China should pay attention to both protection and development of cultural heritage, and pay more attention to the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage protection and inheritance while

allowing modern people to appreciate the cultural style. Nowadays, the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage has become a national behavior, a national consciousness, a national cause, and a manifestation of the cultural quality of a nation. Therefore, based on the principles of scientific development and sustainability, it is of great practical significance to study how the public in minority areas can participate in the protection, transmission and utilization of intangible cultural heritage, which can help promote the revitalization of intangible cultural heritage and make intangible cultural heritage more closely connected with people's actual lives; at the same time, it is of great practical significance to let minority intangible cultural heritage items be more widely promoted and disseminated among the public.

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