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Analyses On Inheritance Of Lisu Folk Songs Under The Context Of Mediumlization

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Abstract

Due to propagation modes and technologies are changing with each passing day, transversal propagation of Lisu folk songs, compared with its traditional feature--“word of mouth”, shows some new trends that reflect the characteristics of times and changes which exerted great influence on inheritance of folk songs. Under such an inevitable context, the inheritance of folk songs is confronted with both shocks and development.

Key words: Lisu; inheritance of folk songs; mediumlization

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With the rapid development of world new and high technology industry, globalization, shaped by the expansion character of capital, is becoming a social phenomenon. In this process, frequent use of media and communication tools has become an important feature of this era. Thereupon, a sort of new global connection characterized by mediumlization came into the world. Mediumlization refers to material entity and various kinds of phenomena in medium and communication industry. Global mediumlization altered the traditional social boundary, by surmounting which individual from one country can exchange and communicate with another. Due to the involvement and influences of different foreign culture, the change pattern of traditional ethnic culture in rural society shows a feature—“superimposition of multiple time space”, that is, through selecting and reinterpreting traditional culture and foreign culture, pass the essence on from cultural subject and change it into a culture entirety fitted with its own needs. No matter how big the foreign culture shock is, cultural change cannot turn a blind eye to traditional culture—the pre-structure. And no matter how strong the inertia of traditional culture is, the influence of foreign culture will never be escaped. “Local culture and transmission culture are bound to be superimposed with new experiences.”^②

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1 New Trend of Diffusing Folk Songs under the Context of Global Mediumlization

Emergence and application of modern high-tech have different influences on contemporary people's life, while changes of their life and living conditions have inevitable and internal bearing on the changes of ethnic art.

Actually, transversal propagation of folk song is tantamount to the spreading of folk songs. It mainly means that culture of folk songs appeared in other places except in its origin place, including exchanges among members from the same ethnic group in different regions as well as information circulation to other ethnic groups. Under the context of global mediumlization, due to propagation modes and technologies are changing with each passing day, transversal propagation of Lisu folk songs, compared with its traditional features, shows some new trends that reflect the characteristics of the times and changes which exerted great influence on the inheritance of folk songs.

New trend of diffusing Lisu folk songs can be divided into two aspects: changes of propagation spaces and changes of media technologies.

Traditional folk song's propagation modes, in terms of its space, are restricted by human being's physical features. First of all, propagation in the same period and same area hinges on human being's sound system and listening learning system. The distance human being's voice can arrive and be heard is the most important physiological mechanism that restricts folk songs' propagation. When Lisu folk songs have formed its own artistic features, the restriction was actually reflected in a clear way. For instance, frequent use of glottal trill in Baishi and Mugua (two of Lisu folk songs; they are the most important and popular among all Lisu folk songs.) is actually a kind of solution countermeasure people used to break through limitations during antiphonal singing. Low and distinctive voice enables singers singing in an antiphonal style to be heard when they are at distant ends of a valley. Secondly, propagation between different regions is restricted by singers. Put it simply, traditional folk songs, when spreading between different regions, the distance people could arrive is an important factor that restricts it, especially in a time when traffic facilities were undeveloped.

Before modern media technology is born, propagation of folk songs mainly depended on human beings. Without characters system in a long period, Lisu folk songs were always propagated by word of mouth. Even after the old writing system of Lisu was formed, characters were mainly used in Christian mission works. Hardly were characters used in the record of folk songs. Wang Renbo, a Weixi peasant, has created a series of syllabic characters to record the canon of Lisu Sacrifice. The 24 poetries he has recorded were one of the rare examples that proved Lisu folk songs have ever been passed on in a form of writing system. Traditional folk songs in Lisu were mainly, in all ages, propagated by human beings. So human being's physical features not only restrict how long and how far folk songs would be propagated but determine how many folk songs would be propagated. Change of contemporary society in dominant medium form, however, is bringing a profound change in intrinsic ecologic structure of national folk art. Creation, propagation and activity form of folk songs thereby inevitably changed a lot, showing new forms and features.

Over the past decade, the most obvious changes of Lisu folk songs' propagation in Yunan are the convenience that folk songs' propagation had to break through its time and space restrictions due to the rich variety of media technology, and the changes of relations between propagation

and acceptability of folklore art constructed via modern media in which electronic media is dominated.

Since the second half of 20th century, electronic and network media have enjoyed rapid development. They have become dominant media forms at present. In some regions of Yunan where Lisu are living, TV and radio are the most common and widespread media. Meanwhile, Internet, an emerging media, is becoming an important communication tool among younger generation.

