

# "Regenerating" Tradition: A Cultural Memory Method to Reshape the Living Inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Ethnic Minorities

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## ABSTRACT

The intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities is an essential cultural crystallization of China. The existing research focuses on how to protect the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities so that it can be continuously inherited; In recent years, methods of living inheritance of intangible cultural heritage have also been researched at home and abroad, with the purpose of making intangible cultural heritage go out of the "museum" and be passed down among ordinary people. On this basis, this paper has changed the research ideas in two aspects. Firstly, the study expands from simply analyzing the advantages of living inheritance over traditional inheritance to looking for innovative methods of living inheritance. Secondly, the memory theory is introduced into inheritance practice in order to stimulate the identification of ethnic minorities members with their own culture through sharing the same cultural memory so as to make them inherit their own cultural heritage spontaneously and consciously. This research selects the intangible cultural heritage of the Tujia nationality in the southwest of Hubei province -- Silk String Gong and Drum art as a specific case. Based on in-depth interviews with the inheritors and other stakeholders of this intangible cultural heritage, as well as excavation and sorting of historical evidence, this paper extracts three phenomena of memory in the process of national culture inheritance: "mourning the dead" "collective amnesia" "horizontal inheritance", and at last put forward some schemes of embedding intangible culture heritage into the memory of the new generation of ethnic minorities. This article also responds to and advocates "a subaltern perspective of memory research" at the theoretical level.

**Keywords:** *Cultural memory, Intangible cultural heritage, Living inheritance, National identity, Spontaneous inheritance.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is an important symbol of the historical and cultural achievements of a country and a nation. As a multi-ethnic country, there are numerous and diversified ICH of ethnic minorities in China, which constitute an indispensable part of the human culture. Nowadays, the majority of ethnic minorities' ICH is in a precarious situation due to the cross-regional population flow and the assimilated way of lifestyle. Therefore, ICH, especially the inheritance of ethnic minorities, is attracting much attention and discussion at present.

The discussion of "intangible cultural heritage and living inheritance" has long been. Living inheritance refers to the inheritance mode of protection and

inheritance in the environment of the generation and development of ICH. The focus is people-oriented. As Eichler Jessika (2021) noted: "other than material heritage, intangible cultural heritage reveals strong dependencies on and interrelations with humankind: so-called 'cultural bearers' transmit intangible cultural heritage elements to future generations, attributing flexible, fluid and dynamic components to the very concept of intangible cultural heritage" (p. 793)<sup>[1]</sup>. In a considerable number of existing studies, researchers mostly take the existing experience and scheme of the living inheritance of ICH as the objects, such as the existing experience of the living inheritance of intangible cultural heritage local opera (Li Qing & Song Xu, 2019, p. 129)<sup>[2]</sup>, and pay special attention to the advantages of the living inheritance over the traditional inheritance mechanism (Gao Xiaokang, 2016, p. 2)<sup>[3]</sup>.

However, the living inheritance of ICH has encountered a new bottleneck. The first aspect is the dilution of the unique cultural atmosphere. The second aspect is that the living inheritance of ICH of ethnic minorities is often a mere formality, and the connotation of ethnic culture is not fully explored. Therefore, at present, living inheritance should no longer stop at the comparison with traditional inheritance but also need to transform its focus to find the unique connotation of the nation and explore its own cultural identity.

Reshaping the "uniqueness of culture" is a necessary proposition to give vitality to the inheritance of ICH. As Slovak scholars, Beňušková Zuzana and Pavlicová Martina (2021) mentioned, "The concept of cultural heritage in ethnology/anthropology overlaps with traditional human culture, which is a part of the culture of each community, thus safeguarding the continuity of traditions" (p. 6)<sup>[4]</sup>. Culture is the process of producing and using symbols that convey meaning and allow people to share aesthetic, religious, and personal experiences. Therefore, the reconstruction of "shared experience" between cultural groups and the construction of culture are linked and generated by each other. This "sharing" means "identification".

Identity is a social phenomenon (Jan Assmann, 1992)<sup>[5]</sup>. Cultural identity is the belief of a certain culture formed after reflection. The function of cultural memory is to ensure the continuity of group identity. The cultural memory of minorities will help minorities strengthen their identity. Implanting the ICH of an ethnic group into the consciousness of ethnic groups through the integration of traditional festivals and ceremonies will be conducive to the spontaneous protection, inheritance, and dissemination of the precious historical wealth of ethnic minorities. Therefore, the theory of cultural memory can be closely combined with the proposition of inheritance of ICH and put forward a new practice direction for the living inheritance of ICH.

