

Research on Innovative Communication Strategies of Gaozhou Puppet Show from the Perspective of the 'Hundred Thousand Ten Thousand' Project

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Abstract: The research is set against the backdrop of the "Hundred Thousand Ten Thousand" project in Guangdong Province, aiming to explore how Gaozhou Puppet Show, as an important part of Chinese folk culture and art, can leverage its cultural communication potential in the process of new urbanization and urban-rural integration. By deeply analyzing the unique role of Gaozhou Puppet Show in cultural education and combining field research with literature review, this paper proposes a series of innovative communication strategies. The research results show that Gaozhou Puppet Show occupies an important position in the art of Cantonese opera, through effective communication strategies, and it can further promote its inheritance and development in contemporary society. Ultimately, the study concludes that innovative cultural communication strategies are of great significance for the protection and promotion of Gaozhou Puppet Show, helping to realize its cultural value and social function in the new era.

Keywords: Gaozhou Puppet Show; "Hundreds, Thousands, Tens of Thousands" Project; Innovative Communication; Intangible Cultural Heritage

1. The Historical and Cultural Value of Gaozhou Puppet Show

1.1 The Historical Origin of Gaozhou Puppetry

Gaozhou puppetry, as one of the representatives of traditional puppetry in southern China, has a long history. Chinese puppetry originated in the Tang Dynasty and developed through the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, gradually maturing by the period of the Republic of China.

During this process, Gaozhou puppetry absorbed the essence of local Guangdong operas, forming a unique artistic style. Commonly known as "Kui Zai Xi," Gaozhou puppetry belongs to the cloth bag puppet category, named for "carving wood into puppets" [1]. In the 1970s and 1980s, Gaozhou puppetry ushered in its golden age of development. During this period, the number of puppet troupes surged to over two thousand, and the number of performances reached an astonishing ten thousand per year, reflecting its influence and popularity. In 1997, Gaozhou was officially named "Guangdong Folk Art (Puppetry) Hometown" for its outstanding achievements in the art of puppetry. Six years later, in 2003, Gaozhou puppetry once again received national recognition and was named "Chinese Folk Art (Puppetry) Hometown" by the Ministry of Culture. In 2006, Gaozhou puppetry was officially included in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage recommended projects [2].

1.2 The Cultural Value and Social Function of Gaozhou Puppetry

Gaozhou puppetry is not only an important intangible cultural heritage in the Guangdong region but also possesses profound cultural value and social functions. It carries a wealth of historical information and ethnic memories of the Guangdong area, serving as a significant carrier of traditional culture. In the continuous process of inheritance, it has absorbed new artistic elements, demonstrating a unique artistic charm. Gaozhou puppetry also conveys positive values through various dramatic performances, which has a certain educational significance. As a unique cultural phenomenon, the protection and dissemination of Gaozhou puppetry are of great importance for the inheritance of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation.

2. The "Hundred, Thousand, and Ten Thousand" Project and the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage

2.1 Overview of the "Hundred, Thousand, and Ten Thousand" Project

In 2023, Guangdong implemented the "High-Quality Development Project of Hundreds of Counties, Thousands of Towns, and Ten Thousand Villages," referred to as the "Hundred, Thousand, and Ten Thousand" Project, with the utmost intensity. The project is themed around promoting high-quality development, driven by strategies such as the rural revitalization strategy, regional coordinated development strategy, the strategy of the main functional areas, and the new urbanization strategy. It primarily aims to integrate urban and rural development and construct a new pattern of coordinated urban-rural regional development, thereby strengthening the comprehensive strength of counties and comprehensively advancing rural revitalization to promote coordinated development between urban and rural areas [3]. In this process, special attention is paid to exploring and utilizing the intangible cultural heritage resources of towns and villages, such as Gaozhou puppetry. By promoting the integration of intangible cultural heritage with village construction, the project allows intangible cultural heritage to play a greater role in the "Hundred, Thousand, and Ten Thousand" Project. This not only enriches rural cultural life but also promotes the comprehensive integration of intangible cultural heritage into modern life, injecting new vitality into rural revitalization.

2.2 National Strategy for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage

The Chinese government places great importance on the protection of intangible cultural heritage and has formulated a series of policies and strategies, establishing the basic principles and objectives of intangible cultural heritage protection in the form of law. The "Law of the People's Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage," promulgated on February 25, 2011, provides a solid legal foundation for the protection of intangible cultural heritage. In addition, China actively participates in international efforts to protect intangible cultural heritage, cooperating with UNESCO to bring traditional Chinese intangible cultural heritage,

including Gaozhou puppetry, to the world stage, showcasing the unique charm and profound heritage of Chinese traditional culture. Through these efforts, not only has the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage been achieved, but contributions have also been made to promoting cultural diversity and the exchange and mutual learning of human civilizations.

