

The tripartite approach to narrating China's "intangible cultural heritage" stories

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Abstract: This paper aims to explore effective methods for narrating the stories of China's intangible cultural heritage (ICH), proposing a tripartite approach that includes a deep exploration of the cultural connotations of ICH, innovative dissemination methods, and the integration of modern technological means. This is to better inherit and promote China's intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in a global context. Firstly, we will delve into the profound connotations of ICH culture, uncovering its underlying history, culture, and spiritual values. Secondly, we will investigate how to utilize diverse communication methods to increase people's understanding and appreciation of ICH. Lastly, we will explore how modern technology can provide new possibilities and impetus for the inheritance and promotion of ICH culture. Through these three approaches, we can better narrate the stories of China's ICH, allowing it to shine brightly in the tide of globalization.

Key words: intangible cultural heritage; Chinese national community consciousness; the two combinations; innovation; digital empowerment

1 Introduction

Intangible cultural heritage, the non-material cultural crystallization inherited from past generations through production practices and social life, carries the memories of history and people, encompassing various aspects such as culture, production, lifestyle, interaction, and entertainment [3]. The historical and cultural implications behind ICH are crucial for promoting the cultural identity of the people. In the context of globalization and digitalization, effectively narrating ICH stories to transcend cultural and temporal boundaries and resonate with a broader audience is a scholarly hotspot worthy of in-depth exploration. China highly values the protection and inheritance of ICH, forming a series of important discourses on its protection and inheritance, emphasizing that ICH is a precious treasure of the Chinese nation and an integral part of national culture. It plays a significant role in inheriting excellent traditional Chinese culture, enhancing national cultural confidence, promoting cultural diversity and the prosperity of socialist culture. ICH represents the spiritual wealth of a country or a nation, carrying rich historical connotations and traditional wisdom. With the rapid evolution of media technology today, new platforms and media like digital technology provide new opportunities for the inheritance and promotion of ICH. Utilizing new technologies and methods to narrate the connotations behind "ICH" stories not only facilitates the effective protection and inheritance of these precious cultural heritages but also enhances public awareness and interest in ICH, promoting the protection and development of cultural diversity and continuously strengthening the public's identification with excellent traditional Chinese culture. This paper explores the tripartite approach to narrating China's "ICH" stories from the perspectives of history, connotation, and innovation, aiming to

provide new insights and methods for the inheritance and protection of ICH.

2 Narrating history: naturally coupling with the solidification of Chinese national community consciousness

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) encompasses cultural phenomena created by the descendants of the Chinese nation, including oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, customs, rituals, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe. It constitutes a precious cultural and historical heritage of the Chinese nation. Chinese leaders have repeatedly emphasized the significant role of ICH in solidifying the consciousness of the Chinese national community and constructing a shared spiritual home for the Chinese nation. Therefore, there exists a natural coupling between narrating the historical aspects of ICH culture and solidifying the consciousness of the Chinese national community. History is the memory of a nation, recording its origins, development, and transitions, serving as a crucial foundation for constructing national identity and community consciousness.

2.1 In-depth exploration of the historical connotations of intangible cultural heritage

ICH, as the inheritor of history, documents the long-standing history and cultural traditions of the Chinese nation, presenting a reenactment of the splendid ancient civilizations of various ethnic groups. It imprints the historical memory of the tumultuous and changing times of the Chinese nation and the inclusive spiritual core of "beauty in unity" among different ethnic cultures. It serves as rich material for educating about the solidification of the Chinese national community consciousness [4]. Delving deep into the historical connotations of ICH not only deepens our understanding of its value but also promotes its active inheritance and innovative development in modern society. On one hand, in order to inherit ICH through education, exploring the historical connotations of ICH to impart its historical and cultural values to the public, especially the younger generation, is a vital component of the practice path for in-depth exploration. By enhancing curriculum development, teaching, material compilation, and teacher training, specialized ICH education courses can integrate the historical background, significance, and practical skills of ICH into the educational system. On the other hand, it is crucial to systematically organize historical documents, archives, and research works related to ICH to construct a historical knowledge framework for ICH projects. Strengthening interdisciplinary research, combining perspectives from history, anthropology, and folklore, and engaging in ICH protection efforts in villages and communities through observation and participation can provide an in-depth understanding of the historical background, inheritance process, and social functions of ICH. Furthermore, enhancing the collection of oral histories by interviewing ICH inheritors and elderly community members can capture first-hand data on the inheritance and changes of ICH.

