The Preservation and Promotion of Marine Folk Culture in Zhoushan under the Background of Cultural Globalization

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ABSTRACT. Marine folk culture is an essential part of Chinese folk culture. The preservation and promotion of marine folk culture plays an important role in the promoting of local culture industries. After investing the connotation, features and current situation of marine folk culture in Zhoushan City, this paper analyzes the problems existing in the preservation and promotion of marine folk culture from the perspective of cultural globalization. Finally, approaches for effective preservation and promotion are proposed for Zhoushan to better handle all the challenges under the background of cultural globalization.

KEYWORDS: cultural globalization; Zhoushan marine folk culture; preservation and promotion

1. Introduction

Zhoushan is an island city, located in China’s east coast and is the largest archipelago of China. For generations, Zhoushan people make a living from the sea, which gives birth to an abundance of marine folk culture. Zhoushan marine folk culture is not only an indispensable part of China’s marine culture, but also the core of marine folk culture in the East China coastal areas. Zhoushan marine folk culture covers a wide range of forms, including music, art, handicrafts, shipbuilding, fishing, etc. It is not only the collective wisdom of local people, but also a treasure of local traditional culture. In recent years, with the continuous advance in cultural globalization, the invasion of foreign cultures has brought many challenges to the development of Zhoushan marine folk culture. In order to meet these challenges, effective measures are demanded to better preserve and promote such unique form of Chinese folk culture.
2. Cultural Globalization

Cultural globalization refers to the transmission of ideas, beliefs and values around the world in such a way as to extend and intensify social relations.¹ It involves the formation of shared norms and knowledge with which people associate their individual and collective cultural identities. It also brings increasing interconnectedness among different populations and cultures.² This process began with the colonial expansion and was driven with the economic exchanges between different countries. Now cultural globalization is greatly accelerated by the Internet, mass media, and international travel. The circulation of cultures along the world enables individuals to partake in extended social relations regardless of national and regional borders.

Under the background of cultural globalization, the exchange and cooperation between Chinese and Western cultures forcefully help China learn from the advanced culture of Western countries, raise people’s awareness of science, technology, legality and management, and update their social concepts. The cultural diversity and complementarity brought by cultural globalization have given China’s traditional culture a new vitality and granted unprecedented opportunities for the export of Chinese culture. But cultural globalization has also brought many challenges to China’s indigenous culture. With pervasive impacts from foreign cultures, the independence of our national culture has been imperceptibly decreasing, and some outstanding traditional cultures are facing a crisis of inheritance and development. Having hamburger, drinking Coca-Cola, listening to rock music, enjoying Hollywood blockbusters, observing Christmas, and reading the “Harry Potter”, infused in the western culture while growing up, the younger generation of China has become extremely enthusiastic about Western culture, but has China’s outstanding traditional culture shelved and almost forgotten. In the long run, Chinese traditional culture is bound to face the crisis of withering and uprooting.

Cultural globalization and the independence of national culture are not inherently contradictory. The two are an organic whole that is dialectically unified and quite complementary, and is also an important process for people from different cultures seeking the common grounds while reserving their differences and maintaining development. The surge of cultural globalization is more than a challenge from other cultures. It actually is an unprecedented opportunity for all Chinese to promote their outstanding culture and better achieving the cultural confidence.

3. Marine Folk Culture

3.1 The Connotation of Marine Folk Culture

During the course of long history, the hardworking people in coastal areas have created an ample material civilization as well as a splendid marine folk culture. Marine folk culture refers to the unifying expressive components of everyday life as enacted by localized, tradition-bound groups in coastal areas. It has its own independent cultural features because of the unique regional economy and local historical culture. Marine folk is an essential part of national culture. It belongs to the people who make living from sea, and reflects their rebellious and adventurous spirit. It is a profound material and spiritual wealth created and accumulated by people in coastal areas over time and is the crystallization of their wisdom.

3.2 Features of Marine Folk Culture

Marine folk culture is popular in coastal areas. Its emergence, existence, and development are closely related to the ocean. To some extent, it reflects the living habits, aesthetic concepts and artistic tastes of the people in the coastal areas, characterizes itself as being regional, inheritable, diverse and entertaining.