At the macro level, widespread popularization of TV and radio in Lisu enables the scope of Lisu folk songs' propagation to be greatly extended. It is a reform of far-reaching significance to any ethnic group. These changes are apparent and obvious to all. As a form spreading from top to bottom, media dominates the masses' contacts with outside world through controlling their rights of discourse and delimits the scope and content of people's cognitive world. It exerts great influence on national folk art activities. And the influence is divided into two aspects: one is to foster an information environment in which people can master their own national folk art; and the other is to change the original nature of inheritance when reproduce the folk art.

Kellner Douglas, an American scholar, has mentioned in his book *Media Culture* that: "The image of media helps a culture or a society form their view toward the whole world as well as their most profound value: what is good and what is bad, what is positive and what is negative, what is moral and what is evil. Media provides symbol, myth, and the individual with the resource by which a sort of sharing culture is constructed. And with the resource, people enable themselves to be embedded in culture." In the process of fostering an information environment in which people can master their own folk arts, mass media is closely linked with macro-cultural policies of country and cultural propaganda orientation of government. They formed a "panoramic" image world in which the combination of state will and local cultural features was incarnated. For instance, due to Christian liturgy has become the main cultural life of the public in Nujiang, the focus of all television broadcasting stations is thereby to publicize macro policies related to national folk art and to advocate the rejuvenation of national traditional culture. The active spreading of cultural activities centering on Lisu folk songs and danced spectacle that thousands of people are dancing to the music "Achi Mugua" or "Wa Qiqi", creating an artistic environment conducive to the inheritance of folk art.

As mentioned above, the creation and spreading of traditional folk songs, restricted by space, time and language, always went within a limited scope, and participants were mainly the residents in the ethnic group. Folk songs were sang from man to man. "Original nature" and "extemporaneousness" are its basic features, fitting in with the individuality of singers as well as the whole performing environment. Mass media (mainly refers to TV), to meet the need of spreading, will adopt traditional folk art to stage performances in order to make it satisfy the requirements of visual appreciation. But in daily life, the importance of media made audiences automatically take the contents of medium as a sample. They acknowledge these changes, even consider them as the original form. With this kind of acknowledgement, the more care audiences show in folk art, the more faith they have in the contents of medium. Due to the necessity of spreading, mass media will turn a blind eye to some details related to the nature of traditional folk art. There will, of course, be a gap between the faithfulness of media and the reality because the content of media is fragmented and means "nothing to do with people's daily

life”. These features will definitely affect the acknowledgement of audiences toward traditional folk art.

As for the main body of inheritance, voice recorder, camera, cellphone, computer and other communication tools, Internet and other medium tools gave the spreading of folk songs new experiences and feelings. Nowadays, in the dwelling district of Lisu, cellphone has become the most common communication tools. This article which embodies globalization and modernization has become the important and obvious carrier of Lisu in showing their local culture and features. When city dwellers take color ring as their individuality, the residents in Lisu mountain village are also willing to show themselves by such a simple and clear way. The ringtone of Christians is the anthem sang in church, Li Xuehua, a state-level inheritor of Lisu folk songs, uses the song he himself played as his ringtone, the famous folk singer of Lijiang, Ashicai, also uses his own song as ringtone. Via Internet, the spreading space of folk songs was expanded to several hundred, even several thousand times than its original size. According to a survey on the Internet, Lisu folk songs have become an important pusher to the development of tourist trade in Lisu region, as well as a crucial media connecting Lisu siblings from all corners of the country with the tourist enthusiasts. Folkniks from all over the world are bonded together by the Internet. Such media technology will exert great influences on the inheritance mode of folk songs.

2 Current Changes in Inheritance of Lisu Folk Songs

In its long traditions, the core concept of Lisu folk songs’ inheritance aims at inheriting culture, communicating, educating and entertaining. The main carrier of inheritance is “human being”. “People-oriented” concept is the main content of inheritance. By word of mouth, the pattern of singing was passed on and the traditional pattern was reinterpreted. As the new trend of folk songs’ spreading steps in, the original traditional pattern of Lisu folk songs was accordingly affected.

2.1 Expansion of Spreading Space Brings out Obvious Openness of Inheritance

Giddens, a British sociologist, called the relationship between time and space as the feature of traditional society—“the availability of present local life”. With traditional media, Lisu folk songs in Yunan are prone to be restricted by their regionality, that is, the availability of art activities can only be earned in specific region and space and current environment. The inheritance of folk songs is inevitably restricted by regionality, laying stress on particularity of “presence”. Modern media, thanks to modern technologies, is endowed with openness and freedom going beyond time and space which surpass all of the previous medium. The use of technical media greatly increases the possibility of inheritance’s being independent from its regionality.