This study aims to explore how to "re-integrate" ICH art into the ritual memory of the young generation using cultural memory theory. Field investigation methods such as participatory observation and key person interviews were used in this paper. At the end of 2021, the author went to Changliang Township, Jianshi County, Hubei Province, to conduct field research on the Silk String Gong and Drum (SSGD) art of the Tujia Nationality, a provincial intangible cultural heritage, and conducted in-depth interviews with relevant inheritors, protectors, and local people. The following will take the Tujia SSGD art as the research object.

Jianshi County is located in the southwest of Hubei Province and belongs to Enshi the Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture. The population of the Tujia, Miao and other ethnic minorities in the county accounts for 36.3%. Jingchu culture, Bashu culture, Tu Miao culture, and other cultures blend here. the Tujia SSGD art

is a kind of integrated instrumental music integrating silk string music and percussion music. It is developed on the basis of the Tujia traditional percussion music, "weeding gongs and drums", and constantly absorbing the nutrition of folk tones and foreign opera music. It is known as the "the Tujia people's Symphony". SSGD is widely spread in Jianshi County. There are more than 1300 SSGD artists in 65 administrative villages of Changliang Township alone. In 2005, Changliang township was set as a "national folk culture ecological protection zone" by Enshi the Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture Government; In 2007, "Jianshi Silk String Gongs and Drums" was announced as the provincial intangible cultural heritage list by the provincial people's government.

SSGD is widely used in the marriage and funeral occasions of the Tujia people. Since the 1980s, due to the introduction of new forms of entertainment such as karaoke into local families, Jianshi people have gradually begun to use new forms of entertainment at weddings. The respect for tradition and the dead made it possible for this art to be preserved at the funerals. On solemn occasions such as funerals, people still tend to invite SSGD bands to play music. The close combination with funerals essentially promotes the living inheritance of this ICH. In the process of interviewing the fifth-generation of inheritors, the author has learned that the average age of professional performers of SSGD is mainly over 40. How to attract more young people to participate in the inheritance, enhance the identity of the new generation of the Tujia nationality, and promote the SSGD art to the whole country are new challenges now.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The domestic attention to the topic of "Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance" shows the characteristics of multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and fine differentiation. In terms of quantitative research, on the one hand, scholars in economics and statistics are committed to building a comprehensive evaluation index system of ICH in specific fields, with the purpose of investigating the advantages and disadvantages of different types of ICH protection measures (Chen Xiaorong, He Wei, Zhang Qin & Cui Jiabao, 2017, p. 48)<sup>[6]</sup>, so as to provide a basis for formulating ICH related policies (Chen Bo & Zhao run, 2020, p. 79)<sup>[7]</sup>. On the other hand, it is committed to building the equation model of influencing factors of ICH inheritance (Cui Jiabao, Zhou Aiguang & Chen Xiaorong, 2019, p. 13)<sup>[8]</sup>. In terms of qualitative research, some studies focus on the inheritance mode and changes of ICH at the macro-level (Liu Xishan & Deng Xinghua, 2016, p. 24)<sup>[9]</sup>, and some studies also analyze and compare different types of inheritor mechanisms from the more specific micro levels (Wang Chen, 2015, p. 120)<sup>[10]</sup>. The key to the protection of ICH lies in the inheritors. Therefore, both studies have

paid more attention to and discussed the inheritors of ICH. Some scholars affirmed the leading function of inheritors as "cultural heroes" (Sun Zhengguo & Xiong Jun, 2019, p. 13)<sup>[11]</sup>. How to further improve the identification mechanism, management mechanism, and safeguard mechanism (Li Rongqi, 2016, p. 21)<sup>[12]</sup> is also the topic of discussion in the existing literature; At the same time, some scholars believe that the current protection policy of ICH inheritors focuses on establishing elite representative inheritors and neglects to provide most inheritors with a real social environment conducive to the improvement of skills (LV Jing & Bo Xiaojun, 2018, p. 6)<sup>[13]</sup>. Therefore, they turn to the further development protection of ICH.

