

# On Preserving and Inheriting Tanmen's Marine Folklore in the Context of New Urbanization of Hainan Province

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**Abstract.** Marine folklore refers to traditions or customs shared by certain nations or social groups. Hainan province covers a sea area of 2,000,000 square kilometers, which results in various marine folk cultures with characterized marine features. With the new urbanization in progress, the construction of international tourist destination has been showing good momentum. Qionghai city adheres to the principles “not to cut down a tree, not to demolish a house, not to occupy a field, and urbanization in situ”, and great changes have taken place. However, some marine folklore has been in danger of disappearing, and there are few related studies on how to protect and inherit Tanmen's marine folklore. Therefore, it is of significance to investigate, preserve and inherit marine folklore to better serve the prosperous province of oceanic economy strategy and the Belt and Road Initiative.

**Keywords:** Marine folklore; preserving and inheriting; new urbanization; Tanmen in Hainan.

## 1. Introduction

Hainan covers a sea area of about 2 million square kilometers, and Tanmen fishermen are the only continuous special group of people to develop the Xishan and Nansha area in the South China Sea in the history. Since the Song Dynasty, Tanmen fishermen compiled *Genglubu* (Ancient Hainanese Navigation Manual in the South China Sea) and navigated themselves to Xisha, Zhongsha, and Nansha in the South China Sea, as they called the area the ancestor's sea. And the navigation guide *Genglubu* was included in the second batch of national intangible cultural heritage lists on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008 by the State Council. Tanmen' tourism development plan was assessed and approved on August 29th, 2013 to make it the “Millennium fishing port, and Gate to the South China Sea”, with expected tourist reception capacity of 4,200,000 passengers in 2020. The 6<sup>th</sup> *South China Sea Traditional Culture Festival* and the 1<sup>st</sup> *Beachcombing Festival* in Tanmen, held on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2015, with the traditional sea sacrifice ceremony and the the *Belt and Road Cultural Exhibition* included, attracted a total of 80,000 people. The *National Museum of the South China Sea* construction commencing ceremony was conducted in Tanmen town of Qionghai city on November 28<sup>th</sup> 2015. Nowadays, Tanmen has been gradually serving as a window to display the culture of the South China Sea, delicate handicrafts, and delicious seafood for the travelers home and abroad.

The new urbanization is featured with coordination in urban and rural areas, harmony between human beings and environment. *Qionghai Municipal Party Committee* and municipal government approved and formally issued the urbanization plan to build it into “a garden city and a happy Qionghai” in January 8<sup>th</sup> 2013, covering urban and rural infrastructure, ecological protection, industry support, rural tourism income and social management to turn towns into “one town one character, one town one style, and one town one industry”. Qionghai city always adheres to the principles “not to cut down a tree, not to demolish a house, not to occupy a field, and urbanization in situ”, with expected goal of turning the whole city into AAAAA scenic spot, and “building a garden city, a happy Qionghai”. With the rapid urbanization in Qionghai, some marine folk customs and cultures are in danger of disappearing, but the related studies lag far behind. Therefore, it is of significance to discuss how to protect and inherit folk customs and cultures of the South China Sea.

## 2. Literature Review

The nations or regions of *the South China Sea Rim* include Hainan province, Guangdong province, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Macau, Taiwan province, Fujian province, the Xisha Islands until Zengmu reef, adjacent to the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam, Singapore, Cambodia, Thailand and other countries. The customs or cultures in the South China Sea cover or influence the area and the waters, which leads to a unique culture of the territory and waters. Under such a historical background, Tanmen forges the unique characteristics of tropical marine folk culture of “farming in the sea” through thousands of years of fishery development in tropical South China Sea.

A great many marine folk custom and culture-related studies have been achieved mainly in Shandong province, Guangdong province, Fujian province, Taiwan province, Zhejiang province, Jiangsu province, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and other places, concentrating on the following aspects: ①Protection, inheritance and exploration of marine folklore. Mao Hai Ying held that it is necessary to interpret the ecology of marine folklore from perspective of cultural ecology to protect and inherit the marine folklore to highlight their cultural core and survival wisdom. [1] ②The correlation between the Maritime Silk Road and marine folklore. ③The relation between migrants and marine folklore. ④The impact of marine folklore on economic development, religious beliefs, social progress, and so on. ⑤the marine folk sports culture. ⑥The regional marine folklore research. ⑦The comparison of marine folklore. ⑧The marine folklore translation.