The expansion in spreading space formed by media technologies changed the concept of “presence”. The “presence” in traditional scene paid special attention to instant interaction and communication, while, under the context of media, the inheritance in some Lisu regions was delayed. Li Xuehua, a villager of Nujiang, is a state-level inheritor of Lisu folk songs (Intangible Cultural Heritage). His little son, Li Weixin, though often heard and watched his father’s songs and dances, failed to master his father’s feats. But on the Internet, we can see a tie between him and traditional folk art, which I haven’t discover when I was at his home. He made many posts about the folk songs in his QQ zone, such as, My Beautiful Hometown—Nujiang, My Favorite

Lisu Folk Songs, Baishi, and so on. These posts are about traditional songs or some Lisu folk songs bearing popular elements. All of them unveiled his love for art and his deep feelings to his hometown and Lisu culture. The absorption of folk songs culture in daily life were displayed in another time and space. He didn't sing some folk songs in order to inherit the traditional folk songs, instead, he passed on the concept of songs by spreading the texts of songs. The inheritance of Lisu folk songs not only means the inheritance of skills, but the inheritance of the concept and the whole tradition.

In terms of its spreading, traditional folk songs, through modern medium, overstepped the restrictions of regionality. It means a sort of freedom and that the constraints of "presence" were broken in intergenerational inheritance.

2.2 Effects on features of Folk Songs

The flexibility in melodies and lyrics is where the artistic charm and lifeline of folk songs lie, which leaves room for singers' extemporaneous play. So, someone holds that "How do singers sing is closer to the core of culture than what singers sing." "Improvisation" is the most essential feature of folk songs and the lifeblood to keep their vitality.

In the natural performing environment, the contents of songs during antiphonal singing are possibly changed because of different singers. Folk songs are passed on by means of oral instruction and rote memory, so each singer has their own comprehension with folk songs when they are singing. Their performances go in a certain context formed by two kinds of interaction: one is the interaction of eyes and ears, and the other is the interaction of audiences and performers. So in different situations, singers would choose different performance forms. In a living performance, the inheritance of tradition and the creation of singers always go simultaneously. Singer is tantamount to creator. Whatever he will sing, recreation is always necessary. His improve show is closely linked with his knowledge of tradition. Extemporaneousness is the lifeblood of folk songs. In a stable pattern, the inheritance of folk songs is a process in which people take what they need to take, change what they want to change, and refine what they think they should. The means of oral instruction and rote memory still keeps folk music moving and changing. This change uncovers the creativity of inheritors. When folk songs are passed on among different individuals, each individual takes what he needs, what he is interested in and what he is accustomed to. But once someone becomes the spreader, the folk songs will be recreated according to his own knowledge and the requirements of audiences, and then be passed on.

The rich variety of media technology has an influence on extemporaneousness of folk songs.

First of all, excessive dependence on media weakens the power of folk songs' feature – extemporaneousness. In traditional art activities, creators, performers and audiences were usually simultaneous and direct participators. They co-created the "extemporaneous" artistic ambience, mainly in the form of group. Each time of singing will be a sort of artistic appreciation which cannot be replicated because of its uniqueness in a certain time and space. But the powerful replication function of media technology changes the interactive process of art produced in a common space-time context. To borrow an expression of Walter Benjamin (a famous German scholar), "In the age of mechanical reproducibility, the only thing that art works were touched is their 'spirit' due to the existence of numerous samples, these replication technologies."

During a festival, members from an old people's art ensemble in Nujiang took part in two shows. One is at the opening ceremony of Deng Geng Sing-Song Event, and the other is at the New Year's Party held in Xinjian village of Shangjiang. The team leader of art ensemble, Mr. Yang, with another 23 old people of the ensemble, gave a performance. It was about acting as a matchmaker (a scene in traditional Lisu marriage customs). This show was a quality program of the ensemble. They often practiced it and prerecorded a special CD, the original soundtrack. As a matter of fact, there's little differences though the show was put on in different places because scene and dress rehearsal were the same as what were practiced in advance. But in the show of the New Year's Party, the CD was not used because the equipment went wrong. Mr. Yang, seated in the center of stage, sang by himself with a microphone. Audience sometimes burst into laughter by his humorous singing. Mr. Yang, accordingly increased his pause time according to the responses of audience, and began the next aria after laughter died away. It was the biggest difference between the first show and the second show. Without a replicated ambience, performers had a closer interaction with audience and a greater ability to hold a performance.