In the study of intangible cultural heritage by foreign scholars, there is an ethnic perspective to specifically explore the protection and inheritance of ICH in a specific country. Carrillo Yap Siu Lang (2021) cares about traditional forest-related knowledge of Amazonian indigenous peoples (p. 854)<sup>[14]</sup>; Kim et al. (2021) research inhabitants' garments of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Weld Quay, Malaysia (p. 5393)<sup>[15]</sup>; Pavlos et al. (2021) focus on architecture through the ICH of three Aegean islands (p. 665)<sup>[16]</sup>. Scholars not only pay attention to their national cultural heritage but also introduce innovative strategies for the protection of this heritage. In 2020, Jayson, Dewayani Ery, and Rusdi Ziad concluded, "One of the advanced technology that can be used to preserve intangible cultural heritage is mobile technology" (p. 1)<sup>[17]</sup>. Brand strategy is also one of the directions for scholars to think about the living inheritance of ICH, especially in the tourism industry, based on the quickly expanding tourist market (Schildenfeld Ivana & Odak Krsić Stana, 2020, p. 81)<sup>[18]</sup>.

From special to general, foreign scholars also hope to find abstract laws and research methods from the protection of ICH, and the theoretical perspective of Pan culture is introduced. Daniel Drápala (2020) considered to which extent it is possible to apply the theoretical foundations of social capital to the ICH from the experience of "the national environment (Czech Republic) and an international organization (UNESCO)" (p. 15)<sup>[19]</sup>. The "Foucauldian" duality of power/knowledge is an introduction to analyzing how the representation of cultural heritage is linked to "the discourse around its materiality/tangibility and immateriality/intangibility" (Melis Claudia & Chambers Donna, 2021, p. 2)<sup>[20]</sup>. In 2020, Siow-Kian Tan, Hui-Hui Lim, Siow-Hooi Tan, and Yon-Sin Kok advised introducing the creativity framework originally belonging to the individual level into the social culture, so as to increase the creative source of ICH (p. 444)<sup>[21]</sup>.

### **3. PAST: CULTURAL MEMORY OF "MOURNING THE DEAD"**

Cultural memory means "what we cannot forget", and

here "we" refers to the collective. The collective needs the past to define itself. The imagination of the nation as a collective relies on an image of continuity that can be traced back to the depths of time, which is a consolidated foundational cultural memory pointing to the origin of the group. Mourning the dead is the most primitive and universal form of cultural memory (Jan Assmann, 1992, p. 34)<sup>[5]</sup>. At the beginning of its birth, the Tujia SSGD art began to perform in public on occasions such as weddings and funerals. Today, however, SSGD is almost exclusively played on funeral occasions. Respect for the continuity of "traditional customs" is preserved in funerals because compared with marriage, death is the most primitive form of revealing the rupture between yesterday and today. Because life has an end and cannot be continued; until it is over, it becomes the past, and the culture of memory can develop on its basis. the Tujia funeral highlights the inheritance of cultural memory and is related to the root of the Tujia culture.

#### ***3.1. Origin: The unique outlook on life and death of southern witchcraft culture***

As indicated in series 22 of Jianshi County Cultural and Historical Data, "since the Qin and Han Dynasties, the south and the north of China have belonged to two different cultural systems. The north is the historian culture, emphasizing personnel and paying attention to reality; the south is the witch official culture, believing in ghosts and gods and full of imagination." Ancient Ba culture was the most typical southern witchcraft culture. Ban Gu of the Han Dynasty has already mentioned in the "Hanshu · geographical records" that "the families in the Chu believed in witchcraft, and paid attention to sexual worship." Witchcraft culture is the ancestral culture of the Tujia nationality. Its religious belief in ghosts and witches has an important impact on the objective externalized symbols of the Tujia cultural memory (such as dance, ceremony, etc.). The view of life in witchcraft culture can be characterized as "animism" (James George Frazer, 2005)<sup>[22]</sup>. Lai Yongbing (2013) pointed out that in the theory of animism, "Gods are considered to affect or control the phenomena of the material world and people's life in this and future life, and believe that gods and people are interlinked" (p. 87)<sup>[23]</sup>. In this way, they have fully developed the concept of animism, including believing in the soul and future life. The life consciousness of believing that the soul is immortal and everything has spirit is reflected in all aspects of the life of the Tujia ancestors, especially in the funeral culture. There exists a kind of funeral dance named "playing funeral drum" in the Tujia customs, which is directly derived from the belief of believing in ghosts and witches. It is believed that after people die, their descendants should "play a funeral drum" to accompany the "dead" for one night.