The marine folklore related studies in Hainan province can be summarized as following: ①Being short of papers, with only 9 articles published: *on marine features in Hainan folklore* co-authored by Liu Shixiang and Zhu Bingyan, *Thoughts about Hainan marine culture and the development of Hainan marine industry, the problems and solutions in exploring Hainan marine culture, the connotation of Hainan marine culture, and the sea culture in Xia and Shang dynasties* by Chen Zhiyong, *the prosperous province of oceanic economy strategy and new opportunities of Hainan's development* by Zhang Yiping, *the marine culture and the construction of Hainan International Tourist Destination* by Chi Fulin, *the cultural attraction of the Maritime Silk Road in Hainan province* by Wang Jianguo, *on the folk belief and the custom of offering sacrifice to the sea from the perspective of marine culture* by Zhou Linlin. ②Fewer monographs: the book *Hainan Marine Culture* by Chen Zhiyong was published by Hainan Press in April 2008, which includes the ancient Hainan marine culture development process, Hainan maritime living custom, production custom, marine belief and marine literature and art, marine culture, maritime road culture, and marine tourism culture. However, Tanmen-related marine culture and custom are hardly discussed. Other books, such as the *Folklore and Tourism in Pearl Hainan* edited by Wang Tianjin, *the Folklore in Hainan* edited by Xing Zhizhao, *the Introduction to Folklore in Hainan* co-authored by Jiao Yongqin and Sun Hailan, also focus on the land not marine folklore, with no monographic study on tropical marine folk culture and custom. [2] The research on marine folklore in Hainan is severely deficient.

## 3. Mechanism for Preserving and Inheriting Hainan Marine Folklore

The South China Sea is called the ancestor's sea by Tanmen's fishermen, because they have gone there to make a living generation after generation since the Ming Dynasty. In the process of fishing in the South China Sea, it is imperative to further preserve and inherit the regional marine folk culture and custom with the measures are as follows:

### 3.1 Gaining More Support from Government, Considering Funding to Set up Special Organizations to Strengthen the South China Sea Folk Culture and Custom Studies.

In July 2008, Hainan Normal University set up the *South China Sea Regional Culture Research Center*, and upgraded to the *South China Sea Regional Culture Research Base* (Hainan) in October 2009, which concentrated on the the comparison study of regional culture in the South China Sea rim. In December 2011, the *Hainan Federation of Social Sciences* together with Hainan University

formed the *South China Sea Legal Research Center* (Hainan) with the support of School of Law in Hainan University to focus on the legal research in the *South China Sea Rim* to serve national strategy. Last but not the least, the *South China Sea Culture Promotion Association* was established in December 2013 with the approval by the *Civil Affairs Department*, aiming to safeguard Chinese interests of the South China sea by means of culture. Although some organizations have been working, no monographic study on marine folk culture and custom in Tanmen has been released. Qionghai municipal government can cooperate with Hainan University, Hainan Normal University, Hainan College of Software College, and other universities or colleges outside the province, and fund to establish the *South China Sea Marine Folk Custom and Culture Research Center* or *Tanmen Folk Customs and Culture Research Association* so as to conduct the South China Sea marine folk custom and culture research, which can provide more intelligence support for the *South China Sea National Museum*, and contribute to upgrading the *South China Sea Traditional Cultural Festival* in Tanmen.

### **3.2 Collecting Oral History of “Farming in the South China Sea”, Emphasizing *Genglubu*-related Research.**

Folklore researchers are generally divided into academic and public folklorists in the US. The former ones investigate the folk customs and cultures, manage exhibits, plan folklore performances, conduct theoretic research, provide consultancy and advisory services to the folk art projects, and write description of the project materials. The latter describe and explain the folk culture and custom through research and writing papers, educate students to understand, respect and further research diversified cultures and custom, make the multimedia materials in various forms. They are responsible for the folk culture and custom performance, display of traditional folk festivals, and possible problems to be solved to publicize the existence of tangible and intangible resources with the help of local scholars. Folklore scholars should coordinate and communicate with others to inherit traditional cultures and custom, provide reasonable consulting service for folklore theory and methods, and participate in community cultural heritage in person. [3] The Professor Zhou Weimin in Hainan University repeatedly went to Tanmen to collect first-hand materials for academic research and completed the monograph *An Arcane Book about the South China Sea: Cultural Interpretation of the South China Sea Voyage Book Formed by Fishermen in Hainan Province*, which lacks the study on Tanmen' marine folklore. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that first-hand oral history of “farming in the South China Sea” should be collected in various form with the help of the experienced captain Su Chengfen and Huang Yuhe. More importantly, it is of great value to conduct *Genglubu* (Ancient Hainanese Navigation Manual in the South China Sea)-related research to exploring further the ritual of offering the sacrifice to the sea and the customs of navigation by means of *Genglubu* to provide more valuable historical data or suggestions for the marine folklore in the South China Sea and better preserve and inherit marine folk culture and customs in Tanmen.