3.2.1 The Regionality of Marine Folk Culture

Marine folk culture is a typical cultural form created, shared, inherited, and developed by working people in the coastal areas with a good mass foundation, deep cultural connotation, and features of life and ritualization. It’s the carrier of coastal residents’ knowledge of the ocean, their lifestyles, entertainment habits, the worship of primitive beliefs, etc. For the sharing living mode and fully ocean-related social practices, people in the coastal areas clutter themselves as a special group of population and root themselves in the marine folk culture, marking the regionality as one of the most distinctive and significant features.

3.2.2 The Inheritability of Marine Folk Culture

People in the coastal areas of China have formed their unique cultural traditions passed down from generation to generation. All the events, rituals and customs their society share in the long-going history are not simply inherited, but greatly enriched, carefully collected and further spread, constantly inpouring material and spiritual wealth nurturing the future generations, establishing themselves as an important part of Chinese culture. In the coastal areas of southeast China, people created the Mazu culture in the Song Dynasty and formed one of the most important folk worships in

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3 https://findwords.info/term/folk%20culture
the history of Chinese marine culture. In Guangdong, the Polo Birthday Temple Fair has a long history, embodying Guangdong’s most representative traditional marine folk culture. Meanwhile, in another coastal area of Shandong, people worship the Lord of the Sun, the Lord of the Moon, the Lord of Yin and Yang, and the Lord of four seasons to pray for a good fishing and all safety. These marine folk cultures are inextricably linked to the changes in local culture, social background, historical conditions, politics, economy, religion, etc., and have historical heritage.

3.2.3 The Diversity of Marine Folk Culture

With a long history of inheritance, accumulation, and development, marine folk culture falls into a wide range of varieties, integrating activities on the mainland with those at sea, and the ancient with the modern, ranging from the fishing practices to leisure entertainment, living necessities to work of arts, everyday life to legendary adventures, season stories to ocean tides, daily routines to elaborate rituals, mortal life to religious belief, diverse in form and rich in content. Various marine folk cultures in the coastal areas have spread to the present day by the word of mouth, from age to age.

3.2.4 The Entertainment Value of Marine Folk Culture

The establishment of marine folk culture is inseparable from the marine production and coastal living activities. Besides their hard work of fishing, coastal people apply their acquired skills of fishing practices in leisure entertainment, forming an essential part of marine folk culture. The magnificent Kaiyang ceremony--a ritual held to pray for a good harvest and safe voyage, and Xieyang ceremony--a ritual conducted to express the gratitude for the ocean mercy, floating sea lantern--a worship of the ocean, flea dances--ritual dance to ward off evil and bless peace, fishermen song--the heart-stirring and forceful work songs depicting the fishermen’s hard work as well as their happiness of a big haul, etc., all embody the spirit of working people’s optimism and hard work, and are deeply loved by people in the coastal areas.

3.3 Zhoushan Marine Folk Culture

Zhoushan is a well-known island city of China and is one of the country’s primary construction sites of “marine exploration”. In the long years, the people of Zhoushan who took boats as their cars and oars as their horses created and amassed unique and engrossing folk culture, full of marine factors in their living and working. Zhoushan marine folk culture is the brightest pearl of the crown of Chinese marine culture, shining for ages and awaiting for better polishing.
3.3.1 Fishing Folk Culture

Fishing folk culture is the culture bred by Zhoushan fishermen in long-term fishery production labor, and is the kernel of Zhoushan marine folk culture. Zhoushan fishing folk culture permeates almost all aspects of fishery production such as fishing gear, fishing boat building, and fishing customs.

Fishing boat, an indispensable tool for Zhoushan fishermen, is honored as “wood dragons”, while sails as “awnings”. Small flags hanging on the top of the mast telling wind direction, in the shape of swimming fish, are named after “cod fish”—a sacred fish in the marine legendary. What’s more, the animals of the 12 zodiac signs are applied to various tools on board vessel. Besides the zodiac signs, animal “cat” refers to the “anchor” on ship, for they share the similar pronunciation in Chinese language. All the naming are unique, interesting and easy to remember.