The reason why the "dead" of the Tujia nationality can

"continue to live" and "exist forever" is due to the firm will of the group not to let it disappear. The group consciously overcomes the interruption caused by death, retains the membership of the "dead" in the form of memory, and makes it follow the group to every new present. Full-time staff, ceremonies, and even institutions have gradually emerged in this cultural activity. The art of SSGD did not directly originate from the witchcraft culture, but first emerged from the "grass gathering gongs and drums" of the Tujia people during the Ming and Qing Dynasties and turned into "playing gongs and drums". However, the continuous enrichment and improvement of the art form of SSGD, as well as its lively and jubilant characteristics, make it gradually enter the funeral occasions of the Tujia people and deeply integrate with the funeral culture. With funeral music, people constantly recall the past of the deceased in jubilation and subsequent life. From a broader group level, it is equivalent to the memory of the past of the group. The cultural memory of the group comes to the present through the current memorial ceremony, constantly reminding the group members of "who I am" and "where I come from".

### ***3.2. Communication: Confucian filial piety culture in the Tujia funeral occasions***

During the Yongzheng period of the Qing Dynasty, the governments implemented the policy of "改土归流 (bureaucratization of native officers)" in the southwest on a large scale. As a result, a large number of Han people entered the southwest district for business, agriculture, and intermarriage with the local people. The Han people in "Han the Tujia intermarriage" had a direct impact on the marriage and funeral folk customs in Southwest China.

The Confucian culture in the Central Plains is known for its "emphasis on ethics", and monarch and minister, seniors and juniors, the old and the young have their own special norms of behavior. Confucian "ritual" is also a form of law. It takes the maintenance of the patriarchal hierarchy as the core. If someone violates the norms of "ceremony", they will be punished. In Confucian culture, funeral activities are generally held by the younger generation for the elders. Ethical filial piety naturally permeates them, showing the etiquette culture of respecting the elders and making the best of filial piety. For those who participate in funeral rituals, various activities in the funeral process are a kind of practical education on ethical filial piety. Their words, deeds, and every move are undoubtedly demonstration materials, which will also be inspired by bystanders. Therefore, the Han funeral permeated with filial piety emphasizes "ostentation", which is not only the mourning and remembrance of the dead but also a symbolic performance ceremony about filial piety. Therefore, when the Confucian culture enters the funeral occasions

in the Tujia areas, the funeral songs and dances such as SSGD will not be obliterated by the impact of culture but will become an important performance in the filial piety ceremony.

Interview Case A (Xiang Yuezhou, the Tujia nationality, Jiashi County TV staff, born in the 1960s): Nowadays, many local Tujia people still compare their funerals with each other in "ostentatiousness". If a person does not invite a band to play gongs and drums for the funeral of his parents who died of old age, or if the gongs and drums band invited is not as good as that invited by other younger generation of the family, the villagers of the older generation may think that the person is "not filial", or that he is not as filial as others.

"Bureaucratization of native officers", the blending of Central Plains culture, and the inconsistency between nationality, culture, and political form have also induced reflection, and the Tujia people's natural sense of their own national cultural significance has been weakened. The individual's sense of belonging to the collective does not necessarily translate into a member's sense of belonging, but under the contrast of foreign cultures, the national memory image is more vivid. By analogy with the "looking-glass self" theory of personal self-identity, people's self is formed through interaction with others. Others' evaluations and attitudes toward themselves are a "mirror" reflecting themselves. Individuals know and grasp themselves through this "mirror". Individual consciousness is the carrier of collective self-cognition. The emergence of collective identity is also inseparable from the differential cognition when facing other collectives - "without any difference, there is no uniqueness". In the blending with the culture of the Central Plains, the identity of the Tujia people as "we" is becoming clearer and clearer.

It can be seen that the birth process of SSGD is accompanied by the Tujia people's gradual recognition of "we". The enrichment of SSGD art forms and the increase of application occasions are also closely related to the changing self-identity of the Tujia people. As one of the important symbols of the ethnic funeral ceremonies, the art of SSGD is a part of collective memory from the beginning.

## **4. NOW: COLLECTIVE "AMNESIA" AND ATTEMPTS AT MEMORY RECONSTRUCTION**

Cultural memory is not inherited by the gene. It is inherited from generation to generation by means of culture. In the traditional farming society, due to the relatively closed geographical environment and slow social change, the traditional culture can be inherited and continued stably. However, with the rapid transformation and development of modern society and the influence of urbanization and industrialization, the memory subject, carrier and corresponding symbols of regional and

national folk culture are inevitably absent and changed, resulting in the cultural memory fault of the new generation of people.

