Study on Innovative Ideas about the Heritage and Development of Traditional Culture with Manchu Features

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Abstract. With dramatic changes of social development at nowadays, traditional ethnic culture has gradually faded away from public attention, becoming less and less important. Due to impacts of new media and pop culture, the traditional cultures of ethnic minorities are hardly finding their presence these days. In such context, China should take certain protective actions and practices to preserve the traditional cultures of ethnic minorities, preventing their extinction in the trend of the times. As Manchu has a comparatively larger population among China’s minorities, this paper makes a deep exploration and analysis of the traditional culture of Manchu based on its development over the history, and studies its features, which can make a contribution to the completeness and heritage of the Chinese civilization, achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Keywords: Manchu, Traditional culture, Heritage, Development, Innovation.

Before studying the traditional culture with Manchu features, we must define a scientific and rational perspective on the traditional culture of Manchu; nowadays, traditional cultures of Manchu and other minorities are subject to difficult development. With the deepening of economic globalization, capitalist ideas, with strong cultural features, have been gradually cognized by the public, which easily hinders the development of traditional cultures of the minorities; therefore, this paper focuses on analysis and study on problems of Manchu culture during its development, and puts forward practical proposals,

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i.e., constantly absorbing and drawing lessons from outstanding achievements of other cultures, which will promote the prosperity and progress of Chinese culture.

A. Difficulties and problems of the traditional culture development of Manchu in today’s world

With faster and faster development of economic globalization, cultural communications among different countries have become more and more frequent. Under such circumstances, the development of the traditional culture with Manchu features is mainly restricted by the following factors:

1. Imbalance between regional development

In the process of inheritance and development of Manchu traditional culture, the restriction from territorial factors are very obvious. Such restrictions mainly consist of: a. Manchu population has a dispersion characteristic in terms of geographic distribution. This characteristic can date back to the early development stage of Manchu, at which time Manchu mainly originated in the northeast of China, but due to political and cultural reasons, Manchu began the migration, gradually scattering all over the country. However, the northeast has always been the gathering place for the development of Manchu culture, while the south and northwest regions have never embraced the prosperity of Manchu culture, the main reason of which lies in the restriction of Manchu population in these areas. b. Inequality of wealth is another main restricting factor, i.e., rural development lagging far behind urban development, which results in huge difference in the development of culture.

According to our analysis, such differences find expressions in the following two aspects:

(1) In remote villages where economic development is slow, there are still some Manchu cultural traditions; however, due to lack of combination with the development trend of the times, the heritage value of these traditions have decreased rapidly and the influencing areas of these traditions have been constantly shrinking. It is urgent for cultural preservation officers to fully explore the Manchu culture. According to the author’s field investigation in rural areas of Ulla Street Manchu Town in Jilin Province, there are only 10 Manchu courtyards which completely possesses the Manchu cultural factors, and 3 of the 10 courtyards have been included in the national key cultural preservation objects, 4 of them have been abandoned, and only 3 of them still have people living there. According to the investigation, average age of the dwellers are above 60. One of the elder residence mentioned that, as the house has a long history, he is willing to preserve the courtyard with traditional factors of Manchu culture. His daughter just lives in a new tile-roofed house beside his courtyard, and according to his daughter, they keep this courtyard
mainly because she cares for her father’s feelings, and once his father passes away, she will demolish this courtyard for new houses.

The investigation result clearly shows that the heritage value of Manchu traditional houses decreases rapidly in today's world of fast economic development. Especially in today’s rural cultural development situations, in which people’s pursuit of economic benefit is sharply increasing while education degree at rural areas is still lagging behind, it is very hard to preserve the traditional houses in rural areas. Even so, we still cannot ignore the historical and cultural value of Manchu traditional culture. Related government authorities should maintain historical sites of Manchu traditional culture.