2.2 Displaying the historical origins of the Chinese national spirit

"To seek the longevity of a tree, one must fortify its roots; to desire the river to flow far, one must dredge its source." Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is replete with rich national cultural information, reflecting the wisdom and spirit of a nation. By unveiling the historical origins of the Chinese national spirit to narrate ICH stories, it not only facilitates a deeper public understanding of the value of ICH but also ignites a sense of national pride and cultural identity. "Throughout the long river of history, the diligence, plainness, politeness and benevolence of agricultural civilization, the unrestrained enthusiasm and robust vigor of the nomadic civilization, and the inclusive and daring spirit of the maritime civilization have continuously contributed to the traits and endowments of the Chinese nation, collectively forging the great national spirit centered on patriotism [8]", as articulated by Xi Jinping in his speech at the National Commendation Conference for Ethnic Unity and Progress. These spirits have been passed down through generations, and are deeply rooted in the history and culture of the Chinese nation, becoming a crucial component of the consciousness of the Chinese national community. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized in the Central Ethnic Work Conference that "to solidify the

consciousness of the Chinese national community is to guide all ethnic groups to firmly establish the concept of sharing weal and woe, honor and disgrace, life and death, and common destiny". These values and spiritual forces have inspired the tenacity and courage of the Chinese nation in the face of difficulties, strengthening our identification with the national community while also enriching the cultural essence of the Chinese nation, injecting a potent spiritual force into the development and prosperity of the nation. On one hand, ICH stories can be situated within the historical context of the development of the Chinese national spirit, showcasing how ICH projects reflect and inherit the spiritual qualities of the Chinese nation. On the other hand, it is essential to highlight exemplary figures, narrating stories of historical personalities related to ICH projects to demonstrate the tangible manifestations of the Chinese national spirit, enhancing the story's appeal and persuasive power. Finally, proactive emphasis on value transmission is crucial, highlighting the significance and role of ICH in inheriting the Chinese national spirit, thereby stimulating public support and participation in the protection of ICH.

2.3 Vividly presenting the magnificent historical epic of Chinese cultural exchange, integration, and assimilation

"Culture is the soul of a nation, and cultural identity is the foundation of national unity." The exchange, communication, and integration of Chinese culture constitute a magnificent historical epic, with intangible cultural heritage (ICH) playing a significant role in this process, reflecting the historical orientation of the Chinese nation's interactions and integrations. As pointed out by Chinese national leaders, "the reason why Chinese culture is so splendid, profound, and extensive is due to its inclusive nature. Unfolding the long scroll of history, from King Wuling of Zhao adopting the Hu's attire for riding and archery to Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei's Hanization reforms; from 'every household in Luoyang learning Hu music' (a kind of music of ethnic minorities in ancient China) to 'all Qiang people singing Han songs'; from frontier ethnic groups wearing 'top garments and skirts' and singing 'elegant songs' to the central plains popularizing 'upper garments and trousers', Hu clothing and caps, as well as the lion dance, Huqin (a musical instrument of a Chinese minority nationality), and cheongsam seen everywhere today, all these demonstrate the mutual learning and integration of various ethnic cultures." It can be said that the long-standing and profound ICH not only retains the historical memories and Chinese cultural genes of multi-ethnic interactions but also serves as a vivid practice in constructing a shared spiritual home and solidifying the consciousness of the Chinese national community. The ICH and its embedded Chinese cultural genes are the vital sources for building the Chinese national community, enhancing national identity and unity. By showcasing the historical facts of Chinese cultural interactions, we can strengthen the national pride and cultural confidence of the Chinese national community members, aiding in transforming the Chinese nation into a community with a higher degree of identification and stronger cohesion. By narrating the detailed history of the interactions and integrations among the children of the Chinese nation, people can sense the accumulation of history and the continuation of traditions, thus fostering a sense of identification and pride in Chinese traditional culture, actively seeking the essence of national and patriotic spirit, forming an indestructible national centripetal force, gaining cultural identity and belonging, and promoting the cohesion of the Chinese national community consciousness.