#### ***4.1. The function of ideograms and the fault of memory***

There is no national language in the Tujia nationality. Before Chinese characters entered the Tujia region, the inheritance of cultural memory completely depended on teaching by generations' precepts and examples. So "repetition" was the first key, otherwise, the cultural memory would lose its original appearance and thus be forgotten after generations. In the primitive witchcraft culture, the division of cultural memory is strictly controlled, and the final interpretation of cultural memory such as festivals, rituals, and myths belongs to the minority groups such as chieftoms and wizards who can "communicate" with gods and ghosts. The average person can acquire cultural memories only through the "presence" of festivals and ceremonies. When there were no other ways for information to travel, only festivals and rituals can provide a reason for groups to get together, and the regular repetition of festivals and rituals can consolidate national identity and make it pass down to offspring.

After the introduction of Chinese characters as written characters, the way the Tujia people transmit knowledge to future generations has changed in some aspects. It is worth noting that Chinese characters are ideograms. It leads people into the world of abstract thinking through the conceptual expression of things. The use of Chinese characters allows a nation to record important knowledge of its origins onto paper, but writing is also a double-edged sword that can lead to the degradation of human natural memory, leaving some important memories on the shelf. If the elder did not force or attract the young generation in various ways to read this part of the text, once the festivals and rituals of the past were broken, the corresponding memories would be forgotten.

Interview case B (Zhang Xiangmei, one of the fifth-generation inheritors of SSGD, born in 1965): I began to learn the tunes of Silk String Gongs and Drums with my master when I was very young. At that time, there were no written music scores, and we had never seen stage and numbered musical notation. Master hummed the tune to us with his mouth, and we listened to the tune with our ears and kept it in mind. In the 1970s, when I was a teenager, a volunteer teacher from Wuhan came to our village. By chance, he began to teach me numbered musical notation, and then we began to write the score and lyrics on the paper. Written numbered musical notation is really convenient for people with poor memory to learn, but now I think the teaching effect of word-of-mouth in our childhood is better. The tune and lyrics of Silk String Gongs and Drums have many untranslatable the Tujia spoken languages. How

can they be conveyed with Chinese characters and numbers on numbered musical notation?

#### ***4.2. "Horizontal" inheritance -- a new attempt to preserve the memory***

The intertextual text implies Mutual interpretation between texts. It can overcome the rupture of characters and build a language bridge in order to better inherit and popularize culture. By means of annotative text on past customs, cultural things can be memorized in history. In the summer of 2020, the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau of Jianshi County, together with the County Committee of Culture and History of the CPPCC, the County Bureau of Culture and Tourism, the County Cultural Center, and other departments began to plan and sort out the book "Jianshi Silk String Gongs and Drums". Modern inheritors of SSGD art still preserve technical memories of SSGD by preserving written materials, which actually is a kind of new practice, named "horizontal inheritance".

Interview case C (Liu Mingqing, Jianshi Silk String Gongs and Drums team leader): Compiling the "Qupai" into a book is of great significance to the standardized dissemination of SSGD. The inheritance of this art is not only done by the inheritor of ICH but also by nearly 100 gongs and drums groups. It is beneficial for those unofficial groups to learn the skill. In the past, each group could not necessarily learn the most orthodox SSGD, some because they did not find the most reliable teachers, and some because they were too far away from their birthplace. So we will use modern numbered musical notation in the book. Everyone who wants to learn more about this art can get to know it just by reading this book.

For modern people who want to learn and inherit SSGD (also known as potential inheritors), mastering printed materials can standardize the learning of the art of SSGD. In this way, at the current stage, the art of SSGD can be spread horizontally to a wider range of regions. However, for the Tujia people who appear as audience members, there is no need for them to learn skills. The significance of "Silk String Gong and Drum" only lies in its uniqueness from other ethnic cultures, and the biggest problem is still that not everyone in the audience is aware of this uniqueness.

The sense of belonging to national identity needs to be implanted into the consciousness of each member by the collective. The collective memory of each generation is mainly influenced by their life experiences at a relatively young age (Maurice Halbwachs, 1978, P. 51)<sup>[24]</sup>. For the inheritance of ICH, "entering the campus" can be a solution to arouse the interest of the younger generation. There are two main purposes of entering the campus: one is to enhance the understanding of teenagers about national ICH and arouse national pride; another is to attract potential and young inheritors.