(2) In remote rural areas where economic development is faster, the Manchu traditional culture is also hard to inherit due to economic reasons, and the consciousness of preserving traditional culture needs to be promoted. Puhe District is about 20km from downtown of Shenyang, and residences living here are all descendants of the Manchu “Eight Banners” who were in garrison here in Qing Dynasty; in recent years, with income increase due to fast economic development, local dwellers are able to improve their living conditions, which leads to the disappear of traditional Manchu houses. The good news is local people still keep the consciousness of preserving their Manchu traditional culture, and in traditional Manchu festivals, they will still hold grand banquets or sacrificial ceremonies which still follow the rules inherited from their ancestors. Due to strong impact of economic globalization, the preservation of Manchu cultural relics meets great difficulties; although local residences bear the consciousness of cultural preservation and inheritance, their recognition of cultural inheritance still does not reach certain extent, which makes it difficult to repair the traumas happened to the Manchu traditional culture within a short term. If such traumas cannot be recovered within a short period of time, it will be easy to result in loss of the Manchu traditional culture.

2. Cultural needs of Manchu people are hard to meet

We have visited several regions to analyze situations of the Manchu traditional culture. As a result, we found there were not many recreational activities of the Manchu traditional culture, not to mention meeting the needs of practices in daily life, i.e., the Manchu culture could not meet the spiritual fulfillment of local residence. Even if in some areas, local residence will hold some traditional activities of the Manchu culture, the time for holding these activities are mainly right before or after major national festivals, during which time there are always a lot of activities and visitors are careful in selection and easy to get visual fatigue; as a result, it does not provide much help for revealing intrinsic value of the Manchu culture.
3. Construction of cultural infrastructure is not complete

According to our investigation, construction of urban cultural undertakings is more complete than that of rural cultural undertakings, but it lacks of strict supervision and management and the rights between supervision and maintenance do not have clear boundaries, which results in insufficient quality maintenance for the infrastructure facilities of the Manchu culture. This phenomenon is more severe in remote mountainous regions, mainly because the construction of cultural infrastructure facilities there still has some shortages. The principal of Culture Center of Benxi Manchu Autonomous County expressed his opinions on several limiting factors for the development of the Manchu traditional culture: the first is low salaries and compensation for maintenance staff of the cultural infrastructure facilities; the second is due to leadership transition, regulatory measures and corresponding mechanism vary with each leading group, resulting in further loss of Manchu cultural assets.

4. Insufficient protection of the Manchu traditional culture relics

In order to make further analysis on the Manchu culture relics, we carried out investigations and studies on the Manchu cultural relics in each region. During visiting and interviewing process, a lot of traditional Manchu families placed many traditional Manchu decorations or living supplies. Due to technological progress at nowadays, there ancient Manchu culture relics are very easy to get damaged or laid aside and been neglected. In modern society, even if these articles have little utility value, their historical and cultural value as well as ornamental value as cultural relics still exist, not to mention these articles have witnessed existence and development of the Manchu nationality over long history. They should be regarded as the national key cultural preservation relics, and are significant manifestations of Manchu lifestyle and folk custom.

The preservation situation of Manchu non-material cultural heritage is satisfying. Although many of Manchu historical and cultural monuments have been included as national key cultural preservation items and the government has released related policies, implementations are not complete according to our field investigations and researches. People who inherit Manchu traditional cultural techniques will live on a shoestring if they cannot get the support of the relevant government departments. Taking the technique of Shamans Singer, most of the inheritors are elder people whose physical conditions no longer allow them singing. While this technique is commonly inherited by oral teaching, and children of the elder inheritors are out-migrating for work due to pressure from life, having little time learning this technique from their parents, this technique is inevitably facing the dilemma of failing to be handed down.
5. Lack of a sound cultural market

With the country laying more and more importance, cultural undertakings are becoming more and more prosperous; however, the huge cultural crisis hidden in the prosperous phenomena cannot be neglected. Numerous pirated cultural books flood in the cultural market, which not only confuses visitors during selection, but misleads them on the understanding of the Manchu culture, even negatively affecting their tourist motivations towards scenic spots of the Manchu culture.

According to the above-mentioned analysis, it can be concluded that the inheritance and development of the Manchu traditional culture have severe shortages.

B. Targeted Countermeasures and Suggestions

During Manchu cultural creations, creators should not simply adopt factors of the Manchu traditional culture, but make innovations to create cultural products satisfying the public, and fully develop cultural undertakings of the Manchu nationality to constantly improve the competitiveness and performance of the Manchu traditional culture, so as to create a platform and opportunity to present Manchu cultural resources, and meanwhile strengthen promotion and advertising to allow the Manchu traditional culture gradually restoring vigor and vitality on the basis of innovation.

