

Guardians of Dance-Related Intangible Cultural Heritages and Their Roles

Lan Xun

Music College, Zhaoqing University, Zhaoqing, Guangdong Province, 526061, China
236625688@qq.com

Abstract: In the context of globalization, a nation's inherent culture can be regarded as its competitive advantage. Including UNESCO, the inclination for the protection of world cultural heritage has gradually changed from "tangible cultural heritage", which is mainly based on buildings, to "living heritage", that is, "intangible cultural heritage(ICH)". However, with the development of the times, the ICH has been strongly impacted by modern culture, and the younger generation pay insufficient attention to it. In particular, the dance-related heritages, which are taught by personal example as well as oral instruction, have gradually lost their vitality. Therefore, to revitalize the dance-related ICH, it is pressing to make research on the roles and plans of ICH guardians. With the new circumstances, it is urgent to build a safeguarding mechanism of multi-guardian cooperation to promote the overall safeguarding of dance-related ICH through effective cooperation of multiple parties, so that all the dance-related ICH can be developed in an orderly manner.

Keywords: Intangible cultural heritage; Dance-related ICH; Inheritors; ICH guardians

1. Concept of ICH guardians

1.1 Intangible cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is the wealth left to humanity in history and a manifestation of culture. In terms to its form of existence, Cultural heritage can be divided into tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage. Cultural heritages vary with countries and nations. Due to their diversity, countries around the world, besides UNESCO, have different concepts and names for them. Among them, "Intangible Cultural Heritage" is a term defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Subsequently, many countries have successively introduced the term and translated it into their own languages. For example, it is called "むけいぶんかざい" in Japan and "무형문화재" in Korea. After China joined UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, it was named "非物质文化遗产" in Chinese. Although the names used are different from country to country, they are all defined as "intangible cultural heritage". Intangible culture is both a traditional culture and a "living" culture. It is a manifestation of various knowledge, skills, performing arts, and cultures that societies and collectives constantly create in the interaction of their own environment, culture and history. ICH has the collective nature of a community and is passed on in life through personal examples as well as oral instructions.

According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the "intangible cultural heritage" refers to various social practices, concept expressions, manifestation, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, objects, handicrafts and cultural sites, which are regarded as part of cultural heritage by communities, groups and sometimes individuals[1]. In Article 2 of Chapter 1 of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China promulgated in 2011, "intangible cultural heritage" refers to "various traditional cultural expressions which are passed down from generation to generation by people of all ethnic groups and regarded as part of their cultural heritage, as well as objects and places related to traditional cultural expressions[2].

1.2 Inheritors

As early as 14 years ago, China promulgated the Interim Measures for the Identification and Management of Representative Inheritors of National Intangible Cultural Heritage Projects (known as

the "Interim Measures"), from which it can be seen that China has begun to attach importance to the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage since 2008, and encouraged and supported the representative inheritors of national intangible cultural heritage to carry out inheritance activities. Subsequently, the promulgation and implementation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China (known as the "Intangible Cultural Heritage Law") in 2011 legally confirmed the system of representative ICH inheritors. With China's increasing emphasis on the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, the Administrative Measures for the Identification and Management of Representative Inheritors of National Intangible Cultural Heritage (referred to the "Administrative Measures") promulgated in 2019 is a comprehensively improved version based on the Interim Measures. Article 2 of the Administrative Measures defines the representative inheritor of the national intangible cultural heritage — "A representative inheritor of the national intangible cultural heritage mentioned herein refers to an inheritor who undertakes the responsibility for the inheritance of a representative project of national intangible cultural heritage, has a great influence in a certain area, and is recognized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China." [3] Different from tangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage is a "living" cultural pattern with practical activities of the inheritor as the main carrier. In order to ensure the ICH inheritance, inheritors must not only possess the highest technical level in the heritage, but also shoulder the mission of continuing the lifeblood of ICH. Both the ICH and inheritors are indispensable.

1.3 ICH guardians

According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the "Safeguarding" refers to "measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage." [4] As can be seen from above, it is necessary to safeguard ICH from multiple aspects, so who should take the responsibility? Each state should formulate relevant safeguarding measures according to their national conditions, and provide appropriate support and assistance.

Article 3 of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law states that "The State should take measures to identify, record, and archive intangible cultural heritage to preserve it; for those intangible cultural heritages that embodies the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation and has historical, literary, artistic and scientific value, measures of inheritance and transmission should be taken to safeguard them." [2] The Intangible Cultural Heritage Law clearly stipulates that it's the "State" who should protect the development of intangible cultural heritage, which shows that the "State" plays a highly important role as one of the ICH guardians. However, there are other ICH guardians besides states. ICH guardians can be roughly divided into two categories. The first category is the aforesaid inheritors, which refer to the personnel that promote the generation, preservation, inheritance and development of ICH. The inheritor has the responsibility and obligation to safeguard the ICH projects that they possess. The other type of ICH guardians refers to those who do not possess the ICH nor inherit its skills, but protect and promote the development of ICH by virtue of their different resource advantages. These include governments, academia, commercial circles, media and NGOs, which play an important role in promoting the protection, inheritance and transmission of ICH.