Interview case B (Zhang Xiangmei, one of the fifth-generation inheritors of SSGD and after-school counselor of Changliang Ethnic Primary School): We still hope to attract more young people to learn this craft because young people have strong learning ability, which is more beneficial for inheritance. I have been learning since I was a child and have a clear understanding of this matter. At that time, I took the initiative to learn this. It was also at that time that the rural cultural life was very barren, and there was a lively group of people playing gongs and drums in the village, which really attracted me. But for this generation of young people, there are now more job options and more entertainment options. Spending time on a smartphone or watching a movie is more interesting to them than beating a gong or drum. At present, we have set up the optional course of SSGD in primary schools, which has attracted many pupils to develop this as a hobby. If some of the students find it really difficult for them to develop further in their studies, we hope that making a living on SSGD can become a possible job direction for them. The income of a professional artist is not low.

Changliang township is the "folk art ecological protection zone" of Enshi Prefecture. So far, the learning of the existing inheritors has been extended to a wider region. However, the optional course is still limited to Changliang township. SSGD can be standardized and inherited by modern printing media, but the attraction of mass culture brought by modern media has also become the biggest enemy of this traditional culture. Neil Pozman (2005) commented on the TV media with a critical attitude in his book "Amusing Ourselves to Death"<sup>[25]</sup>, which can also be compared with the situation today. TV programs are highly fragmented. News presents entertainment rather than information, which makes people have the illusion of obtaining a large amount of information. The process of SSGD competing with mass culture for potential inheritors and group identity essentially refers to the struggle between the past cultural memory and the memory fault when people's memory degenerates.

## **5. REGENERATING TRADITION AND SPONTANEOUSLY INHERITING**

SSGD is a cultural symbol, which represents the cultural memory handed down from generation to generation by the Tujia people. The inter-generational inheritance of SSGD is actually the continuity of cultural memory. To solve this problem and better protect ethnic ICH, more Tujia new generation should join the team of protection, inheritance, and dissemination. As a unique cultural symbol of a nation, we must first let the new generation see the differences between our national culture and other cultures, cause reflection, so as to give birth to the sense of national identity and belonging to the same group with other ethnic members. As a result of positive feedback, the identity of ethnic identity can lead

to spontaneous inheritance of ethnic culture.

There are many seemingly or claimed ancient "traditions" in modern society, whose origins are often quite recent and sometimes "invented" (Hobsbawm, E. J. & Ranger, Terence O., 1992)<sup>[26]</sup>. It is the so-called "modern tradition". The reason why it can be considered as a tradition lies in the continuity between this modern tradition and the past. But this continuity is man-made, which means the behavior of modern people "trying" to establish a connection with a major historical time in the past. So it is of vital importance to distinguish between "inventing" and "regenerating".

The art of SSGD originated from the Tujia traditional folk custom of "weeding gongs and drums" in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. In the process of its inheritance, it absorbed a variety of foreign operas such as southern opera. However, its identity as the Tujia traditional art has not been denied or forgotten, and the inheritance of art itself has not been faulted. It is the collective attention of ethnic members that has been shifted due to the use of ideographs and the influence of media. Forgetting also appeared in some people. However, for the whole ethnic group, the art form of SSGD has always existed and has been active, although the degree of activity in each era is different. The current discussion on how to better inherit SSGD is a discussion on how to attract attention again, instead of inventing something unprecedented. Therefore, for the discussion on the reconstruction of the Tujia national memory, the word "regenerating" or "reconstruction" is more appropriate than "invention".

### **5.1. Regenerating memory carrier**

Memory needs a carrier to be present, and so does cultural memory. Therefore, to "reproduce" the traditional folk customs of the past in modern life, we need to find the right carrier first. Reproducing the festivals and ceremonies of the past is an important way to reconstruct the memory carrier. The construction of national cultural identity is a kind of acquired (or secondary) sense of identity and subjective cultural behavior initiated consciously and actively by the group during the formation of a "nation". At present, all kinds of national festival ceremonies and musical performances have become the most important display and release place for the construction of national cultural identity. There has been the custom of playing lanterns during the Spring Festival in West Hubei, "Shi Nan Fu Zhi" records: "On the ninth night, dragon lantern and lion dance enter rooms so as to drive epidemic; The lights stay on all night for the Lantern Festival.)" When SSGD had just developed from weeding gongs and drums, it was mainly used in Lantern Festival when playing lanterns. Around 2013, Jianshi County no longer designated the Lantern Festival as a statutory holiday due to some reasons. The folk custom of holding the Lantern Festival has gradually disappeared in the city of Jianshi County, only reserved

in Changliang township and other townships of the county.