3 Conveying connotations: perfectly aligning with the "two combinations" logical framework

At the centenary celebration of the Communist Party of China, it was explicitly stated, "integrate the basic tenets of Marxism with China's realities and the best of its traditional culture" (referred to as the "two combinations"). The logical framework of "two combinations" first acknowledges the excellent components of Chinese traditional culture; secondly, it confirms the high compatibility between excellent traditional Chinese culture and the values of scientific socialism; lastly, it asserts that only through creative transformation and innovative development can the integration issues be resolved and excellent traditional Chinese culture be endowed with contemporary significance.

3.1 Profound understanding of the concept and significance of intangible cultural heritage

The concepts contained within intangible cultural heritage (ICH) align with the pursuit of the socialist core values. ICH encompasses the essence of national values and spirit, serving as a vital source for nurturing socialist core values. For instance, the spirit of bravery and resilience conveyed through ICH attire aligns with patriotic beliefs; the spirit of enduring hardship matched with the quality of dedication to one's work; and the concept of a common origin resonates with the ideal of an egalitarian society [1]. The values conveyed by ICH culture deepen the cultural foundation of socialist core values and enrich the cultural semantics of those values.

ICH holds multiple meanings and values. Firstly, it is a crucial vessel for cultural inheritance. Through the transmission and promotion of ICH, people can learn about and experience the cultural heritage left by their ancestors, thereby maintaining and carrying forward cultural traditions, promoting excellent national culture, and strengthening cultural identity and pride. Secondly, ICH serves as a significant symbol of national culture. Each ethnicity has its unique ICH projects, such as Peking opera, Cantonese opera, and Kun Opera in China, which reflect the unique style and spiritual essence of the national culture, symbolizing its cultural significance. Thirdly, ICH acts as a bridge promoting cultural diversity and exchange. ICH projects from different ethnicities and regions showcase a rich cultural landscape, facilitating exchanges and mutual learning among various cultures, contributing to the diversity and richness of human civilization.

ICH projects are not only testimonies of history but also valuable assets for contemporary society. By protecting and inheriting ICH, we can ensure the continuation of traditional skills and folk customs, allowing traditional culture to thrive with new vitality in modern society. Moreover, ICH provides new ideas and resources for the development of modern society. The rich cultural creativity and wisdom embedded in traditional skills and folk customs offer inspirations and guidance for innovation and development in contemporary society. Therefore, ICH is not just a memory of the past but also a source of power and wisdom for today's society.

3.2 The in-depth exploration of the inheritance and the development of intangible cultural heritage

Currently, the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) faces several challenges and difficulties. Firstly, with the process of modernization, traditional culture is gradually marginalized and diluted, leading to a decline in interest and identification with traditional culture among the younger generation, which puts pressure on the inheritance of ICH. Secondly, the aging of the inheritors of some ICH projects, along with worsening inheritance environments and conditions, puts certain ICH projects at risk of being lost. Thirdly, the collision and integration of traditional culture with modern life also pose challenges to the inheritance of ICH, and finding a way to adapt to modern society while maintaining traditional cultural characteristics is an urgent issue to be addressed.