From the primitive floating rigs, to rafts and canoes, then to wooden sailing boat, and now the high speed modern ships, Zhoushan has a long history of ship building. The wooden sailing boats handcrafted by local skillful craftsmen, with carvings and paintings of various birds, animals, fish, insects and different auspicious patterns as unique decorations have once famed Zhoushan far and near. As time goes on, those traditional wooden sailing boats have been gradually phased out, only leaving the traditional boat building art a national intangible cultural heritage.

The Kaiyang and Xieyang festivals are two of the most important fishing folk customs in Zhoushan. As a kind of spiritual activity to express the fishermen’s inner prayer, the Kaiyang and Xieyang festivals take sacrificial rites as the core, folk art performances as the main program, displaying its nature of entertaining gods, presenting all the participants a feast of cultural diversity. In Zhoushan, fishing is divided into four operation seasons. The gap between two seasons is a time for fishermen to repair tools, gather labors, and greet the rest of the seasons. Fishermen name this period “Xie Yang”. Among the four fishing seasons, the second one from May to June in the lunar calendar, is the most important for the harvesting of big yellow croakers. There is a folk saying going among the locals, “debts are like numberless sands, and the seawater values to pay off all.” After the end of fishing season, when fishermen return with a full load and harvest the most fruitful results of the year, Xieyang festival will be the first priority for fishermen to observe. This ritual takes a fishing boat or family as a unit and is performed at the Dragon King Temple or on fishing boat to thank the Dragon King for his gift and sheltering the fishermen returning with a full load. People kill pigs, slaughter sheep, serve wine and prepare vegetables as sacrifices to the lord of the sea, at the same time, pray for the next fishing season to be safe and smooth.

3.3.2 Fishing Songs

Zhoushan fishermen created various unique marine music arts in their fishery labor. Zhoushan fishing songs are the typical product, dating back to the wooden boat period when most of the fishing work was done with manual labor. Zhoushan
fishing songs fall into four categories in terms of the laboring scene: setting sail, running rigging, sculling boat, and mending fishing nets. They come from fishery labor and are conducive to fishery labor. For the sake of coordinating operation, inspiring morale, and carrying out the hard labor, one fisherman acts as the lead singer, the others chorus his singing with strong rhythm, forceful pace and passionate tune. The sonorous singing resounded in the port, getting to the farthest boats, telling the fishermen’s joy of work and harvest.

3.3.3 Zhoushan Drums

Zhoushan drums originated from the fishing labor and living activities of the local people. It is often performed on some auspicious occasions, such as the Xielyang Festival, Chinese Spring Festival, Sand Sculpture Festival, etc. In the early years, fishermen sailed on the sea, taking the sound of drums as a signal when sailing or returning to the harbor. If two ships met on the sea, they would greet each other with the drums beating. When strong winds and waves coming, fishermen would believe that sea monsters are playing havoc, and they would drive away evil spirits with their roaring drums. With the powerful beat and exciting performance, Zhoushan drums depict the tough and bold characters of fishermen.

3.3.4 Marine Paper-cutting

The versatile Zhoushan fishermen show their love for life and the ocean in various art forms. Zhoushan marine paper-cutting is one of the unique marine art forms, and was added to the list of intangible cultural heritage in 2013. It features the rough, simple and pure style of paper-cutting in the north China, and also contains the delicate beauty of paper-cutting in the south China. It is based on the theme of marine culture and has strong regional characteristics. The cutting technique is divided into two types—the Yin Shear and Yang Shear, and monochrome is the predominant style, mostly in red color. In order to echo the blue ocean theme, blue paper-cutting works are also very common in Zhoushan. After hard physical work, Zhoushan fishermen take their paper, scissors and carving knife, producing ingenious paper-cutting wonders, presenting their working scene and making their prayer for health and prosperity.