### **3.3 Probing Further into the South China Sea Marine Folk Customs and Cultures Based on the *South China Sea Culture Museum* (Tanmen) to Diversify the Marine Tourism in Tanmen.**

The festivals or exhibition activities in Hainan province during the whole year total 109 according to incomplete statistics, with an estimated revenue of 30% of the total year. The Laotian New Year (i.e. Songkran Festival) in April, Dragon Boats Racing and Water Lantern Festival (similar to Loi Krathong in Thailand) in October, and other major folk festivals attract many foreign tourists each year. [4] The folk festivals, also popular with travelers in Japan, whose number of folk festivals amounted to more than 428, attracted millions of travelers all over the world. [5] A motivation investigation for the overseas travelers from the US, the UK, France, Germany, and Japan indicates that the people eager for Chinese folk cultures and customs amounting for 100%.

The six elements, namely dining, accommodation, transportation, traveling, shopping, and entertainment, have been familiar with the ordinary people. However, the director of the *National Tourism Bureau* Li Jinzao pointed out in 2015 that new tourism elements should be developed for travelers with various motivations: business (including business travel, convention and exhibition, incentive travel, and others), health keeping (including longevity-keeping travel, fitness-keeping

travel, heart-nourishing, and others), study (or Research, neither pure tourism nor study abroad but in between travel and learning throughout language learning and sightseeing, including further study by traveling abroad, research, training, outdoor bound, photography, collecting folk songs, a variety of summer camp and winter camp, and other activities), leisure (travel for leisure in rural and urban areas, vacations or holidays, etc.), affection (emotion-related travel, including honeymoon, marriage anniversary, religious pilgrimage, and others), curiosity and adventure (including discovery, exploration, adventure, recreation, and so on). [6] Therefore, it is of significance to collect, edit and store the South China Sea-related materials based on the *South China Sea Culture Museum* (Tanmen) to hold more marine folk culture exhibition and publicize the South China Sea marine folk customs and cultures to meet the needs of travelers for the marine tourism in Tanmen.

### **3.4 Avoiding the Construction-caused Destruction and Development-led Destruction to Boost the Sustainable Development of Regional Marine Folk Culture and Custom with Characteristics.**

Construction-caused destruction refers to destroying historical sites, traditional customs and cultures, resulting in historical sites and folk cultures ceasing to exist because of urbanization. During the process of new urbanization, the protection awareness of some people is relatively poor, with more attention paid to hardware updates instead. Development-led destruction mainly refers to the traditional customs and culture vanishing gradually during the urbanization due to the change of people's production and life style. With the new urbanization in Tanmen, a considerable part of the offsprings of the fishermen no longer hunt for fish in the sea. Instead, they tend to process and sell some shellfish crafts, and traditional navigation technology and customs gradually fade, even faced with the threat of disappearing. Therefore, the local government should take measures to encourage the fishermen in Tanmen to keep the traditional ways of fishing in the South China Sea for sustainable development of the marine folk cultures with regional characteristics.

## **4. Summary**

With the *Belt and Road Initiative* put forward in the contest of new urbanization, investigating, preserving, and inheriting the marine folk cultures and customs in Tanmen is good for promoting the transformation and upgrading of the marine festival, which is not only conducive to enrich the marine folk discipline but also further humanities research. The practice to preserve and inherit the marine customs and cultures also plays an important role in increasing the awareness of national land and sea, internationalizing Tanmen's marine folk culture, enhancing the cultural power of the Hainan International Tourist Destination, contributing to the *prosperous nation of oceanic economy strategy* and the *Maritime Silk Road initiative*.

## **Acknowledgments**

This work was financially supported by Hainan philosophical and social studies 2016 HNSK (ZC) 16-22.

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