

Protection, Inheritance and Development of the Eight Immoralities of Cangnan Opera from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Yilin Yuan¹

¹ Conservatory of Music, Zhejiang Normal University Conservatory of Arts, Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua, China

Email Address

2502511129@qq.com (Yilin Yuan)

*Correspondence: 2502511129@qq.com

Received: 15 January 2024; Accepted: 25 February 2024; Published: 29 April 2024

Abstract:

There are many folk intangible cultural heritages in China, among which Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera, as a traditional opera art form in Cangnan County, Zhejiang Province, China, was selected into the third batch of intangible cultural heritages of Zhejiang Province in 2009. This measure points out the right direction for the inheritance and development of the Cangnan Eight Immortals opera. However, as a whole, with the development and influence of The times, Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera has been more and more despised, from its popularity to decline, it can be seen that the development of traditional art is difficult. Therefore, through in-depth research on the historical origin of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera, this paper analyzes the inheritance and development status of it, in order to provide a useful reference for the protection and inheritance.

Keywords:

Intangible Cultural Heritage, Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera, Chinese Music History

1. Introduction

In recent years, related terms such as “cultural heritage” and “intangible cultural heritage” have frequently appeared in the public eye, which has set off a wave of upsurge for the excellent traditional culture of China. In Wenzhou, Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera, as a traditional opera performance form, has been loved and respected by the local people.

Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera play originated in Cangnan County, Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, in the folk also commonly known as beating eight immortals, eight immortals celebrate longevity. It is often performed in villages and towns from the second day to the fifteenth day of the year to get an auspicious prize. It takes the eight immortals in Chinese mythology as the main characters, and unfolds its plot through various artistic forms such as acting, singing, reading, acting and playing. In

Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera, each of the eight immortals has its unique character and skills, such as: Zhang Guolao can transform; Han Xiangzi is good at changing spells; Iron crutch Li can use the cane to cure people and so on. The actors vividly show the image and story of the Eight immortals through their performances. It is not only entertaining, but also carries people's longing for a better life and thinking about good and evil, righteousness and evil. However, in today's fierce cultural competition, compared with other intangible cultural heritage, Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera has not received the same degree of attention and importance as a local opera. Under the vision of intangible cultural heritage protection, it is imperative to protect China's intangible cultural heritage and Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera, and to strengthen the exploration of the inheritance and development of the Eight imbecilities of Cangnan.

2. The Historical Origin of Eight Immortals Opera

The Eight Immortals Opera in Cangnan originated from Wenzhou, and Wenzhou was the birthplace of Southern Opera as early as ancient times. From the historical records of the Eight Immortals Opera, it can be basically determined that the Eight Immortals Opera originated from Zaju and Southern Opera in the Song and Yuan Dynasties.

According to the literature records, Zhuang Yi-fu's "A Collection of Classical Operas" said: "The official opera of the Song Dynasty, that is, "Banquet for Yao Chi". At the end of the Yuan Dynasty, Tao Zongyi's Records of Dropping Out of Farming in the South Village, Names of the Courtyard, listed the Yaochi Club, the Eight Immortals Club, the Flat Peach Club and so on, and Zhong Sicheng's Banquet and Ballad Pool Flat Peach Club in the Yuan Dynasty, Zhu Youdun's Eight Immortals' Celebration in Yaochi Club, Fu Lushou Immortals' Official Celebration Club in the Ming Dynasty.

"Eight Immortals Opera" can be roughly divided into North and South. The Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera in Wenzhou is a typical representative of South Opera. In the process of inheritance, influenced by history, culture and regional style, Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera gradually absorbed the essence of other arts and developed itself, which has certain regional characteristics. It is an auspicious opera with happiness and good fortune. Up to now, the Eight Immortals Opera in Cangnan, as a local opera with auspicious, rich and safe meanings, is often performed from the second day to the fifteenth day of the first month of the new year, and every town is immersed in the colorful atmosphere of gongs and drums, silk and bamboo, southern accent and northern accent almost every day. In addition, whenever there are festive activities such as local temple fairs, temple repair, musical notation, opening, etc., the "first family" will often hire a class club to perform the "Eight Immortals Drama" in order to achieve peace and good luck, prosperous business, abundant crops and prosperous livestock. Therefore, the Eight Immortals Opera is endowed by the local people with their beautiful vision of life.

At present, there are 15 sets of Eight Immortals Plays in Cangnan County, which contain some well-known aria, such as Dianjiang Lip, New Water Order, Oil Gourd, Music in the World, Crane Order, Mixed Dragons, Bu Bujiao, and Yan'er.

