

The New Media Communication Strategies for Birch Bark Culture of the Oroqen Nationality in Heilongjiang Province*

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Abstract—With the arrival of new media era, on the one hand, the living environment of intangible cultural heritage is impacted and the birch bark culture of the Oroqen Nationality in Heilongjiang Province is disappearing; on the other, technological updating also offers new opportunity to the communication methods of birch bark culture of the Oroqen Nationality. In this paper, the birch bark culture of the Oroqen Nationality is taken as the research object, and the new media communication strategies of birch bark culture of the Oroqen Nationality is analyzed with emphasis starting from its general communication situation and the communication value of new media.

Keywords—the Oroqen Nationality; new media; birch bark culture; communication strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

The Oroqen Nationality is one of ethnic minorities with small population in northeast China, who are mainly distributed in Oroqen Autonomous Banner of Hulunbuir League, Buteha Banner and Morin Dawa Daur Autonomous Banner in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and the counties in northern Heilongjiang Province, such as Huma, Xunke, Aihui and Jiayin. It is called “the nationality in white birch forest” thanks to the indissoluble bond with white birch. Birch bark cannot be separated from the life of people of the Oroqen Nationality, and birch bark culture has become the inherent traditional culture of the Oroqen Nationality. According to the archaeological material, birch bark culture has a long history of more than 3000 years. Currently, the birch bark manufacturing skills has been listed in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage list, but it is in starting stage in terms of new media communication.

II. GENERAL SITUATION OF BIRCH BARK CULTURE COMMUNICATION OF THE OROQEN NATIONALITY

Currently, the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage in Heilongjiang Province is still in the aspects

of simple duplication and image recording. And the communication of birch bark of the Oroqen Nationality is mainly manifested as oral teaching by traditional craft inheritor, communication in craft exhibition hall, communication by teaching in schools, image record transmission by academic and cultural teams. People who live far away from those places or the ordinary one know little or nothing about birch bark culture. The communication of birch bark culture is hindered due to various reasons although they are interested in learning about the culture, which are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

A. Communication Effect Influenced by Regional Characteristics

As the unique manual skill of the Oroqen Nationality in China, the birch bark manufacturing skills are of typical national and regional characteristics. Its materials are mainly taken from white birch forest. Birch bark has very good performance of waterproof and anticorrosion, so the vessel made by it is light, portable and non-breakable. As a result, people of the Oroqen Nationality make relevant production and household goods using birch bark. The manufacturing skills contain four steps, namely peeling the bark, boiling the bark, cutting and suturing, decorating. However, production method and life style of hunting people of the Oroqen Nationality have changed a lot with the progress of modern civilization and continuous development of the society. First, it is hard to draw materials of birch bark due to progress of modern society; second, traditional life of fishing and hunting has already faded out the view of nomadic people. In addition, the birch bark manufacturing skills can only be passed on within the ethnic group by oral teaching. The communication effect is affected by regional space, so the birch bark manufacturing skills are in a progressive decline, and even face the crisis of loss.

B. Communication Effect Affected by Simple Communication Methods

At present, the communication methods of birch bark manufacturing skills of the Oroqen Nationality mainly contain two aspects: first, communication by master-apprentice inheritance; second, static communication by birch bark craftwork. The entire communication effect of birch bark of

*Fund: This is the research achievement of the project of philosophy and social sciences research in Heilongjiang Province “Research on Digital Protection and New Media Communication Strategies of Birch Bark Culture of the Oroqen Nationality in Heilongjiang Province (Project No.: 18XWE588).

the Oroqen Nationality is affected by both methods. The first method requires the inheritor to pass on the skills within certain space, and the techniques are complex, so fewer people can master. As for the second method, national pavilion or museum is one of the static displays of craftworks. In 2016, Heilongjiang Museum held the Folk Customs Show of the Oroqen Nationality together with intangible cultural heritage protection center, and birch bark craftworks were displayed in the show. Audiences can enjoy a vision experience by the exhibits in the exhibition, but it is temporary, with few people learning about it in-depth, so it won't work for long. Another method of display is the communication by pictures and videos on the Internet, which are mainly the provincial-level intangible cultural heritage exhibition, but there are few exhibitions about birch bark of the Oroqen Nationality. Moreover, the interactive effect is absent by picture display, as audiences can only watch the pictures without being able to feel the texture and pattern of birch bark craftworks. Therefore, the communication effect is greatly affected.