3. The Current Status of Gaozhou Puppetry Dissemination Analysis

3.1 Dissemination Channels and Audience of Gaozhou Puppetry

Gaozhou puppetry, this ancient art form, originally spread mainly through traditional stage performances. In these live shows, audiences can experience the unique charm of puppetry up close. In terms of educational promotion, schools and communities have included Gaozhou puppetry in their curricula and cultural activities, providing young people with the opportunity to understand and learn about this art. Moreover, Gaozhou puppetry is closely integrated with local tourism resources, becoming an important part of cultural tourism. Through various tourism experience activities, visitors can not only appreciate the exquisite skills of puppetry but also deeply feel the cultural stories and local characteristics behind it.

Local residents are the main audience for Gaozhou puppetry, while tourists interested in traditional culture get to know and appreciate Gaozhou puppetry through tourism experiences. Through educational promotion, students become an important force in understanding and passing on Gaozhou puppetry. With the popularity of digital media, many internet users come into contact with and learn about Gaozhou puppetry through online platforms.

3.2 Issues in the Dissemination of Gaozhou Puppetry

In the rapid development of modern society, Gaozhou puppetry faces many challenges [4]. This article will analyze the main problems encountered in the dissemination process of Gaozhou puppetry, including the singularity of dissemination methods, the limitation of the audience group, and the shortage of inheriting talents, and then discuss the impact of these issues on the inheritance and development of Gaozhou puppetry.

3.2.1 Singularity of Dissemination Methods: As a precious intangible cultural heritage, Gaozhou puppetry currently mainly relies on traditional stage performances for dissemination and inheritance. This dissemination model is relatively singular, often limited to specific times and places for performances, lacking innovative and diversified dissemination methods. With the development of society and the popularization of new media technology, the pace of life for young people has accelerated, and entertainment methods have become more diversified, indirectly affecting the dissemination and development of Gaozhou puppetry.

3.2.2 Limited Audience Group: Although the audience group of Gaozhou puppetry has expanded to some extent through education and cultural tourism projects, the overall dissemination range is still subject to certain regional and age restrictions. This intangible cultural heritage is mainly circulated in Gaozhou, Guangdong, and its surrounding areas, and its audience group is mostly middle-aged and elderly people, especially those who have a deep emotional connection with traditional art. This concentration in terms of region and age limits the dissemination power and influence of Gaozhou puppetry. From a regional perspective, the dissemination of Gaozhou puppetry is limited by physical space, and many people far from its birthplace have difficulty experiencing the charm of this art form in person. Even in tourism promotion and cultural exchange activities, it is often limited to specific areas and difficult to cover a wider geographical range.

3.2.3 Shortage of Inheriting Talents: With the rapid development of society and changes in the cultural environment, the number of people willing to devote themselves to the study and inheritance of traditional art is gradually decreasing. This situation means that traditional art performance forms such as Gaozhou puppetry are facing a serious shortage of inheriting talents. On the one hand, the learning process of traditional art often requires a long time of practice and accumulation, and the economic return is relatively low, which makes many young people unwilling to invest time and energy to learn these skills; on the other hand, the fast pace of modern society also makes it difficult for young people to find suitable time and opportunities to contact and experience traditional art. In addition, the public's

awareness of the protection of intangible cultural heritage still needs to be improved [5]. Many people do not have enough understanding of the value of traditional arts like Gaozhou puppetry and lack sufficient respect and support.

4. Innovative Dissemination Strategies for Gaozhou Puppetry

4.1 Theoretical Basis for Innovative Dissemination

Policy reports clearly state: "Strengthen the construction of an all-media dissemination system to shape a new pattern of mainstream public opinion [6]." With the advancement of China's modernization, technological progress has provided new platforms for public opinion dissemination, significantly enhancing the coverage, influence, depth, and appeal of mainstream public opinion. In the dissemination process, cultural content should be in line with the cultural background and reception habits of the audience. We also need to deeply analyze the audience's acceptance, impact, and persistence of dissemination activities to improve the effectiveness of dissemination. At the same time, digital technology should be used to optimize the dissemination process and enhance the interactivity and participation of the audience. The audience's needs and feedback should become the key basis for adjusting dissemination strategies. Ultimately, by combining the actual situation of Gaozhou puppetry, these theories should be applied to practice and continuously optimize dissemination strategies to adapt to the development of the times.