3. The Inheritance and Development of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera

As one of the traditional local opera forms in China with a long history, Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera is based on Cangnan dialect, with easy-to-understand lyrics, beautiful tunes and lively singing, which is deeply loved by local people. However, under the impact of the development of modern society, Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera is facing many challenges and development difficulties.

3.1. the audience demand change dilemma

With the diversification of modern entertainment methods, the aesthetics of the market and the audience have gradually changed to the direction of entertainment, and the demand for traditional art has gradually decreased. In particular, the younger generation of viewers prefer to pursue fashion and trendy culture, and their acceptance of traditional art is low. This has led to a decrease in the performance opportunities of traditional arts in the market, and at the same time, this trend has led to a decrease in the performance opportunities of traditional arts such as Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera.

On the one hand, modern society has brought viewers a variety of entertainment options, such as movies, TV series, variety shows and so on. These emerging forms of entertainment are more in line with young people's aesthetic and consumption habits. They attract a large number of viewers' attention with advanced technical means and excellent production quality. In contrast, the performance form and program content of traditional art may seem too old to keep pace with the times to meet the entertainment needs of modern audiences.

On the other hand, young people are more advocating fashion and trendy culture, and they are more willing to follow the trend and participate in hot topics. In this fast-paced era of information explosion, the charm and cultural connotation of traditional art may not attract their attention. They are more inclined to pursue novel and exciting forms of entertainment, and their sense of identity and interest in the traditional art of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera is relatively low.

3.2. Brain drain and fragile dilemma of inheritance chain

The inheritance of traditional art needs solid skills and long-term training, and the inheritance of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera is no exception. However, in reality, with the rapid development of social economy and the diversification of cultural market, the inheritance of traditional art is still facing competition from modern entertainment industry. Due to economic interests and realistic pressure, many young people have not chosen to engage in traditional arts. For young people, engaging in traditional art often means long-term training and low economic returns, which cannot meet the pursuit of material life in modern society. Moreover, the rapid rise of modern science and technology has also changed people's aesthetic needs. The younger generation is more inclined to pursue fashionable and popular art forms, while the status of traditional art in young people's hearts is gradually declining. Therefore, more young people turn their attention to other industries.

Today, the number of inheritors of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera is less than 100, among which Zhang Shusheng, a provincial inheritor, has been performing in southern Zhejiang and eastern Fujian, adopting the traditional teaching method of

apprenticeship and folk teaching of opera, but the audience is limited. Gao Fuyu, another inheritor, interviewed and collected the scores handed down orally by his elders, and recorded VCD for easy learning and circulation, leaving precious music scores. However, there are few video materials and troupe performances of traditional operas, so it is very difficult to publicize local operas. The less people know, the less people learn. The inheritance and development of the Eight Immortals Opera need to be solved urgently.

3.3. Dilemma of insufficient publicity

As a traditional art form with a long history in Cangnan area, Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera is rarely known except the local people in today's information-developed society. It is precisely because of the audience's lack of relevant information that their understanding and interest in Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera is relatively insufficient, which leads to the inability to effectively improve the market demand.

On the one hand, the publicity channel of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera is relatively single. With the rapid development of Internet and social media, the role of traditional media in the publicity of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera has gradually weakened, and the problem of relatively single publicity channels has become increasingly prominent. In the past, the performances of the Eight Immortals Opera in Cangnan mainly used traditional media, such as television, radio and newspapers, but with the rise of the Internet and social media, the influence of these traditional channels gradually weakened. The publicity and promotion of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera on the new media platform is relatively lagging behind, which cannot attract the attention of more young audiences.

On the other hand, the propaganda content of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera lacks innovation. It has the characteristics of paying attention to introducing the history and art of traditional operas. Therefore, in terms of publicity, it often highlights its characteristics for publicity. However, for young people in the new era, this single propaganda content will lead to the aesthetic fatigue of the public, and the interest and curiosity of the Eight Immortals Opera in Cangnan cannot be effectively triggered. Lack of propaganda means and forms to keep pace with the times. In this regard, the propaganda content of the Eight Immortals Opera in Cangnan needs to be more innovative. It should not only focus on introducing the historical and artistic characteristics of traditional operas, but also combine the characteristics of the times and the needs of the audience, and adopt the means and forms of advancing with the times to further make Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera known to more people.