2. Dance-related ICH guardians

The ideal ICH safeguarding mode is spontaneous inheritance within a nation. On this basis, the internal ICH safeguarding will not be affected by external factors, and such ideal spontaneous ICH safeguarding mode requires an intact and unspoiled original cultural ecology. Throughout the world today, the native cultural ecology has been spoiled more or less, so it is now not enough to only rely on the internal inheritance for the safeguarding. With the gradual advancement of the ICH safeguarding in China, in addition to the ICH holders, different participants such as the governments, academia, commercial circles, media and NGOs are required to devote themselves to the actual ICH safeguarding, so as to form coordination and cooperation between different forces.

2.1 Government functional departments

The governments of all dynasties has played an important role in the process of protecting folk art, under whose protection the collection of traditional operas and traditional songs and dances in ancient

China was completed and has been passed down to the present. Since modern times, the collection and sorting of ethnic folk dances in China have also been completed under the leadership of the government with the power of the whole country. The role of states in the safeguarding of ICH is indispensable. The Opinions on Strengthening the Safeguarding of China Intangible Cultural Heritage promulgated by the General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China in 2005 is an earlier authoritative document, which puts forward the working principles of ICH safeguarding: "Government leadership, social participation, clearing responsibilities, and formation of joint forces; long-term planning, step-by-step implementation, combination of points and aspects, and emphasis on actual results." [5] Among them, the principle of "government leadership" has a long-term effect on the subsequent ICH safeguarding. In the subsequent safeguarding, the functional departments of the Chinese government adopted the joint meeting system and, according to the needs of the ICH safeguarding, many departments have been involved in the ICH safeguarding with the leadership of the Ministry of Culture, which laid a good foundation for the later work [6].

2.2 Academia

Academia has played an important role in the ICH protection and promotion. In society, they should not only arouse the public's awareness of the protection of intangible cultural heritage, but also promote the spirit of intangible cultural heritage. Academically, they conduct in-depth analysis and summary of the inheritance and dissemination of traditional cultural heritage, and carry out domestic and foreign academic exchanges of intangible cultural heritage to introduce foreign experience. When the country needs them, the academia needs to set up a team of experts to assist in the formulation of government-related documents.

The academia of safeguarding of dance-related ICH includes dance practice experts and dance theoretical professionals, and dance educators who have certain basic knowledge on ICH. Places for the safeguarding of dance-related ICH include art institutes, colleges and universities that offer dance majors, art colleges, dance schools in various provinces and cities, dance training institutions, etc.

2.3 Commercial circles

At present, the commercial circles in ICH safeguarding in China include film and television groups, cultural companies and development companies. The role of commercial circles has been controversial over the years. Whether the commercial circles can appropriately and actively promote the ICH development depends on whether they have a correct understanding of the concept of ICH safeguarding. At present, the development of dance performances is an important manifestation of the commercial development of ICH. However, how to exactly display the dance while enable commercial circles to seek economic "win-win" results requires further in-depth thinking.

2.4 Media

As one of the most important participants of ICH safeguarding, the media industry undertakes great social responsibilities. The media can effectively popularize and publicize dance-related ICH and guide the public to actively participate in the ICH safeguarding through various forms such as television, radio, newspapers, periodicals, and the internet.

In terms of the safeguarding of dance-related ICH, China has, with the assistance of the media, carried out publicity and transmission through various online and offline channels and forms. In 2021, the fifth theme of the 14th Five-Year Plan for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China clearly pointed out the important role of media in the ICH safeguarding, and encouraged various news media and related industries to protect and transmit ICH.

2.5 NGOs (Non-governmental Organizations)

Matsuura, the former secretary-general of UNESCO, said in his speech that "Civil societies, especially NGOs, play an important role in trying to bridge the gap between the community and the government." NGO is the abbreviation of Non-governmental organization. The so-called NGO generally refers to those non-governmental, non-profit, and voluntary social intermediary organizations that are engaged in public welfare undertakings. In the field of ICH safeguarding in China, there are various forms of NGOs, including industry associations and professional groups, as well as some

foundations, non-profit organizations, enterprises, etc., all of which may become an ICH guardian. Among them, there are also many social groups such as the art associations, dance associations and dance groups in China's dance field.

3. Roles of dance-related ICH guardians

3.1 Leading of governments

Governments play a key leading role in the implementation of ICH safeguarding. This is embodied in the following: representing the State to undertake the international obligations of the Convention, establishing various institutions for the safeguarding, improving policy systems, setting up organizations for the safeguarding, raising funds, etc. These can fully ensure the rationality and accuracy of government decisions, which contributes to ICH safeguarding work to be carried out in an orderly manner. In the safeguarding of dance-related ICH, the attitude of governments is very critical to its inheritance and development. Firstly, the government should establish relevant administrative agencies, manage to make plans through on-the-spot investigation and research so as to retain the traditional style of dance. Secondly, the government is expected to regularly organize some performances or activities of dance-related ICH projects, so that people can actively accept the influence of dance in a specific environment, and more people can make acquaintance with dance-related ICH. Thirdly, the government increases capital investment to provide economic security. Fourthly, the government can set up "dance protection villages" or "dance inheritance bases". Finally, the government should care about the inheritors, provide them with spiritual support and encouragement, ensure basic living security, and solve the main problems that hinder inheritance work.

