

A Study on the Oral Language Inheritance System of Gejia People

Gu Jijian

Chongqing Vocational College of Transportation, Jiangjin, Chongqing, 402247
Gumuran2006@126.com

ABSTRACT

Language is the soul of ethnic culture, and words are the carrier of language. Unwritten Language culture is a wonderful cultural heritage, but it may be a mournful or unsustainable phenomenon of civilization. The Gejia people fit exactly into this characteristic, and the research on the language and character inheritance system of the Gejia people is rare. This is a bad sign because the topic is really fascinating.

Keywords: *Gejia language; unwritten language; civilization erosion; cultural heritage;*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Gejia is an ethnic group of Chinese found mainly in the counties of Huangping, Kaili, Guizhou province, southwestern China. They are officially classified as a part of the Miao, but they are obviously different from the Miao people in terms of belief, clothing, language, etc., and they do not identify with the latter psychologically (to be recognized as the 57th minority group in China). They have a language without written characters. The "Exploration·Discovery" section of China Central Television once released a special program in 2003 to introduce the people, and introduced in more detail the origin, historical development, and folk customs of the people. From then on, the Gejia people began to draw attention from the outside world. And what I am most concerned about is where the development of the language of the people will go, for language and culture are the soul of a nation, and the carrier of the language is indeed words. Language and culture without words is respectable, but might leave the world with a lament. Netizens Zuo Xiaoduo once commented sadly: Dongba characters born of religion and known as the "living fossil" of the origin and development of human social writings; the women of the Pingdi Yao people invented nv shu – "women's writing", the only gender-based written language to have been found in the world.; the ancestor of the Shui tribe, Lu Duogong created hieroglyphs that are exclusive to men—Shui Shu, "water writing" ... the fate of these unique text treasures created by the ancestors may be just like other customs in China it disappeared and vanished in the long course of history. Also having the same fate (all ethnic minorities) are 17 languages including Turkic, Uighur, Chagatai, Khotanese, Tokharian, Sogdian, phags-pa yin hergen, Khitan large script, Khitan small script, angut script, Jurchen script, Dongba pictographs, Saba pictographs, Dongba hieroglyph, Geba syllabary, Shui syllabary, Manchu script, etc. To be precise, the disappearance or non-existence of languages will slowly dissect the soul of a

nation, either subject to a part of another nation, or to "oblivion", or to be reduced to an assimilation. This is the perpetual law of history, and it is also in line with some linguists' estimation that "more than 80% or 90% of the 6,700 languages worldwide will disappear in the 21st century, and a more conservative estimate is 70%". In other words, there will be 4700 languages gone in the 21st century. The disappearance of a large number of marginalized languages will inevitably lead to the singularity of the language, which will lead to the singularity of the culture and even the singularity of the human thinking mode. Does it forebode that human kind would be living in a miserable world without words? This requires answers to be sought from history and reality.

2. Language and Ethnic Fate

2.1. Historical Verification of Evolution and Ethics Science and Morals (Book by Thomas Henry Huxley)

The historical law of "the natural selection and survival of the fittest" is also applicable to the development of a nation or ethnic group, including its culture, language, and ethnicity, except for abnormal extinctions. If an ethnic group vanishes, the most important reason is that it can't interact with the outside world. The core problem is the lack of language, as argued in the "The World Vanishing Peoples", "the extinction of the Sumerian is as gruesome as the disappearance of the Akkadian cuneiform script". No matter how strong and brilliant this ethnic group used to be, doom often befalls unexpectedly. Egypt is a typical example. The Romans burned the Alexander Library. After the Arab occupation, enslavement and assimilation, the Egyptians completely became an Islamic nation. An ethnic group with language is still so fragile, not to mention those ethnic groups without words will find it difficult to resist the fatal blows of foreign invasions, just as the Turkic, Uighur, Khotan, Sogdia, Tangut, Jurchen and other ethnic groups

are lost in history. The method of inheriting civilization from language is fragile. The path of inheriting civilization from text is progressive and stable, and it is also an inevitable demand for social development. Although the pronunciation of the Gejia language throughout the country is very uniform with no dialect and no native language, which is a very prominent advantage. However, after all, it is a low-level advantage, and the people speak both their own national language, as well as Chinese and Miao language. They speak their language according to the context. Under the external influence, it is a big question whether the clan can "hold its own ground" and "stand still". When a very prominent ethnic group changes its language habits, its cultural system must change qualitatively. After the qualitative changes in the system and internal structure, I think that this ethnic group will lose its appeal; the change of the Gejia people in recent decades has confirmed this terrible process.