C. Communication Effect Influenced by Limitation of Communication Means

At present, the Oroqen Nationality of Heilongjiang Province is mainly distributed in the counties, such as Huma, Xunke, Aihui and Jiayin, in northern Heilongjiang Province. The communication methods of birch bark culture in these places are mainly oral communication and body movements. Traditional communication means are limited by time and place, and the communication can only be performed in the place near the inheritor, which is of high instability. The inheritance of this intangible cultural heritage will be affected significantly once the inheritor is lost. Therefore, digitalization of intangible cultural heritage will play an important role in saving and protecting intangible cultural heritage. [1]

Currently, the database of intangible cultural heritage of Heilongjiang Province is under construction, yet the new media communication methods of birch bark manufacturing skills of the Oroqen Nationality are still in exploration stage. The communication by constructing digital museum in combining with new media technology not only can expand the communication effect of birch bark culture of the Oroqen Nationality, but also can interact with the audiences in the network era, enabling audiences to watch the craftworks at any time in different places via media technology. In addition, the audiences can also feel the essence of birch bark manufacturing skills through VR and other technologies, providing new communication means for the intangible cultural heritage.

III. NEW MEDIA COMMUNICATION VALUE OF BIRCH BARK CULTURE OF THE OROQEN NATIONALITY

In 1948, Lasswell, one of the four founders of communication put forward the "Three-function Theory" in *Structure and Function of Communication in Society*, holding the opinion that the basic social function of mass communication is social inheritance function, which is mainly referred to that the development of human society is established on the basis of inheritance and innovation. Only by recording, accumulating, saving and passing on the experience,

wisdom and knowledge of predecessors to the descendants can the later generations make further improvement, development and creation on the basis of predecessors. [2] In the current era when information changes and develops constantly, showing the birch bark culture of the Oroqen Nationality by new media has practiced the cultural inheritance function of new media as mass media very well.

Speaking from the level of skill, birch bark culture belongs to intangible cultural heritage; but analyzing from the material level, the products, such as birch bark house, birch bark boat and birch bark bowl, all carries the profound cultural information and have unique regional style and national features, which should be inherited and communicated widely. However, in the reality, the ancient birch bark culture can only stay in the museums and exhibition halls due to the limitation of time and space, affecting the communication effect of intangible cultural heritage. Nevertheless, the emergence of new media has broken the time and space limitation of communication with the constant updating of modern information technology. On the one hand, people can examine the origin, variety and latest image information of birch bark culture on the computer and mobile whenever and wherever possible while remaining within doors; on the other hand, the mass media can combine the traditional birch bark skills with the forms favored by young people, and show the traditional birch bark culture skills to audiences by online game, live video streaming and micro-video without changing the original material. In this way, the social inheritance function of medium is realized, regional limitation is broken and more people can learn about and communicate the birch bark culture.

IV. NEW MEDIA COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR BIRCH BARK CULTURE OF THE OROQEN NATIONALITY

A. New Attempt of Combining Online Game IP

Online game is one of the ways of entertainment by young people in modern society. According to the latest data, the actual sales revenue of Chinese game market was 214.44 billion yuan, increasing by 5.3% on year-on-year basis, with user scale of 626,000,000 people, increasing by 7.3% on year-on-year basis. In the current society with Internet developing rapidly, online game is of great market development space.

No matter the World of Warcraft, Honor of Kings or League of Legends favored by the young people, these online games are the stories formed by role-play. Actually, the story of game itself is another output mode of the culture. Players can deepen their understanding of the story through role-play in experiencing the game. Therefore, the combination of excellent traditional Chinese culture, birch bark culture of the Oroqen Nationality and online game is a beneficial attempt.

The Cultural Industry Development Plan during the 13th Five-year Period of Ministry of Culture published by the Ministry of Culture in April, 2017 put forward that "During the 13th five-year period, we should cultivate a batch of key game enterprises that have strong brand influence and international competitiveness, and create high-quality games with healthy content and national features. For instance, Tencent Company has already trying to invite Fang Zhida, the

national representative inheritor of Peach Blossom Castle New Year wood-block print, to make the custom-made gift of New Year wood-block print with the theme of “Wei Wo Guo Feng” for the online game “Moonlight Blade”. In addition, Tencent also plan to integrate the intangible elements, such as Suzhou embroidery, Cen’s antique wooden sailing boat, into the creation of game IP, so that the traditional skills of intangible cultural heritage can combine the online game perfectly. Such combination can add the element and deposits of traditional culture for the game, enabling the more young people to get access to and learn about intangible culture one the one hand, and on the other, the intangible cultural heritage can be communicated in a better way to increase the national cultural soft power.

B. New Expression by Combining with Micro-video

According to the latest data, as of June 2018, the number of Internet users by mobile phone reached 788,000,000 people; 35,090,000 Internet users by mobile phone were added in the first half of 2018, increasing by 4.7% compared with that of 2017. More and more netizens watch micro-video through the carrier of mobile phone, and form the secondary communication in the social media. In the era of information fragmentation communication, as a kind of new information carrier, micro-video is favored by more and more people thanks to its communication characteristics of “short, fast, accuracy”.