3.2 Support from academia

For academia's ICH safeguarding, articles 33, 34 and 35 of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage Law propose that it is encouraged to carry out research on science and technology of ICH and on protection and preservation methods of ICH. It is support to record ICH and organize and publish representative projects of ICH, etc.. At school level, it is expected to carry out relevant intangible cultural heritage education. At the level of public cultural institutions, ICH academic research institutions, and protection institutions, etc., the sorting, research, academic exchanges and publicity of representative projects of intangible cultural heritage should be carried out.

Academia has been an active participant in protection and inheritance of ICH. Disciplines of dance-related ICT research involve art, history, literature, ethnology, anthropology, sociology, folklore, ICH, etc. However, the academia still lacks corresponding multidisciplinary talents and professional talents for dance research. In the next step, we can fully integrate academic resources of dance-related ICH and organize research on the historical origin, cultural connotation, art performance, ritual function, social change, and inheritance and protection of dance-related ICH.

At the level of school education, dance projects in various provinces and cities cooperate with schools to promote the protection and inheritance of local dance-related ICH in primary and secondary schools and college campuses. For example, firstly, set up ICH teaching bases in primary and secondary schools with local dance-related ICH programs, offer dance-related ICH courses, and promote the training of dance-related ICH professionals. Secondly, set up dance-related ICH research bases in colleges and universities. The establishment of research bases is not simply to inherit the project, but more about scientific research. Through scientific research and discussion of protection methods, the scientific and technological level of dance-related ICH protection will be improved.

3.3 Impetus of commercial circles

Commercial circles play a key role on boosting the safeguarding of dance-related ICH. They promote the masses to become potential transmitter and inheritors of dance-related ICH. At present, under the effective packaging of the commercial circles, the dance-related ICH has presented a huge commercial attraction, brought enormous economic benefits and increased the attention of the masses at the same time, allowing more people to learn about dance-related ICH and inspiring them to actively participate in the protection and inheritance of dance-related ICH. For example, commercial circles have created some commercial works of large-scale Chinese traditional music and dance show all over the country, such as The Walking Art of the Qiang Nationality - Shipada(羌族行走艺术-诗帕达), Dreamer

Millennium (梦客千年), etc. These works have aroused great social responses in the local area, attracting a large number of audiences to watch and appreciate the artistic beauty of ICH.

3.4 Wide transmission by media

Since China took the media industry as the strategic partner of the safeguarding plan in the 14th Five-Year Plan for the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the media industry has launched waves of reforms. In the ICH safeguarding, the media has assisted to achieve three roles of publicity, education and entertainment.

At present, the media can protect and transmit China's dance-related ICH in the following ways. First, the mobile transmission channel is the main front. Using the influence of mobile transmission can achieve the "going out and bringing in" of China's dance-related ICH. In recent years, short video applications have developed rapidly, attracting young people and the public. It is a desirable development approach to register dance ICH official account and inheritor personal accounts on the short video platform, post some dance videos, and form an interaction mechanism between the masses and dance culture. Second, build an online dance exchange and sharing platform to promote exchanges and mutual learning, e.g., popularize dance theoretical knowledge, teach dance online, and post performance videos on the platform. Third, transmit through radio, film and television. The media should focus on typical reports and make more groups come to know dance-related ICH and actively participate in the safeguarding activities through reporting on the deeds of inheritors and guardians of dance-related ICH. The correct use of media transmission will greatly expand the transmission scope of the dance-related ICH. This can not only satisfy the public's pursuit of dance, but also promote the positive transmission of high-quality traditional culture.

3.5 Active promotion by NGOs

Among China's NGOs, the China Folklore Society (CFS), Chinese Arts and Crafts Society, and Chinese Society for the History of Science and Technology are ones certified by the General Assembly of States Parties to UNESCO. In the field of dance art education, China has many social groups such as art federations, dance associations, and dance groups, whose working methods are more flexible and changeable. And they can provide dance-related ICH safeguarding in various forms and channels.

NGOs in the field of dance abroad have cooperated with ICH groups or individuals to assist inheritors to carry out ICH dance exchanges, hold dance cultural exhibitions and mutual visits and performances, etc. at home and abroad, so as to support local dance-related ICH projects. By drawing on the experience of the dance-related NGOs abroad, China's NGOs can play the role of "cultural coordinators" and carry out ICH dance activities on the basis of understanding the current needs of dance-related ICH and the will of the public.

NGOs does not only play a role of injecting vitality into the community, but also a bridge role between the "outside" and ICH guardians. It can be seen that NGOs play an indispensable role in the safeguarding of ICH.

4. Conclusion

Under the new situation, in order to smoothly safeguard dance-related ICH, it is necessary for the ICH guardians to give full play to their own functions and achieve this through cooperation, so as to effectively integrate the resources of each ICH guardian, promote the overall safeguarding of dance-related ICH in an orderly manner and realize ICH inheritance and transmission on the basis of improving the safeguarding quality.

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