2.2. The Visual Trends of Reality Evolution

The Gejia people have been pursuing the dream of rising from an ethnic clan to a minority group since the Republic of China. From what have been widely advertised in various media, like the "Table Manners Observed as a Gejia Diner", "Mysterious Gejia Customs", "Gejia Independent National Language", "A Collection of Guizhou Gejia Ethnic Studies", "Gejia Magic Residences", "Gejia Ethnic Group: Identification of 'the 57th Nationality'", "A Letter to the Gejia People", etc., I believe they had failed to or neglected one key element in their efforts to gain national recognition and rights: that's the language of this ethnic group. If the top priority is not resolved, any other so-called breakthroughs would be just putting the cart before the horse. Based on what I concluded from my QQ group consultation in the "Gejia online group", the octogenarian older generation are speaking the Gejia language everyday. They are not familiar with the mandarin. However, half of the young people born in the 1980s and 1990s speak half mandarin and half Gejia. The trend is assumed to be unchanged. At least half of spoken language used by Gejia would be mandarin in 30 years. This compulsory language change indicates that the language of the Gejia will become an endangered intangible cultural heritage. What will happen in 50 years? I dare not imagine, but it is foreseeable that the "single nation" preference neglects the core of this ethnic group, that is, the independence and integrity of the language without the support of the text may be destroyed

3.The Problems Existing in the Language Inheritance System of the Gejia People

3.1. Gejia People Language Inheritance System

Based on the above-mentioned pessimistic judgment, it is necessary to examine the language inheritance system of

this ethnic group. The investigation found that Gejia has adopted a typical tribal communication method. There are no written tools such as words and symbols. It is only passed from generation to generation and by word of mouth. The inheritance mode of the culture of this ethnic group can actually be achieved in the following three ways:①Carriers such as clothing and decorations. Gejia embroidered graphics (to a certain extent, it can be regarded as a representation of language inheritance) through batik on clothing, quilts, pads, and even clothes, pleats, headscarves, handkerchiefs, belts, umbrella covers, etc. Apparel and accessories become a kind of language that interprets the history of the Gejia. The "words" are unique, but they are mainly concentrated on individual figures, such as stars, sun, dragons, phoenixes, insects, fish, and some plant patterns. ②Natural inheritance from generation to generation. No matter which ethnic group, as long as it exists, it must have this characteristic. The characteristics of intergenerational teaching are reflected by the previous teaching the next generation how to speak, and then the civilization of the ethnic group is passed on through the responsibility of education. These include the elders and juniors, intergenerational and occasional members within the group are passed from generation to generation, but they are natural. The unintentional and compulsory inheritance system is only an internal need or activity requirement. ③Inter-group dissemination. It mainly refers to the grand sacrifice activities in the respect group, such as the Harong Festival of the Gejia, which is held every 30 to 50 years. The Gejia sub-group like to honor their civilization by observing certain rituals like worshipping bows and arrows, often clad in armored clothing, sacrificing ancestral drums, dancing Lusheng dance, bow and arrow dance, sacrificing rice porridge, performing "shooting birds", asking for flowers, asking for sweets, and returning to glutinous rice. It is said that "Gejia men has three treasures, bows&arrows, lusheng and swords. Gejia men wear batik embroidered hats and encircle silver double bows, which was used by ancestors to fight and hunt. Flower ribbons represent bowstrings. Rooster feathers symbolizes arrow tails. Gejia women who'd rather face the powder than face powder the face wear red spike hat as sun hat, with the silver hairpin as arrows, and the silver rings bows. The women 's buns envelopes the sun and the bow symbolizes the moon. These grand events were a collective baptism of ethnic civilization and a concentrated inheritance of the ethnic civilization, but the time span was too long.