4. Innovative Development of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera

Nowadays, with the development of the new era, promoting the inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage can not be achieved by one person alone. The protection of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera is a social undertaking with the participation of all the people under the leadership of governments at all levels and in combination with the present era.

4.1. Government-led, protecting cultural authenticity

As the birthplace of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera, the Cangnan county government should formulate cultural support policies to support the development of

Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera, bring it into the cultural management system, and promote the creative transformation and innovative development of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera. Create a good development environment for the music culture of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera, clarify the intangible cultural heritage status of it, increase the training and support for artists and actors, support returnees and local talents to join the cultural heritage team, and constantly explore and cultivate the musical heritage talents of the Eight Immortals Opera in Cangnan. At the same time, we will carry out multi-level and multi-channel cultural organization activities, and actively organize various performances and activities to enhance the popularity and influence of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera in society and attract more people to participate in it.

At the same time, the government should also actively play a leading role in protecting the authenticity of the Eight Immortals Opera in Cangnan. The issue of authenticity is of great significance, especially for the protection of intangible cultural heritage in the world. The problem of heritage protection can be simplified as the problem of maintaining authenticity. Many areas did not pay attention to this problem when developing and utilizing intangible culture, which eventually led to the loss of cultural origin and uniqueness of local intangible culture.

4.2. Comply with the requirements of the market and the times, and develop in innovative forms.

With the diversification of the market, the popularity of the Internet and the changes of the audience's aesthetic needs, the original form of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera is no longer acceptable to the public, and it is gradually fading out of public view with the development of the times. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of today, it is necessary to carry out continuous innovation and reform. In today's era of developed Internet, Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera can provide diversified works and performance forms by integrating modern information technology elements, improve the viewing experience, increase interest, make it more competitive than other operas, and attract more attention from young audiences. At the same time, in such market competition, excellent actors and teams of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera will also get more performance opportunities and economic returns, thus increasing the motivation to engage in this art form.

4.3. Combining literature and tourism to realize the mutually beneficial development of countryside and culture

The integration of intangible cultural heritage and tourism industry is a new trend in the development of intangible cultural heritage in China. The integration of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera and rural tourism can not only promote the economic development of Cangnan County, but also enhance the publicity of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera. The first thing that rural tourism looks at is the rural environment. Cangnan County can build the brand IP of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera with the theme of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera, and integrate it with local tourist attractions to watch Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera while enjoying the scenery of Cangnan County. Cangnan county can also promote local economic development, increase jobs, make young people who go out to work willing to return to their hometown, develop and build their hometown, and make Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera play alive.

It should be emphasized that in the process of integrated development with rural tourism, we should also pay attention to retaining the original connotation of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera, which, as a cultural resource, can bring economic and social benefits to Cangnan County. Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera has also attracted the attention and love of a large number of audiences with its exquisite performances and wonderful stage performances. Rural tourism means that tourists can experience real rural life. Cangnan County can also carry out activities such as the performance of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera, so that tourists can truly feel the unique charm of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera.

5. Conclusions

In a word, the intangible cultural heritage is rich in cultural and artistic value, which embodies the cultural self-confidence of China people. The culture it contains is the soul of the country, the source of water for the nation. In the hearts of Cangnan people, the Eight Immortals Opera is a yearning for the country's prosperity, social civilization and villagers' friendliness. It not only bears the important responsibility of continuing the regional culture, but also is an indispensable spiritual pillar for the local people from generation to generation. However, it is this spiritual pillar that is facing many difficulties with the rapid development of the times and the change of the public's aesthetic concept. The inheritance and development of Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera need to be solved urgently. In view of these challenges and development difficulties, we can actively carry out innovative exploration, inject modern elements and artistic techniques, and promote Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera in various ways under the dual promotion of the government and the market. It's believed that with the joint efforts of all walks of life, Cangnan Eight Immortals Opera will surely usher in a more brilliant future. Through continuous research, inheritance and innovation, it can also make positive contributions to the development of Chinese traditional opera art.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- [1] Zhao, L. Analysis of Cangnan folk "Eight immortals play"[C]//Intelligent Information Technology Application Association. Education and Education Management (EEM 2011 V2), 2011, 5.
- [2] Wang, H.M. A Brief Introduction to the Eight Immortals in Song and Yuan Dynasties. *Knowledge of Classical Literature*, 2001, 01, 64-68.
- [3] Tu, X.H. On the Eight Immortals in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties. *Journal of Fujian Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2004, 06, 84-90.



© 2024 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)