Secondly, the use of modern medium, to some extent, changed the way of creation. The improve of tradition Lisu folk songs is a sort of sing-song blurted out in the interaction of singers and audience. It needs a moment of inspiration, without leaving extra space for singers to refine it. This is an all-sided tests for singers. Quick wit, accurate language and adept skills are all the criteria to measure singers' talents.

When the author was doing a survey in Liming township of Yunan county Lijiang province, a local famous Lusheng (a reed-pipe wind instrument) player named Wang Yonggang, together with other villagers who loved Lisu folk songs, sang many folk songs around Huotang (a kind of Chinese fireplace). Each time they sang a song, they would make some choices and changes according to our responses. For instance, when they sang a song to advise others to drink a song to pay a girl compliments on her beauty, they would give full expression to the flexibility of folk songs. In comparison, many Lisu folk songs created in recording studio were unconsciously refined and changed, with less extemporaneousness. Li Xuehua, as one of the judges in 2017 Zaotang Sing-song event, was asked to perform "Baishi" amid intervals of the event. The day before the performance, he recorded the song he would sing the next day in the voice recorder, listened and refined it repeatedly. This was his first creation born by this method. It was right because the song he sang the next day was his solo without antiphonal singing that he could finish his creation in voice recorder. But to integrate medium devices into the creation of folk songs is a trend nobody can avoid. Actually, this is a challenge for quick-wittedness to antiphonal singing of traditional Lisu folk songs

2.3 The Changes in Inheritance Means of Folk Songs

Before the advent of electronic media, the main inheritance tool of human culture was characters and words. Due to the late appearance of characters and after their appearance, they were mainly used to spread Christian culture, the national traditional culture in Lisu region were passed on by word of mouth. Whether the inheritance was from one family member to another, from master to apprentice or from one society to another, the main form was always oral instruction and rote memory. The inheritance of folk songs was the more so.

Quick changes of media technologies facilitates changes in inheritance means of folk songs. Electronic medium has exerted great influences on Lisu villages. When it comes to the

inheritance of traditional folk songs, nobody can turn a blind eye to the use of media technologies by average people.

The involvement of Internet in the inheritance of national art enables the inheritance of traditional folk songs to break through the limitations of specific time-space and be freer and more open. We have discussed it above. For instance, “Lisu Infoport” aiming at spreading culture and gathering information of Lisu nationality has provided a large platform for the exchanges of culture among Lisu of different places. It has played a certain role in enhancing the national cohesion of Lisu and their strong sense of identity towards their own culture. In Lisu Infoport, there is a special column called “Audio-visual of Lisu folk songs”. It collected many audio files and video files of Lisu folk songs from Nujiang, Weixi, Longchuan, Lijiang, Yingjiang, Huapin, Baoshan and Myanmar. Internet has become a virtual stage of artistic performance where folk songs in different styles and from different places were put on. Similar to this, peasant-home holiday-inns run by villagers received a lot of tourists in different fields. Some tourists who like national folk art recorded songs sang by themselves and posted them on the Internet. Sanjiang Sisters Group from Lisu, even created a blog on the Internet. The main business of Guiming Folk Songs Workshop in Nujiang is recording folk songs. Songs spread by word of mouth in the past were kept in a small disk.

Except that those singers and culture-spreading platforms use modern media technology to pass Lisu folk songs on, some common people without special status labels also, via multimedia technology, have a real effect on the inheritance of folk songs. This kind of initiative utilization were not driven by interests. It presents something more natural and genuine in the process of inheritance. Some villagers who I met when I was doing a survey liked to play music accompaniment with a cellphone when they were singing. They were just like in a small karaoke bar. Xiu Zaodi, a villager from Chi Hengdi, Fugong county, was a staff member working in Broadcasting and Television Bureau of Fugong county. She has been a voluntary camerawoman in the village for many years. Various kinds of customs were her recorded target. Videos in her camera were something like local ethnography. Without interests-driven intentions, Xiu Zaodi could be closer to the masses. For those villagers of Chi Hengdi the camera was a natural existence. Xiu Zaodi and her camera have become important tools to pass those traditions of folk songs on.

These actions help increase the popularity of Lisu folk songs and make the beautiful voice of Lisu heard by more and more people. Meanwhile, on the basis of traditional means (word of mouth), they added another means by which traditional folk songs existed in digitalized form to the inheritance of traditional folk songs.