With a shortest length of 30 seconds, micro-video involves extensive contents, and the videos are verified, covering little films, short documentary films, short DV films, video clips, advertising section and other contents. The combination of micro-video with traditional culture is of certain influence by presenting in the form favored by young people. For instance, the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the CPC, National Cultural Heritage Administration and CCTV jointly produce a national self-cultivation engineering, the 100-episode micro documentary film *If the National Treasure Can Speak*. The biggest characteristic of this micro documentary film is that each episode is 5-minute long, so netizens can watch it by taking advantage of the odd moment in their daily life. Such video not only adapt to the fast pace of life, but also save more time for people. It obtained the consistent high praise from netizens on the first day of broadcasting, and was listed in the hot topic list of Microblog. And on the same day, the amount of play of relevant Microblog short video also reached more than 240,000 times, raising another “fever of national treasures”.

Similarly, we can also communicate birch bark culture of the Oroqen Nationality in the form micro-video and shoot short micro documentary films. We can express the birch bark craftworks with micro-expression and attractive stories from new perspectives to make intangible cultural heritage “alive”. First, in terms of image narrative expression, we can combine the birch bark craftworks with the delicate short story behind it and express it with vivid and flexible techniques (subtitle, network language and other forms), to make intangible cultural products move in true sense, so that emotional relationship with people of current society can be established and the charm of intangible cultural heritage can be felt from

craftworks. Second, in terms of communication methods, the short micro documentary films should be played not only on the mainstream media of TV station, but also on the platforms, such as Microblog, WeChat, website and live broadcast software which are favored by the audiences, so as to form the secondary communication of social media, expand influence, and enhance the popularity of birch bark culture of the Oroqen Nationality.

C. New Means by Combining with AR

AR Augmented Reality Technology is a kind of technology computing the location and angle of camera image in real time together with corresponding images, videos and 3D model. The goal of such technology is to apply the virtual world on the screen to real world and interact with it. Currently, AR technology is mainly applied in medical treatment, military science, industrial engineering and other fields. Although China is still in the starting stage, there are also many cases about application in cultural heritage. The first is to use AR cards of museology. These cards have already appeared in the cultural and creative products of many museums, such as AR cards of Banpo Museum, AR cards of Terra-Cotta Warriors, AR cards of Prince Gong Mansion and the AR cards of the Old Summer Palace. We can obtain the 3D model of cultural relics in the screen of mobile phone, together with the additional sound, characters and special effects by scanning these AR cards with mobile phones, displaying the cultural relics in the collection of cultural institution vividly. In addition, the cultural relics can be “brought back home” by audiences for collection by themselves or showing to friends, so as to have a close observation and research of cultural relics. Second, we can restore the scene at that time through AR technology to move the physical museum to the Internet, enabling users to appreciate the precious exhibits personally while remaining within doors by virtue of audio explanation, diorama, and three-dimensional display, for example, Baidu has made VR museums, including Sanxingdui Museum, Sichuan Zigong Dinosaur Museum, Yungang Grottoes and The Museum of Chinese Gardens and Landscape Architecture.

The case of cultural heritage can also be applied in the new media communication of intangible cultural heritage. In 2018, the “First Season of the Plan for Baidu Public Cultural Heritage Guardian — New Year Pictures” was launched officially on Baidu APP. In this project, the manufacturing process of New Year woodblock printings of intangible cultural heritage is reproduced using AR technology. Users can experience the manufacturing process of New Year woodblock printings just by scanning the QR code or opening the APP, and participate in and experience the carving, color washing, image defining and other links by clicking the screen personally. In addition, users can learn about and feel the extensive and profound New Year picture of intangible cultural heritage in the final New Year woodblock printings. Furthermore, Baidu also created more works of AR intangible cultural heritage, such as AR+ Weifang kite, Dong Ka Lau, Hundred-Bird-Feather Clothes, gold leaf, brocade and so on, presenting the craftsmanship on “Baidu APP” in the form of AR. The birch bark manufacturing skills of the Oroqen Nationality in Heilongjiang Province can imitate the latest

application of Baidu to combine the manufacturing skills of birch bark with AR and display the four steps of manufacturing by augmented technology, so that audiences can feel the essence and charm of its manufacturing by combining the interaction link. Such combination of technology and culture has improved the communication effect of birch bark manufacturing skills of the Oroqen Nationality greatly.

V. CONCLUSION

In the new media era, we should take advantage of the new technology and means to make birch bark culture of the Oroqen Nationality walk out of the museum and be accepted by each audience, make the acquisition of intangible cultural heritage information easier and more convenient. This is the key for carrying forward the intangible cultural heritage.

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