4.2 Strengthening the Construction of Digital Dissemination Platforms

Utilize digital tools to create a comprehensive official website that serves as a hub for information on Gaozhou puppetry. This not only provides a platform for showcasing the art but also, according to the "two-step flow" model in communication theory, which posits that mass media information does not flow directly to the audience but requires opinion leaders [7] to convey the information to a broader audience. The process is manifested as "mass media—opinion leaders—general individuals," and the platform will offer rich content, including the history, classic repertoires, and exciting performances of Gaozhou puppetry.

Furthermore, fully leverage the extensive coverage and immediacy of social media platforms,

Regularly post the latest news, performance information, and behind-the-scenes stories of Gaozhou puppetry on popular platforms such as Weibo and WeChat, to attract a wider audience and enhance the interactivity and appeal of the art form. Establish an online education platform and develop a series of online courses and teaching resources, which will not only allow the public to conveniently learn about the knowledge and performance skills of Gaozhou puppetry but also cultivate the younger generation's interest and love for this ancient art form, injecting new vitality into the inheritance and development of Gaozhou puppetry.

4.3 Interactive Dissemination through New Media

The 41st Statistical Report on Internet Development in China released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) shows that by December 2017, the scale of netizens in China reached 772 million, with a total of 40.74 million new netizens added throughout the year, and young netizens accounted for 73% of the total number of netizens. As active participants in the digital age, young netizens are the main force in the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage on the internet. They have a strong ability to accept new things and are very enthusiastic about the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture. Due to the characteristics of network media that transcend time and space, it has become an important channel for the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage. Gaozhou puppetry, with its long history and unique charm, should take advantage of the power of new media to enter the lives of the younger generation in a more vivid and interactive way.

Gaozhou puppetry can open up live video platforms to present the wonderful moments of Gaozhou puppetry to the audience in the form of live broadcasting. This real-time sharing method allows audiences far away to feel the enthusiasm and atmosphere of the scene, greatly enhancing the viewing experience and strengthening the audience's sense of participation and interactivity. At the same time, elements such as barrage interaction and gift giving during the live broadcast can allow young audiences to enjoy the fun of modern internet culture while

enjoying traditional culture.

On social media platforms such as Weibo and WeChat, various online interactive activities can be held, such as Q&A contests and best audience voting. These activities not only improve user participation but also conform to the "interactive communication" theory [8], emphasizing the two-way communication between the audience and the communicator [9]. Through these activities, a large amount of user feedback and suggestions can be collected, providing valuable references for the innovation and development of puppetry.

In addition, content creative development is an important means to attract young audiences. Gaozhou puppetry can develop mobile games or applications related to it, allowing the younger generation to come into contact with and understand this traditional art in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere through gamification. For example, a role-playing game with puppetry characters and stories as the background can be designed, or an interactive game simulating puppetry performance, allowing players to have a deeper understanding of Gaozhou puppetry while entertaining.

4.4 Cultivating Successors and Professionals

In the process of inheriting and developing Gaozhou puppetry as an intangible cultural heritage, it is crucial to cultivate a new generation of successors and professional talents [10]. Gaozhou puppetry should establish a systematic training mechanism, providing young people interested in puppetry with professional learning and practice opportunities through school education and vocational training, and training them to become skilled actors and producers. Secondly, strengthen academic exchanges, encourage communication and cooperation between scholars and artists by organizing seminars, workshops, and exhibitions, and promote the sharing of knowledge and the formation of innovative thinking.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

Through an in-depth analysis of the innovative dissemination strategies of Gaozhou puppetry from the perspective of the "Hundred, Thousand, and Ten Thousand" Project, we have reached the following conclusion: innovative dissemination is not only necessary but also urgent. Traditional art forms require new vitality and forms of expression in the modern communication

environment, and digitalization, interactivity, and education are key pathways. By establishing an official website, strengthening digital construction, utilizing social media, and creating online educational platforms, the dissemination effect and audience participation of Gaozhou puppetry can be effectively enhanced.

This study mainly focused on digital and interactive methods when exploring innovative dissemination strategies for Gaozhou puppetry, but the discussion of other possible dissemination channels, such as physical activities and international dissemination, is relatively limited. Future research can further expand the diversity of dissemination strategies and explore more possibilities for cross-disciplinary cooperation. At the same time, with the continuous advancement of technology, future dissemination strategies should pay more attention to innovation and adaptability to meet the changing audience needs and communication environment. Through continuous research and practice, the dissemination of Gaozhou puppetry will become more diversified and effective, contributing more to the inheritance and development of traditional culture.

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