Interview case D (Huang Zhidong, Jianshi County, born in 1965): In the 1990s, when I first started working, the Lantern Festival in Jianshi County was very lively with many activities and the whole county would have a day off. At that time, the lion dance team would come to the door of each community to dance, and the lion would ask us for red envelopes, and we were willing to give. Every time I held out my hand, the lion's head would glance away, teasing me with special amusement. At night, the streets were filled with all kinds of lights, lighting up the city and the city as if it were daytime. I remember one year I bought a lantern that played music and felt very trendy when I took it home. Now there is no authentic Lantern Festival, and the children can not experience the joy of our time.

Interview case E (Jiang Peiling, Jianshi County, Enshi High School student, born in 2006): Now I only remember the Lantern Festival when I was still in kindergarten, I went to the shopping mall with my mother to guess lantern riddles. If we guessed the riddles, we would win a lottery. But When I grow up, I have no special memories of the Lantern Festival.

During the special festival time, the national timeline extends to the distant past, and the common past of "us" appears particularly clear. Based on the above analysis, national ICH can be combined with festivals and become an important part of national festival rituals, so as to enter the group's memory. Of course, for the art of SSGD, it is more important to establish the continuity with the past Lantern Festival, bring back the Tujia festival folk customs, and then move the music onto the ritual stage to make it an important cultural symbol inseparable from the festival in the memory of the new generation.

## **5.2. An attempt to integrate youth education**

Integrating national culture into national education can make this memory enter the core position of collective memory. Under the influence of China's household registration and school registration system, most of the students in primary and secondary schools are residents and villagers of their hometowns. The promotion of local ICH in primary and secondary schools is naturally conducive to the cultivation of the local new generation's identity to regional culture. And the current primary and secondary school education system advocates reducing the learning burden for students and adding more interest training courses. So, it is the right time to set up intangible cultural heritage courses in primary and secondary schools.

At present, Changliang Ethnic Primary school has set up elective courses of SSGD, with the inheritor acting as the course instructor. But the scope of course implementation is not wide, which means primary and

secondary school students outside Changliang township do not have enough recognition of their ethnic group's ICH. In addition to this, the lack of folk music teachers also constitutes a bottleneck. Based on the current curriculum of normal education in China, most music teachers who graduated from professional colleges are taught by the western music system, and their musical knowledge structure is dominated by the western German and Austrian systems, so their understanding of Chinese ethnic and folk music is not deep enough. The number of inheritors of the local SSGD art is also limited, which cannot meet the requirements of the curriculum in the county. Under this background, it is a better choice to compile and publish school-based textbooks on the art of SSGD. Field experience courses in the winter and summer holidays can also be offered to organize students to go deep into the original environment of inheritance. Students who are not in the inheritance region can better understand the core of inheritance of ICH by taking part in the field experience courses. In addition, the use of similar teaching materials and the establishment of similar courses in primary and secondary schools in the county are also conducive to the construction of common collective memories for local students. As they read and were taught, they would begin to imagine that there were thousands of other students reading and learning the same thing and those thousands of students belonged to the same group as them. There is a hidden meaning here: Tens of thousands of students outside the county would not share the same memory with them. In such an imagination, the recognition of the Tujia gradually returns to the new generation.

## **5.3. Media image production**

The medium is the message (McLuhan, 2003)<sup>[27]</sup>. The media itself profoundly affects and even changes people's way of thinking. The art of SSGD originates from the countryside, and the urban centralism of the mass media leads to the fracture and marginalization of rural culture (Zhao Xia, 2013, p.85)<sup>[28]</sup>, which is also one of the important reasons why people gradually shift their attention from the field of national ICH. The continuous development of new media makes more fragmented information occupy people's cultural life, affect and even dominate people's choices in some aspects.

Interview Case A (Xiang Yuezhou, Jianshi County TV staff): So far, there are no local official accounts to send performances related to SSGD onto Douyin and Kuaishou, nor has there been a special channel dedicated to the operation of SSGD art videos. The members of the SSGD troupe have not run such a special video channel to show their performances up till now, and the reason might be their elder average age and lack of mastery of technique. In fact, most of their performances now take place at funerals, and it's not appropriate to shoot a video and put it on an entertainment app. However, when SSGD is officially

performed on the stage as an artistic performance, there will be a lot of videos recorded by local residents and those videos would be posted on the platform.