3.3.5 Fishermen Paintings

Zhoushan fishermen paintings feature a strong local folk art style and possess distinctive marine amorous feelings, exaggerated in shape and exquisitely drawn at will, reflecting the unrestrained but meticulous simplicity of fishermen. Fishermen haunt between the waves, and sometimes even fight the life and death at sea. Therefore, the fishermen paint with their fantastic, mysterious, abstract and almost weird style, give the works a strong folk characteristics and marine cultural consciousness. They leave the naivety in the paintings. The simple and infinite imagination combines beautiful wishes and sincere feelings into a colorful picture of
whimsical ideas. And all these subjective feelings and strong breath of life are manifested through exaggerated shapes, random lines, gorgeous and strong colors, forming the overall artistic charm unique to Zhoushan fishermen paintings.

4. The Current Status of Zhoushan Marine Folk Culture

To have a deep insight in the current status of Zhoushan marine folk culture, and to carefully analyze the challenges it is now confronted with under the background of cultural globalization, the research team conducted extensive and in-depth investigations and studies.

4.1 Research Methodology

The research team carefully searched and reviewed all materials about local culture collected in Zhoushan City Library and Museum to have a clearer understanding about the connotation of marine folk culture and the current research achievements. Through investigation, the author found that among the many research results of folk culture, the research results on marine folk culture are not abundant. Only a few 30 related research literatures were collected, among which scholar Chen Yonglong (2007) made a thorough elaboration on the definition of marine folk culture and its basic characteristics, which provided effective theoretical guidance for the research group to study Zhoushan marine folk culture. While scholar Tang Yan (2010) studied Zhoushan fishing folk from a linguistic perspective, greatly enriching the team’s understanding of Zhoushan folk culture. Another scholar Liu Zhifeng (2014) discussed maritime folk cultural heritage of Taiwan, presenting specific manifestations of the maritime folk culture of Fujian and Taiwan, thus providing a good reference for the research group. The existing few research results of marine folk culture greatly inspire the research team to have further exploration and to eventually unfold the endless glamour of Zhoushan marine folk culture for people over the world.

Besides literature review, the research team also conducted social visits and on-site interviews with some foreigners to have their views of Zhoushan marine folk culture. Only 10% of the foreigners interviewed had heard of Zhoushan before their visit. But after living in Zhoushan, 70% of people think that Zhoushan marine folk culture is very unique, and nearly 95% are willing to spread it to their relatives and friends. 90% of the international students learned more about Zhoushan marine folk culture during the course of study in Zhoushan. Some foreigners have experienced the charm of Zhoushan marine paper-cutting, and nearly 95% of foreigners want to learn more about Zhoushan marine folk culture. Quite a few foreigners think that film and television songs, books, newspapers and magazines, and other peripherals are helpful to the promotion of Zhoushan marine folk culture.

Visit with Zhoushan government officials also provide the research team some good news. In recent years, the government has attached great importance to the protection of local marine folk culture. Some of the marine folk culture have been
put on the list of intangible cultural list, among which, 5 are included in the national cultural heritage list, 9 are recorded in the provincial level list, and 15 are taken into list of the city level. Many publications about Zhoushan marine folk culture are produced for publicity, including the series of masterpieces of intangible cultural heritage in Zhoushan city. Through an intensive reading and investigation, the research team has gotten closest to Zhoushan marine folk culture.

4.2 The Findings and Discussion of Zhoushan Marine Folk Culture

With the constant deepening of cultural globalization, Zhoushan marine folk culture is experiencing various crises for internal and external causes.

4.2.1 The Fault Zone of Local Inheritance

The preservation and promotion of Zhoushan marine folk culture relies highly on modern peoples’ inheritance of the cultural heritages. However, like many other forms of traditional culture, the inheritance of Zhoushan marine folk culture has stepped into the fault zone for the lack of heirs, and some forms of marine folk culture are actually dying out.

Fishing songs, expressed in the form of Zhoushan dialect, is simple, high-spirited, and rich in cultural connotation. For the change of times and language environment, young men who could master Zhoushan dialect are quite few, nevertheless inherit the fishing songs. Attracted by the modern entertainment, youngsters often show no interest in such traditional art. In the long run, the inheritance and development of fishing songs will be difficult to sustain. Moreover, the exciting Zhoushan drums once ringing through the dock now can only occasionally appear on stage. Very few young people are willing to devote themselves to the performance of Zhoushan drums.