1. Improve the construction of cultural infrastructure

According to the investigation of the Manchu traditional cultures in urban and rural areas, the development situations of cultural undertakings in urban and rural areas still have much difference, with basically mature development of culture undertakings in urban areas while pending development in rural areas where the implementation of inheritance work of the Manchu traditional culture is far from satisfaction, unable to maintain the inheritance of traditional culture. Therefore, related enterprises should carry out the scientific concept of development, plan as a whole the urban and rural development, and achieve sound and rapid development.

(1) Strength the maintenance and management of infrastructure construction.

Before the construction of cultural infrastructure facilities in urban and rural areas, sound management and supervision mechanisms should be established in advance, and relevant policies and provisions should be ensured. Each department should clear division of work as well as well-defined power and responsibility. The government should strengthen the protection and management for constructed cultural infrastructure facilities, and accelerate the progress of cultural infrastructure facilities under development and creation.
(2) Increase manning quotas, and assign designated persons to manage the property. One of the outstanding problems of cultural infrastructure lagging in rural areas is the lack of specially-assigned persons who are responsible for manage various cultural facilities, which leads to a mess in property management and a large scale of property loss. Therefore, it is recommended to increase the manning quotas in cultural sectors to be responsible for the property management in rural areas. As cultural work is professional, the staff should be geared to the needs of their jobs, so as to promote the development of future work.

2. Improve working method, implementation of cultural policies with multidivisional support

Cultural work is a major element for functioning of social mechanism, and the prerequisite of business implementation of cultural sectors; meanwhile, the government’s macro-control is essential, and only under the political backdrop of the government’s macro-control, can the coordination among various departments be ensured. The basic flow refers to the superior authorities issuing corresponding cultural preservation schemes which the government and each department implement through cooperation; only on the basis of coordination and cooperation, will the Manchu traditional culture be able to embrace innovative development and obtain constant vigor and vitality.

3. Strengthen the preservation of Manchu traditional cultural relics

By now, the Manchu traditional culture relics have been subject to severe damage and loss. Therefore, relevant competent authorities should pay more attention to preservation, improve propaganda, establish and complete relevant policies and regulations, give full development space to the Manchu culture, and give cultural creators certain financial subsidies and spiritual encouragement; only by doing these things, will the Manchu culture be able to exist and develop. On this basis, the government should mobilize the masses to participate in the preservation of the Manchu traditional culture, protecting the decorations and living supplies of the Manchu traditional culture as these objects are extremely difficult to recover once being damaged. Overall plans should be made for each department while taking all factors into consideration, and all departments should together be committed to the noble work of preserving the Manchu traditional culture.

4. Improve the combination of tourism and the Manchu traditional culture

The inheritance and innovation of traditional culture with Manchu features should be combined with local tourist industry, only by doing which, can the traditional culture with Manchu features be able to achieve long-term development. However, attention should be paid on the balance between tourism and traditional culture during resource integration, by doing which
local cultural industry can achieve healthy and sustainable development.
(1) Each department should strengthen the management of scenic spots, and during scenic spot design, pay attention to add a certain amount of Manchu cultural elements, so that the competitiveness can be guaranteed.
(2) In terms of the design of tourism brands, only static Manchu cultural elements are not enough for long-term attraction to tourists, as they are easy to cause aesthetic fatigue. Instead, integrate Manchu cuisine into tourism development, allowing visitors understanding the Manchu culture from the perspectives of visual, audio and taste.
(3) Develop goods with Manchu features, achieve one-stop service system, realize coordinated development between the Manchu traditional culture elements and local culture industry, and constantly promote and advertise the cultural ideas with Manchu features.

5. Continue to strengthen the industrialization development of Manchu traditional culture

In order to achieve innovative development of the Manchu traditional culture, the primary premise is to exploit each policy on the Manchu nationality. The government and relevant departments need to strengthen the macro-control, and constantly improve various policies and regulations, pushing the Manchu traditional culture industry developing scientifically and systematically. At the same time, during the development of traditional culture with Manchu features, pay attention to let visitors feel the special appeal of unique Manchu regional culture, and arise their interests on the Manchu traditional culture through personal experience.

Conclusion

In this paper, we analyze the traditional culture with Manchu features and discusses various suggestions on the inheritance and development of the Manchu traditional culture, hoping to improve our country's comprehensive strength and enhance national cohesion and cultural soft power.

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