Though Internet has great inclusiveness, good technical competences and strong financial support are the premises to put one’s songs online. Because most of current Lisu folk songs online were first recorded in recording studio and then finished after post production as well as outdoor shoot. The purified songs sang in casual environment were not the main trend of network songs. Those Lisu folk songs created in recording studio have been away from the performing environment of traditional folk songs. They were just a show, a kind of “consumption culture” available to the wider public. And to earn popularity in larger markets, these songs were added into many popular elements. Accompaniment of musical instruments, tunes and styles are all different from that of traditional folk songs. Clearly, they are affected by popular culture. Even those folk songs created in natural environment are short of

extemporaneousness because they are only splicing clips joined together by important and wonderful bits after editing and post production. After studying the evaluation posts on network songs, we find that though those songs have obvious differences compared with traditional Lisu folk songs, most netizens who sent evaluation posts would make a mark to indicate that they are from Lisu nationality. They would show their love and send their support to those songs because they thought the actions that could pass their national culture on should be encouraged. When I paid attention to the network spreading of Lisu culture, I found that there has been a wide gap between traditional Lisu folk songs and modern Lisu folk songs. Middle-aged and elderly people over 40 loved singing traditional folk songs to keep the old traditions alive, while the younger generation of Lisu, after experienced the “outside world”, were actively seeking a tie to link themselves with the whole world. Those young people took many cultural elements in from other nationalities, longing for gain recognition from others with their own voices. The young generation who grow up under the context of globalization is actually a group of people who run between traditional culture and popular culture. We cannot ignore their efforts to pass national culture on.

2.4 The Inheriting Behaviors of Individuals were Exaggerated and Highlighted

Since International Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage was contracted in 2003 and the first state-level list of intangible cultural heritage was released by State Ministry of Culture in 2006, the register and assessment of national traditional culture has gone for almost ten years in Lisu regions. The awareness of protecting local culture has been formed among the public. With more attention were paid to it, mass media exaggerated some inheriting behaviors, bringing the public different feelings.

Lisu folk songs were mainly passed on in public occasions, such as wedding or funeral ceremonies, new house ceremony, mass rally and festivals. Individual behaviors were always covered by group activities. Though an excellent singer can stand out, the influencing time and space are extremely limited.

Faced with numerous sophisticated and diversified social facts, mass media unmasked some essential features in themselves. Mass media is like a mirror, reflecting the object environment truthfully, but this mirror has the right to select which kind of environment it should pay more attention to. And mass media has another function--the function of magnifier. Mass media's function of selecting and exaggerating together with its strong propagation ability highlighted those individual behaviors to pass folk songs on.

Sanjiang Sisters Group, as mentioned above, is known to everybody in Lisu. They are three sisters from Badi (a village). In 2006, they attended a singing contest called Super Girl. After being ranked amongst top 20 of Chengdu zone, the three sisters earned considerable attention from various media. During the contest, reports about them can be seen in both the TV station and Internet. Experiences, beautiful dressing and even their failure in the contest have become big events the mass media were interested in reported. In this media event, the three sisters were made to be famous. After the report of the channel—Chinese Folk Songs, the three sisters has become a celebrity in whole China and the most popular folk songs group of Lisu.

Such a case is not rare. Especially under the context of Intangible Cultural Heritage, inheritors have become the main line when the media reported events in this field. What's more, in the

work on Intangible Cultural Heritage, inheritors were always hotly discussed and highlighted. Hence, those inheritors, though as individuals, were paid attention from various media.

The group harmony dominant in the inheritance of traditional folk songs were broken by the feature of publicity in the media era. When the inheritance of folk songs runs from traditional to modern, individuals become more and more initiative.

3 Conclusions

The modern inheritance of Lisu folk songs is a process taking global mediumlization as its context and a process in which local knowledge is reconstructed in current space-time environment. When the local culture of Lisu met with global culture, life of Lisu in an isolated geographical environment was also making changes. Life style, ideology and media technology become an important influencing power. The ways of creation are changing. And there are obvious cross-generational differences in people's aesthetics of folk songs. Under such an inevitable context, the inheritance of folk songs is faced with unprecedented shocks as well as development opportunities.

Lisu folk songs, under the impact of Christian faith and modern culture, was away from its existential state as an integral part, and became a cultural form to highlight a nationality and adapt the market economy under the context of protecting cultural diversity. It is what inheritors initiatively choose to use and construct from traditional historical resources of folk songs. It means that traditions are developed and passed on.

Though active individuals have become a prominent part of the current inheritance of folk songs, there are ordinary and low-profiled people in the back of some prominent individual, existing in the form of group. This is the condition by which the basic features of Lisu folk songs can be remained and the environment in which folk songs can be passed on.

Meanwhile, we have to know it clearly that there are some improper behaviors because changes are overaggressive and overactive under the context of global—endemic culture. This is what we should make active reflections on. The inheritance of folk songs cannot lost its nature due to the creation in which we lose more than we gain.