

# *The Sustainable Development of Symbol Consumption and Cultural Ecotourism -----The Case Study of Blang Nationality's Singing and Instrument Playing*

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**Abstract**—Under the background of current cultural diversity and cultural homogenization, cultural symbols of intangible cultural heritage because of the cultural differences have undoubtedly become symbols of local culture. After Blang Nationality's Singing and Instrument Playing has become national intangible cultural heritage, local authorities has made the instrument playing in Manya village an important cultural symbol in order to show the outsiders the cultural characteristics of Blang nationality. However, even with the government's strong advocacy sustainable development and utilization are still the problem, which should be solved with strategic measures for further cultural and ecological tourism.

**Keywords**—*Intangible Cultural Heritage, Blang Nationality's Singing and Instrument Playing, Cultural tourism, Symbol Consumption.*

## I. INTRODUCTION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF BLANG NATIONALITY'S SINGING AND INSTRUMENT PLAYING

The art of Blang Nationality's Singing and Instrument Playing is popular with Blang people because of its smooth and euphemistic singing as well as unique tonal rhythms with different singing contents. The ancient singing contents cover extensively including ancient story of the migration of the nation, legends, production knowledge, memory of ancestors, traditional rituals and worship ceremony. Besides, folk songs, love songs, children's songs and work songs are also involved. While singing styles are divided into solo, duet, chorus or chorus with a leading singer, which are all performed pleasantly by plucking the Blang ethnic three-string instrument. There is saying that Blang songs listening are Blang people's first priority. For thousands of years, with no written languages Blang instrument singing and playing has been the main way for passing on their national culture. As an indispensable part of their life, it is usually performed in important festivals, congratulations ceremony of newly-built house, weddings and funerals. Good singers are often invited to sing in different places. The performance of the art has not only enhanced national cohesion and harmony coexistence, but also become the important tie connecting people's feelings of Southeast Asian countries with same language. What is most critical is to promote the stability of ethnic unity.

In 2003 the group of investigation and protection of intangible cultural heritage of Menghai county, Xishuangbanna dai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province

found that no more than ten Blang people in the villages could do the Blang Singing and Instrument Playing. All of the ten people are over 60 years old. Under the impact of the globalization, the traditional Blang singing and playing cannot arouse the interest of young people. The ancient art is faced with a severe crisis of survival. Based on the first investigation and census of the intangible cultural heritage of the county, a full investigation in 2007 was conducted on Blang ethnic music, in which the production of the Blang music text was finished. In June 2008 the art of Blang nationality's singing and playing was successfully declared as a protection project of national intangible cultural heritage. "Today, tradition or cultural heritage has become an important resource to reconstruct local identity. However, in present local narratives some so-called traditions have been politically and economically reinvented even though they have actually lost their vitality. " "To some extent, the declaration of world cultural heritage has been reflected through the exclusion of "others". Its aim is not to arouse the sense of local people's identity. Instead, excavating historical and cultural resources, recognizing their authority and giving interpretation to the authority of the recognized are what world cultural heritage declaration counts."

## II. SYMBOL CONSUMPTION CHARACTERISTICS OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE.

Intangible cultural heritage is the precious cultural wealth created by generations of ancestors, including oral works, ethnic languages, folk performances, traditional rituals, festivals, music, musical instruments and traditional handicraft skills. As an important carrier of national spirit, intangible cultural heritage embodies the memories of human culture. Because of changes of times and the need for self-survival and development the memories have appeared far from their original forms. What we see today from cultural heritage to great extent has been symbolized. In other words, as the "live memory" of human culture, what intangible cultural heritage presents is the active aggregation of various cultural symbols. The rich cultural symbols contained in intangible cultural heritage can become the cultural resources for the development of cultural industry and provide raw materials for the production of symbolic value of cultural products.