3.2. The Problems of the Language Inheritance System

In view of the fact that the above-mentioned language system has no written language, people have to worry about the world, especially researchers who are concerned about the development of the country. The unity and instability of the inheritance system will bring unexpected hidden dangers. Compared with the inheritance system

above, there are at least the following three problems:

①The limitation of the content of costume inheritance. Clothing and accessories represent a form of inheritance and civilization of the family language. After all, it is limited. No matter how developed their clothing and accessories are, they only express the mainstream, core values or origin of an ethnic group, let alone tell the exhausting history of the change of the family, it is also difficult to cover the latest information about the change of the family, such as the penetration of the market economy in the family, the media, the Internet strategy, and tourism. Impact, etc., it can not be conveyed in the classic clothing culture. This language inheritance system is undoubtedly limited, so it is difficult to reflect the timeliness and effectiveness of information;

②the lack of intergenerational inheritance and the possibility of loss. There are differences in intergenerational inheritance, which can sometimes be very different. A wise man's inheritance of the next generation's language education is rich and complete, but he still has hard-to-reach areas or forgotten information. If the ethnic group had only the information of this generation, this wise man who is proficient may inherit it, and if his next generation does not agree with it or has no preferences, he may lose it. If this wise man cannot master some of the elite culture of the ethnic group, and other compatriots will not, it will be lost. Therefore, because there is no trace, there must be the possibility of lack and loss of the inheritance system of the written language;

③The Gejia ethnic heritage is too long and unregulated. The collective interpretation of the Haron Festival must wait for 30-50 years. This time limit is too long. It has two generations. The time and space of the two generations can only rely on the small-scale Haron festival or the generations. In terms of language inheritance, although the family members can sing and dance, it cannot be confirmed that everyone is familiar with all, or most of the historical civilizations of the family members. If so, they will be the smartest ethnic group in the world. This mode of concentrating and inheriting the essence of the ethnic group is a centralized inheritance of the people of all ethnic groups (especially young people) through their individual strengths. This purpose cannot be achieved by spontaneous intergenerational relationships. Then, there is an unavoidable contradiction, that is, how can the language civilization of this ethnic group be passed down in a long time? You have to type a long string of question marks. Furthermore, the ethnic group does not stipulate what all participants should do, even if everyone is involved, but because of different preferences, some people, especially young people, just join in the fun and have nothing to do with it, their lost language civilization still has no inheritance. This is not stipulated in the collective inheritance of the language system such as the Haron Festival. Even if it is informally restricted, it has accelerated the demise of the language inheritance of the family.

There is no denying that there may be younger generations of wise men re-examining the history of the ethnic group in order to recover the lost glorious civilization, but in the

end, it is a rare case, and the possibility and probability are much smaller, especially the modern civilization under the market shock which seems to have eroded the ethnic minorities, especially the way of life and survival like the Gejia's. Up to now, there has not been a case where the once annihilated language civilization has been successfully restored. This is also an important issue that we will explore next, namely, the pessimistic predictions on the assumption of the language inheritance system of the Gejia subgroup.

3.3. Pessimistic Prediction of the Hypothetical Language Inheritance System of the Family Group

In participating in the study of the language inheritance system of Gejia, I collected relevant materials as much as possible through forums, QQ groups, telephone interviews, discussions, and literature retrieval. Some of them said that words cannot be separated from an ethnic group, and vice versa. This is a very pessimistic prediction, but it is a conspicuous hint at the heavy historical price. This is not making a fuss over an imaginary tragedy, but a worry and a prediction made by some people based on the development of reality. Although my prediction is not so difficult I accept that. However, it is not optimistic. However, hypotheses can only be established as a prerequisite.

Assumption 1: The Inheritance System Is Unchanged

The three inheritance systems of carriers such as clothing and accessories, natural pass-down from generation to generation, and inter-group dissemination are assumed to be unchanged. In the future, this system model will continue to develop without new institutional changes. As a result, there will be: the phenomenon of loss of life is getting more and more serious, which leads to the stagnation of the language of the Gejia or the loss of it step by step until it dies; The customary legal system of this type moved towards the formal constraints of civil law system regulation, and this group completely lost its endogenous ethnicity of language.