The Spring Festival Gala broadcast by China Central Radio and television since 1979 is a typical case of building a secular myth of the same structure of family and country with the help of mass media. The audience gathered in front of the TV, because of the common viewing object of the "Spring Festival Gala", has created a common "theater" devoid of the boundaries of time and space. In this cultural "field", the content of the party program is second, and the most important thing is the sharing of information by the audience.

As the only provincial ICH in Jianshi County, SSGD seeks more attention. If new media is selected for publicity, a large amount of information in new media may occupy much of the audience's time. And because people can choose the time and place to acquire content by themselves, they are rarely "present" at the same time, which lacks the basis for people to have a sense of space-time connection. Although it is reported that the local TV station of Jianshi County has paid more attention to the local ICH, and during the field investigation in Changliang township, the author also visited the Spring Festival Gala program team of Jianshi County TV station who at that time was recording the SSGD shows in Xuanlong Village of Changliang Township. However, the proportion of local TV stations in the media watching time of local residents decreases year by year, and their influence on local cultural life also declines, making it difficult to reconstruct local identity.

From this point of view, it is a dilemma to arouse local people's common recognition of SSGD, a local art, through media influence. It is difficult for traditional media to achieve publicity effect, but it is also difficult for traditional culture to arouse recognition with the help of emerging media. Facing this situation, one of the solutions can be to shape the traditional culture into a new image.

At present, ethnic costumes and music are attracting young people's attention on short video platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou. By February 2022, the hashtag "# Folk song Transform Challenge" had been viewed 800 million times on Douyin, with young people dressing up in ethnic costumes through the most popular cross-dressing videos to gain social attention for their beauty. In November 2020, a short video of Ding Zhen, a Young Tibetan, shot by a Tibetan photographer, became an instant hit on Douyin. The original video received 2.772 million likes and 155,000 retweets (data as of February 2022). In people's comments on this young Tibetan man, "handsome", "exotic" and "pure" are the keywords. This case also proves once again that people do not dislike ethnic images. On the contrary, in this era when the forms and images of "beauty" are abundant and even excessive, the heterogeneous beauty of ethnic minorities can attract

precious attention. The problem lies in how to discover the fashionable beauty of a nation.

It is a topic worthy of further research. In order to produce a professional media image, the local TV media center and culture tour bureau official can become a professional image of the producers, and the inheritors, researchers, and other minority cultural elite can participate in the guidance. The official, formal, artistic, and folk media image of the Tujia nationality can be constructed by means of showing SSGD art. In the call of beauty, the local people are closely united again, so that the Tujia people can proudly declare: "This is the beauty of our nation." Thus inheriting and spreading their national culture spontaneously.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This paper explores the innovative means of living inheritance of ethnic minority intangible cultural heritage by using cultural memory from specific cases. Firstly, based on the time sequence, this paper arranges the evolution of Tujia's intangible cultural heritage SSGD art itself, and the change of its inheritance mode, in order to get the enlightenment from history to awaken Tujia members' cultural identity at present. In the process of inheritance, due to the double-sided role of words and other composite reasons, SSGD art is facing the danger of fault. Modern people try to recall the lost memory by means of intertextuality through horizontal inheritance, but the coverage is narrow, and the majority of Tujia members as listeners are still unable to share this awakening process

The obtained analysis showed that there can be three ways to reshape cultural memory identity using the principle of cultural memory theory: First, rebuilding the memory carrier can help modern people link with the traditional festivals and rituals in the past; The second way is to integrate into the early rising memory of young groups, which needs to be realized by means of education; Third, it can be adaptable to create an innovative media image for traditional intangible cultural heritage, and make short videos become the entry point for reconstructing the media field of "common presence". In essence, these are "regenerating" traditions and rebuilding memories, rather than so-called "inventing" traditions.

At present, the protection and inheritance of ICH for ethnic minorities are still in infancy. How to continue to expand its influence will be a more interesting topic in the future. These methods can provide new ideas of living inheritance and can be used in more fields in the culture industry.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Liu Airong contributed completely to the field investigation of the study and contributed significantly to



the analysis and manuscript preparation. In the process of finishing data independently, Liu Airong performed the analysis with constructive perspectives.

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