The intangible cultural heritage of mankind is an important part of the national culture created by different

nationalities in different natural environments in different historical periods. The intangible cultural heritage of all ethnic groups is one of the cultural forms that can reflect the diversity of national ethnic culture and the uniqueness of each national culture. The originality of intangible cultural heritage determines its uniqueness, scarcity and non-renewability. With the development of science and technology and the acceleration of globalization, many intangible cultural heritages face the fate of extinction and some of them have actually disappeared. In fact, the intangible cultural heritage is gradually weakening and disappearing, which specially highlights the scarcity of intangible cultural heritage. Accordingly, the scarcity and non-renewability add its economic value and become cultural resources that best reflect cultural difference. With the scarcity and non-renewability intangible cultural heritage will be potential to enter the cultural industry and become the cultural capital. Intangible cultural heritage, due to its unrepeatable nature in human history, makes it an important cultural capital to promote the development of cultural industry.

The cultural resources contained in intangible cultural heritage include implicit and explicit two parts (inner recessive and external dominant). For example, folk culture such as national costumes, ethnic architecture and lifestyle belongs to the explicit part, while the deep connotation of folk culture belonging to the implicit part is usually expressed through carrier or cultural atmosphere. High-level folk cultural tourism pays much attention to the cultural environment and the creation of cultural atmosphere. It not only needs a presented career of folk culture, but also an environment and atmosphere in which the tourists can enjoy the pursuit of the original culture. In accordance with the principle of sustainable development non-tangible cultural tourism resources should vigorously develop cultural tourism and eco-tourism tourism projects, particularly the tourism projects with local and ethnic characteristics. The consumption of modern society has been transformed from the material consumption which meets the basic survival needs into the symbol consumption of the psychological culture which is the carrier of goods consumption. Intangible cultural heritage, as a tourism resource with rich diversity of cultural symbols, coincides with the symbol consumption of tourists.

### III. THE TOURISM EXPLORATION OF THE BLANG NATIONALITY'S SINGING AND INSTRUMENT PLAYING

American anthropologist, believes that culture is a set of concepts expressed in various symbols passing on from generation to generation. The intangible cultural heritage, as the living memory of human culture, presents the active aggregation of various cultural symbols. Under the background of current cultural diversity and cultural homogenization, cultural symbols with cultural differences implied by intangible cultural heritage undoubtedly make it a symbol of local culture. The national label gives it a powerful appeal. Since becoming a state-level intangible cultural heritage, the art of Blang's singing and instrument playing has been extremely popular with different fields of people, including official people, folk people, academic researchers at various kinds of purposes, which inevitably disturb the peace of villages concerned as well as the life of inheritors.

#### A. *The Effort of Government*

The relevant departments of Xishuangbanna are keenly

aware of the cultural capital and its value contained in the special cultural symbol of Blang's singing and instrument playing. The sing and playing in Manya village is constructed as an important cultural symbol to show the characteristics of the Blang culture to the outside world.

The following is a recommendation for rural tourism routes in Menghai county, Xishuangbanna.

Manya village, located in Daluo town Menghai county, is a mountain village of Blang nationality. It is about 73 kilometers from the county and about 7 km from the town of Dalu. Renowned for its typical ethnic art and culture---- Blang nationality's singing and instrument playing, Manya village has popularly been regarded as the land of art. As a kind of singing style for generations of Blang people Blang's singing and playing has long been an indispensable part of life. Blang people usually compare instrument playing and singing to cooking salt.

In this simple tour route recommended, Blang's singing and playing is the most valuable tourist tag and symbol in Manya village.

In the next quotation, we will review the work summary of Menghai tourism bureau in the first half of 2010.

In the first half of 2010 with the correct leadership of the state party committee government and the guidance of the state tourism administration, with the support of the relevant departments at all levels and the joint efforts of the whole county tourism industry, the county tourist reception index are to complete the construction of eight typical ethnic tourism villages, covering Mengjinglai village, Manwei village, Manya village, Mandahuo village and Manzhao village.