Assumption 2: The Inheritance Trend Is Unchanged

A worrying trend has emerged in the above three major inheritance systems, that is, the language of the family is becoming weaker and weaker. This trend is bound to be difficult to reverse in the absence of external changes or forcible incidents. This trend will bring three predictable results:①A language will disappear from the world or can only be appreciated in museums. This is the greatest sadness of an ethnic group because they once owned. ②Barren Language has been assimilated by Chinese, its language has changed too much, it has lost the strong color of the original ethnic group, it has become practical but boring, and it has lost the appeal to attract the world; From the internal disintegration of the language system of the family, it has completely evolved into a language that is consistent with or affiliated with another language system.

Assumption 3: The Inheritance Rate Is Unchanged

This hypothesis is to speculate on the number of years that

the speech inheritance of the family can survive, and it indicates a rough expectation of the language loss rate of the Gejia. If this assumption is used to judge the future direction of the language, that is, how many years it can survive. Taking Mr. Fei Xiaotong's investigations as the time line, from 1950 to 2010, a total of 60 years is divided into two phases: (1) 1950-late last century. In 1952, Gao Guozheng accompanied Fei Xiaotong to Fengxiang Village. An important reason was that the complete Fujia language was retained here. "The people who live in other ethnic groups because of their economic dependence on other ethnic groups have gradually lost their language. Some people can't even speak the original language anymore. We want to know the language of the Gejia. It's already difficult to find someone who can speak this language. Many people say that the ancestors knew how to speak the language, and that the elderly still remember, while that young people don't." Fei Xiaotong described it in his collection. Gao Guozhen acted as an interpreter for Fei Xiaotong. At the time, in Fengxiang Village, no one could speak mandarin Chinese. In the past few decades, the family dialect is relatively complete, with less impact, and continues the ancient style of inheritance; Early in the new century-to this day, after the market-oriented reforms, especially when the family was advertised as a mysterious group in front of the world, the impact of the outside world suddenly increased. In July 5, 2001, After the publication of the article "Descendants of the Houyi" by Southern Weekly, CCTV also broadcasted two consecutive episodes under the title of "Looking for the descendants of the Houyi", and then, intangible cultural heritage like the Gongmeng "Hachong" (2005), Huangping Gejia Clothing(2007), Gemeng Lushengle, and Huangping Batik (2009) [3] were unveiled, and the Gejia group has become market-oriented. At the same time, with the development of the tourism industry, in just 10 years, Gejia has changed from when almost no one could speak Chinese 60 years ago, to "half Chinese, half Gejia language for young people born in the post 80s and 90s". How long can the Gejia language survive? Rigid prediction is not applicable here.

Based on the three invariant assumptions of the language inheritance system of the Gejia, we naturally draw a pessimistic conclusion. The Gejia will gradually be assimilated, their ethnic identity will gradually weaken, the language will disappear, and their culture become history forever. This is a painful pessimistic conclusion, but it covers many wonderful expectations.

4.A Judgment and Limited Suggestions on the Inheritance System of the Gejia Language.

The above pessimistic prediction is our judgment that the language and culture of Gejia will move towards the rank of intangible cultural heritage, and the time is getting closer(we calculated through a model that its life span will continue for nearly a hundred years at most). Based on this judgment, from the standpoint of neutrality and rationality of the researcher, a limited number of suggestions based on

personal limited rationality are proposed.

Suggestion 1: Create Your Own Words and Abandon Chinese

I do not advocate the use of mandarin Chinese by the Gejia Group, nor do they advocate the large-scale use of Chinese as a communication tool. In the basic background of being able to understand or use Chinese, abandoning Chinese is a wise choice. It is even possible not to communicate in Chinese, which is based on the perspective of intangible cultural heritage researchers. Sometimes it is very opposed to the destruction of cultural heritage by the process of Chineseization, especially the erosion of ethnic minorities. Therefore, it is recommended to create a text:①Folksong culture model of the Zhuang Ethnic Group. They have no written language, but they have a unique recording mode. It is called Poya Song Book. It records 81 unique graphic symbols on a piece of soil, and records the stories that have been used for generations. The symbol represents a song. To learn this model, it must be done independently by its own ethnic group free of external forces, or the ethnic language and cultural system will be contaminated with "impurities", affecting its original flavor. ②The language patterns of the Zhuang, Li, and Dong nationalities. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, with Chinese pinyin, our government has helped the 12 ethnic minorities, including the Zhuang, Li, and Dong, create 16 languages. This model is a purely national power to complete the historical civilization of the ethnic group in writing, but the effect remains to be discussed; It is not necessary to learn from other writing modes, and create a written form that can inherit the language and culture of the ethnic group according to the actual situation of the ethnic group. Whether complicated or not, it is scientific as long as it suits the development needs of the ethnic group. But this requires wise men and scholars of the ethnic group. The elders can accomplish this through several joint efforts.