Historical experience teaches us that to build a modern civilization for the Chinese nation, it is essential to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of excellent traditional Chinese culture. General Secretary Xi Jinping has emphasized multiple times that inheriting excellent traditional Chinese culture must adhere to the Marxist dialectical view of treating historical culture, which involves discerning and selectively inheriting the millennia-old national culture, thus achieving the creative transformation and innovative development of excellent traditional Chinese culture. As an important component of excellent traditional Chinese culture, ICH carries rich historical connotations and traditional skills, possessing unique cultural value and ethnic characteristics. Promoting the creative transformation of ICH culture means maintaining its traditional features while endowing it with new contemporary connotations and modern expressions, invigorating its vitality to better adapt to the needs and development of contemporary society. Innovatively developing ICH culture involves supplementing, expanding, and perfecting the connotations of ICH culture on the basis of inheritance, thus enhancing its influence and appeal, and imbuing it with new vitality and energy.

3.3 The in-depth exploration of the value and essence of intangible cultural heritage

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH), as an integral part of traditional culture, possesses rich historical value and cultural essence while also holding significant relevance for contemporary society.

Firstly, as times evolve and society changes, traditional culture needs to integrate with contemporary society, incorporating innovative elements to meet the demands of modern life. Exploring the contemporary significance of ICH can facilitate the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture, ignite the creative passion of ICH bearers and artists, and propel the modernization of ICH.

Secondly, ICH carries a wealth of cultural information and historical memory, serving as an essential medium for cultural communication and exchange. By delving into the historical origins and cultural backgrounds of ICH, we can better understand and grasp the connotations of these cultural heritages, promoting exchanges and dialogues among different regions, ethnicities, and cultures, enhancing cultural diversity and exchange, and fostering a sense of national pride and identity.

Furthermore, ICH projects reflect the unique charm and traditional wisdom of national culture, playing a role in consolidating social consensus and promoting social harmony. By deeply exploring the human emotions and artistic allure contained in ICH projects, it can inspire the public's love and identification with traditional culture, strengthen social cohesion and cultural confidence, and contribute to social stability and development.

4 Discussing innovation: closely integrating with the thoughts of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era

On June 2, 2023, at the Chinese Culture Inheritance and Development Symposium, a comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth exposition was made on a series of significant theoretical and practical issues concerning the inheritance and development of excellent traditional Chinese culture from the strategic height of national career development. It was emphasized that "we must adhere to maintaining integrity while innovating, with the vigor and sharpness of innovation, to continue the historical lineage and compose the contemporary chapter of China". This highlights the importance of innovation within the realm of excellent traditional Chinese culture, where standing on tradition and daring to innovate are indispensable factors in the inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage (ICH).

4.1 Leveraging digital technology to infuse modern elements into intangible cultural heritage skills

With the rapid innovation and widespread use of digital technology, digitization has become an inevitable choice for the continuation and revitalization of ICH in contemporary times. Combining digital means with ICH can better showcase its status in Chinese history and traditional culture when narrating ICH stories, evoking people's identification and pride in traditional culture.

Firstly, digitization has become an important pathway for ICH documentation and resource sharing, also serving as a crucial path in recent years for the involvement of communication and archival studies in ICH protection. Digital technology can assist ICH bearers in digitally recording and protecting ICH skills, for example, through digital archives, virtual exhibitions, and other means, multi-dimensional recording and preservation of ICH skills can be achieved to ensure their inheritance and protection.

Secondly, in this era of rapid information dissemination, digital technology can integrate text, images, and audio, providing convenience for the dissemination and promotion of ICH culture. For instance, using the internet, social media, and other platforms to display ICH skills to a broader audience can enhance the visibility and influence of ICH culture, allowing people to understand ICH projects intuitively and authentically. Furthermore, utilizing VR technology to introduce ICH projects in a "playful" manner, showcase the skills of ICH bearers, create a temporal-spatial effect that

bridges the ancient and modern can enable audiences to quickly immerse themselves in the scenes and experience, offering a new channel for the inheritance of ICH.

Moreover, digital technology can also facilitate the integration of ICH skills with modern lifestyles, such as using 3D printing technology to infuse modern elements into ICH skills, empowering the innovation of ICH consumption patterns with digital technology, and deeply integrating culture with technology to create products that better meet the demands of modern consumers.