The inheritance of marine folk crafts in Zhoushan is also facing the problem of lacking apprentices. The skills of Zhoushan craftsmen in building boats have a long history. With distinct characteristics of marine culture and handcraft, Zhoushan shipbuilding was once the symbol of China’s shipbuilding capacity in the wooden boat times. However, with the development of modern shipbuilding technology, old wooden boats have been gradually eliminated from fishing production, once they lose their practical value, the traditional shipbuilding technology could seldom pass down.

Zhoushan marine fishing culture is the wealth of Zhoushan fishermen’s collective wisdom of generations. The fishing proverbs containing fishermen’ working experience at sea, their knowing of the waters and the world have been spread from mouth to mouth, age to age. Sayings like “the fish caught at night is much fresher” telling the fishing wisdom, “the fish bite the tail” describing the harvest scene, and “the ocean warriors can easily climb the mast of ship at sea” depicting fishermen’s courage when fighting against waves, now are gradually
fading out of local people’s life. Many Zhoushan youngsters claim that they have never heard about such sayings even they are brought up on this land.

In addition, with the vigorous encouragement of the government, Zhoushan marine paper-cutting and fishermen painting have been protected and developed to a certain extent in recent years. Most artists of such art forms are the local fishermen and their children, who are closely attached to the sea. They take the scissors and brushes to present fishermen’s life to the outsiders. However, with the shrinking of fishery resources, a large number of fishermen have to transfer the walks of life, once leaving the ocean, their passion and inspiration for art creation would no long sustain.

4.2.2 The Simplicity of External Publicity

The advance of information technology has been continuously promoting the deepening of cultural globalization. With the help of the Internet, the communication methods of various cultures have become more diversified. However, in Zhoushan, the propaganda of marine folk culture still remains single and simple, relying highly on the government-led programs, like Kaiyang festival, Xieyang festival, and Sand Sculpture festival, to name a few, all sponsored by the local government. Without any cultural market engagement, the promotion effect is quite limited. The cultural industry cannot exert its inherent influence for the absence of market-oriented development. Festival ceremonies have no festival atmosphere, consequently fail to attract more tourists and investors. What’s worse, the festival economy can hardly pay off the government investments, which leads the government to an awkward situation. It is far from enough for the single platform to drive the development of marine folk culture. As far as the current situation, Zhoushan has not yet formed a complete cultural industrial chain and a forceful cultural complex of related industries in the preservation, promotion and further development of marine folk culture.

4.2.3 Territorial Limitation

As an island city, traffic inconvenience has been restricting the export and development of marine folk culture in Zhoushan. Historically, for geographical conditions, Zhoushan islands were isolated from inland China, with a large number of islands, but few opportunities for Zhoushan residents to communicate with the outside world. Therefore, for a long time, Zhoushan marine folk culture could only be “kept in the boudoir”. With the completion and opening of the Zhoushan sea-crossing bridge, more and more people in Zhoushan are now able to go out conveniently, which provides chances for the spread of marine folk culture. But at present, traffic inconvenience is still the factor restricting the promotion of local marine folk culture. Zhoushan is still not connected to the railway system, and the number of air routes to Zhoushan is very limited. The transportation from inland cities to Zhoushan needs to be improved.
In addition, geographical constraints also affect the immigration of cultural innovation talents. For the promotion of culture, what needed most are the high-qualified talents with advanced technology and innovative consciousness. The shortage of cultural innovative talents in Zhoushan region has aggravated the development of marine folk culture.

5. Strategies for the Preservation and Promotion of Zhoushan Marine Folk Culture

5.1 Combined Efforts of Local Government and Relative Industries

There are many kinds of marine folk culture and rich resources in Zhoushan. How to better combine the culture industry with others, especially the tourism industry to further the preservation and promotion of marine folk culture should be fully discussed by the local government. Instead of dominating, the government had better step back to play the role of policymaker and coordinator, carefully implementing “government propulsion, industry linkage, market orientation, and society participation” policies. It is advisable for the government to set up special agencies to better coordinate different departments in management, draw overall plans for the combination of marine folk culture with other industries, and attract various social strengths to ensure the effective promotion and rational development. Meanwhile, measures should be issued by government to arouse the public awareness of participating in the mission of preserving and promoting the local culture, and to cultivate technical inheritors for those endangered types of marine folk culture. Moreover, the government needs to solve the constraints of the transportation to increase the geographical accessibility and introduce specific policy to recruit innovative talents.