Suggestion 2: Design Language Inheritance System

This is to address the problems existing in the language inheritance system of the Gejia group. From the perspective of the law of material development, the status quo of the protection of intangible cultural heritage, and the development trend of the language of the Gejia group, their inheritance system does exist. Big problems need to be restructured or added to a new inheritance system that guarantee the language inheritance of the family group, and the restructured inheritance system is more secure.

①The principle of strengthening by clothing accessories. Based on the original language and culture of clothing and accessories, it is viable to continue to explore new forms that can inherit the system in a diversified, wide-ranging, and divine perspective, such as geographical indications, tourist souvenirs, family life tools, and living environment memories, to expand the coverage of the inheritance system. ②Compulsory inheritance system, such as the mandatory requirements for younger generations to be completed at rituals such as the Haron Festival, what formalities need to be grasped during this ritual process, etc . ③ Efforts should be made to enhance the educational role of generation to generation, and urge parents to pass as much as possible on

the cultural traditions of their ethnic groups to the next generation, and supervise them through similar organizations such as ethnic committees; 4. Internal training mechanisms should be set up for ethnic groups Regular training so that the ethnic traditions can flourish in interaction and not be lost. In this way, the language inheritance system of the Gejia group can be designed and reconstructed from multiple angles, so as to preserve its integrity and prevent it from being eroded to lose its nature.

Suggestion 3: Guard the Ethnic Territorial Space

This suggestion is a reflection on the development of the Gejia group and its engulfment in the vortex of the market economy. To allow them to fully adhere to the position is a disrespect for their right to development. They should also enjoy the welfare improvements brought by social development. The cultural attributes come up and they worry that they will lose their original attributes in the process and suffer the loss of cultural diversity. In the selfishness of cultural anthropologists, I hope that the Gejia group can completely guard its territorial space from any invasion, or from becoming market-oriented, but the real problem is that it has already happened, how to keep your own territory as much as possible from being harmed is the biggest success. (1) Try to block the marketized part in the outer layer (surfaced folklore features), and try to avoid being exposed to the market at a glance, otherwise it must be eroded; the territorial space of the (2) ethnic group's life should not be fully opened, it should be somewhat limitation, otherwise the external material factors will moisturize the body of the Gejia group silently, and it is impossible to save it. In short, the language of the Gejia group is fragile and incomplete without the support of words. With the expansion of the material society, its charm will be violated, showing an inverted U-shaped development. The trend will even die out.

5. CONCLUSION

In short, language is a special ethnic group logo. It expresses all the elements and connotations of the entire ethnic group. It is the most obvious symbol, that is, the specific possession of the ethnic group, which can be seen at a glance. This is of great significance to the Ge family: (1) the degree of recognition of the ethnic group in society; (2) whether the language inheritance of the ethnic group is sustainable. All these conclusions are based on the fact that the existence environment of the ethnic language of the ethnic group is not destroyed. This is the primary judgment conclusion for researchers of intangible cultural heritage, and other scholars have no sense of crisis. However, this study does not have a thorough understanding of the process and path of the oral transmission of the Gejia language, its survival mechanism and evolution direction, which is also a key link in this study that needs further in-depth research in the future.

REFERENCES

- [1] Yu Yan. Take effective measures to protect endangered languages. *Journal of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*, 2003
- [2] Liao Chaosheng. Mysterious Bow and Arrow Turkmen Family. [www.mzb.com.cn / html / report / 11663-1.htm](http://www.mzb.com.cn/html/report/11663-1.htm), 2006-09-12
- [3] Liao Fenglin. Review, Problems and Countermeasures of the Stability and Development of the Gejia Group. <http://blog.sina.com.cn>, 2011-03-28