4.2 Strengthening intangible cultural heritage education to cultivate inheritors with innovation awareness and interdisciplinary knowledge

Inheritors are the mainstay of the active transmission of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and the core of ICH protection. China has explicitly stated in the "14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Development" the need to "strengthen the training of ICH inheritors". Enhancing the cultural transmission of ICH is crucially dependent on people, making the training of more ICH inheritors both urgent and necessary [6].

Training more ICH inheritors requires additional policy support. At the government level, ICH-related policies need to be refined and comprehensive guidance provided. This includes establishing a robust ICH investigation and recording system to globally identify representative and significant ICH projects, exploring standards and methods for recognizing ICH inheritors, and developing policy support measures based on these criteria [2].

At the societal level, there should be a strengthening of ICH popular education, especially starting from a young age. Leveraging the advantages of campus resources to cultivate students' interest in ICH through educational teaching pathways is crucial. Establishing ICH education bases and emphasizing the development of young people's awareness of ICH protection are vital steps. Utilizing modern technological means, such as virtual reality (VR) and online education platforms, provides students with digital training and educational resources, fostering a group of ICH inheritors with a spirit of craftsmanship and innovative abilities.

Moreover, various methods should be employed to conduct ICH-themed promotional activities, planting the idea in people's minds that "ICH inheritance is grand and glorious", encouraging young individuals learning ICH skills to gain more understanding and respect from society and family.

4.3 Focusing on cross-disciplinary integration to create ICH works with contemporary value

Cross-disciplinary integration of ICH involves combining traditional ICH with modern society, art, technology, and other fields to create new values and possibilities. Injecting new vitality into ICH culture attracts a broader audience, promoting the inheritance and development of ICH while also helping traditional culture find new value and significance in contemporary society. Currently, the "ICH+" model of cross-disciplinary integration has become an important representation of innovation in ICH inheritance, manifested in several forms.

First, "intangible cultural heritage + cultural tourism" leverages ICH resources to create unique cultural tourism brands. The Yinan Red Sister's (It refers to the great women group in Yimeng Mountains during the war, who made great revolutionary cause) Hometown Tourism Area attracts tourists with various ICH and folk art projects like face molding, spinning, blacksmithing, paper-cutting, pancake baking, gourd pyrography, woodblock new year painting, gold thread products, and tofu making, offering visitors an eye-opening experience. Jinli Ancient Street in Chengdu, with its "four hundred meters of poetic and picturesque paths, revealing two thousand years of vicissitudes", has become a popular spot for young people to visit. In the Puzhehei prairie, tourists can immerse themselves in Mongolian culture, including traditional attire, folk performances, and prairie experiences, deeply engaging with the local customs and culture.

Nowadays, more and more scenic areas and streets are relying on the experience of ICH skills, becoming a significant trend in the integration of culture and tourism.

Second, "intangible cultural heritage + online gaming" breaks the boundaries between virtual and real worlds to expand the living space of ICH. The cross-disciplinary integration of online gaming and ICH culture is a bold attempt that transcends traditional limits, merging online and offline, modern and traditional, and diverse audience layers. Unlike the simple digital preservation and display of ICH, this integration incorporates ICH culture into game props, character costumes, background music, themed events, and scene construction, presenting a diverse manifestation of ICH culture [7]. Through online gaming, players can contact, understand, and experience ICH culture in a virtual world, enhancing the promotion and inheritance of ICH culture interactively. Moreover, gaming platforms reach a wider audience, achieving comprehensive coverage of ICH culture dissemination.

Third, "intangible cultural heritage + products" injects new vitality into ICH culture. By combining ICH skills with modern design, products that meet contemporary aesthetics and market demands are created. For example, traditional embroidery is applied to modern fashion clothing, home goods, and craft designs, while traditional ceramics techniques are integrated into modern architecture, home decor, and art pieces. This combination provides more employment and development opportunities for ICH inheritors, promoting the inheritance and development of ICH culture. Additionally, through innovative design and marketing of ICH cultural products, the market space for ICH culture is expanded, realizing the economic value of ICH culture.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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