5.2 Multi-media Convergence and Multi-channel Communication

With the wide coverage of mass media and internet, the promotion of Zhoushan marine folk culture should not be limited to the traditional mode of publicizing, like the newspaper or television ads. Zhoushan has unique coastal landform, which can be presented as the scenarios of films or television programs, such as the earthly paradise--Taohua Island, the magnificent fishing ceremony--Xieyang festival, and other kinds of marine folk culture, through the combination of words and video, attracting both culture investors and audiences at home and abroad, and rejuvenating the ancient marine folk culture. In addition to film and television promotion, online games which are the first entertainment choice for modern youngsters offer another way to publicize the ancient culture. Game map based on the local landscape can be designed together with game plots about marine folk culture. Players can enjoy island adventure under the guidance of the game map with the scenery of coastal landscape, together experience various forms of marine folk culture, and hence vitalize the endangered traditional culture. Through multi-channel and diversified publicity, youngsters could be engaged in the preservation and promotion of
Zhoushan marine folk culture, breaking the current single propaganda dilemma and reserving potential inheritors to preserve the wealth bestowed by our ancestors. In addition to the multimedia publicity, the international students living in Zhoushan are the natural ambassadors for the promotion of Zhoushan marine folk culture. Delivering lectures about marine folk culture could help them better adapt themselves in the new environment and altogether prepare them as a group of facilitators in the output of Zhoushan marine folk culture.

5.3 In-depth Experience of Marine Folk Cultural Products

Most of the existing products of marine folk culture in Zhoushan could only offer people plain and rough intuitive feeling. Participants just stop at the initial experience stage of watching and taking photos. Many cultural products are one-off consumption without any follow-up engagement. To truly enhance the influence of marine folk culture, an aggregated model of cultural products, allowing all the participants to have an immersive experience and alluring them to come back, should be proposed. What’s more, the locals are highly advocated to work on cultural projects of in-depth experience or set up folk ecological parks, which have the advantages of calling people to participate in close quarters and fully enjoy the unrivalled charm of Zhoushan marine folk culture, hence boosting its promotion.

5.4 A Complex of Entity and Digital Museum

There are many kinds of marine folk culture in Zhoushan, but there is no platform for people to take a systematic and complete appreciation of it. If a museum of Zhoushan marine folk culture can be established, it will not only provide a professional place and base for the preservation, but also a favorable foundation and conditions for the inheritance. A marine folk culture museum will play its role of cultural transmission and social education, arouse public awareness, meanwhile preserve and protect the marine folk culture. It is open to the public at all levels, and can serve as a research base for schools, so that more and more people can participate in the preservation and promotion of marine folk culture.

With time going, many cultural customs in Zhoushan have been changed, and unable to be returned to the original. Setting up digital museum, to collect, sort out, and capture the historical memories of ancient marine folk culture, would at least preserve some of the dying culture and leave the future generation valuable reminiscences and wealth. For example, Wengzhou Zoush--an ancient form of talk show in Zhoushan, which is now listed as a form of intangible marine cultural heritage and has very small number of audiences, can be videoed and put on in the digital museum for audiences to appreciate.

At present, there are only a few of exhibition halls in Zhoushan museum dedicated to displaying local marine folk culture. A complex of entity and digital museum would help achieve the publicity effect of Zhoushan marine folk culture and should be put on the working schedule.
6. Conclusion

Most of the existing researches on Zhoushan marine folk culture remain on the description of folk phenomenon, demanding an intensive research and in-depth analysis. This study focuses on the connotation and current situation of Zhoushan marine folk culture, discusses the ways of preserving and promoting such traditional culture. The direct goal of this paper is to comb out the specific contents of Zhoushan marine folk culture, to fully understand its status in modern society, and to analyze the main causes for the delay in development. Solutions to the existing problems are proposed as an ambitious goal of the research team, hopefully to make a contribution to the development of Zhoushan marine folk culture and to improve the world fame of Zhoushan city.

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