It can be seen that In 2010 two years after Blang's singing and playing was awarded a national intangible cultural heritage, one year after Manya village was awarded "The land of Blang's singing and instrument playing", Manya village was listed into the construction plan of characteristic tourism village. In the Menghai county rural tourism routes the first route was planned as follows: Menghai County ----Daluo Town----Menjinglai Village---- Mandahuo Village ---- Manya village --- Daluo Twon. Obviously Manya village is one of the main attractions of the local push.

Menghai county's tourism industry plan for 2016-2018 also emphasized the Blang ethnic culture. The plan goes that Menghai county is planned to be gradually built into a one with most enriching experience of Dai nationality, Lahu nationality, Hani nationality, Blang nationality. By speeding up construction and improving the DaLuo port infrastructure construction and tourism facilities, Menghai county is to be gradually built into convenient channels and tourism center for border tourism and cross-border tourism facing southeast Asia, concentrating on the upgrade of the water-sprinkling festival and Mulberry Kan festival, enhancing the appeal of national festivals, striving to create the brand of festival travel culture. Besides, the plan also stressed the strengthening of tourism education and training, strengthening the cultivation of intangible cultural heritage in order to pass down the culture of ethnic minority culture from generation to generation (Internal information: The Three-Year Plan for Menghai County Tourism Industry Transformation and Upgrade) .

It can be seen that the local government attaches great importance to promoting the symbolic consumption of intangible cultural heritage at the national level.

#### B. *The Realistic Dilemma*

However, in the several field investigations, the author did not feel that Manya village was actually a tourist attraction. What she saw was nothing but a beautiful and tidy

village unlike other busy and noisy tourist attractions. The leisurely villagers were neither surprised nor shy of our arrival. They smiled kindly and acted freely. On the contrary, in Xiding county we saw a few foreign blonde tourists, who stayed in the local families usually for some time.

The first-line staff said that Blang's singing and playing had not been successfully developed into tourism even though the local government had a plan. No measures had been put into effect other than some group of ethnic artists occasionally went to jewelry shop to show the performance. They were paid by the boss of the shop. Recently because of the situation in Myanmar there were not many tourists coming to Mengjinglai, making it harder to develop Blang's singing and playing (Yushuai at Daluo Cultural Center interviewed by Xi Chun-ai).

While according to travel agency, the reason why they didn't develop the tourism route with Daluo was because of the long journey as well as the lack of valuable attractions (Manager Zhao of one of Travel Agency in Yunnan, interviewed by Xi Chun-ai).

Now the travel market is pursuing the fast and short routes. If Daluo was included, the whole cost would be increased a lot because of time consuming. In addition, single singing and playing performance would not be attractive enough for the tourists unless developing a chain of industrial chain, including food, ethnic clothing and shopping (The manager of a travel agency in Xishuangbanna, interviewed by Xi Chun-ai).

The inheritors said that those who came here were almost the researchers studying Blang ethnic culture and the officials. There were not any tourists coming here. Furthermore, we wouldn't know how to entertain the tourists if there had really been some tourists. We need more performance programs and performers (The inheritor Aiwaluoyu, interviewed by Xi Chun-ai).

What tourists thought was that it was not worth hurrying to Daluo only for Blang's singing and playing, since the travelling time was busy and short. There were neither study in ethnic music nor any interests to travel there (A friend from other provinces, interviewed by Xi Chun-ai).

Compared with the well-known port Daluo nearby, very few tourists go to Manya village, which should be carefully reflected by local government. In terms of tourism development of ethnic minority villages, only when the external participation behavior and internal development goals are put together, the institutional factors shown by the construction of cultural symbols for social development are reasonable, effective and constructive.

Accordingly, it is not easy to transform cultural resources implied by the intangible cultural heritage into cultural capital. As an industrialization process, it must be influenced by various factors such as investment environment, human resources investment channel and so on.

#### IV. CONCLUSION: THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM

Reasonable development and utilization of the intangible culture heritage for tourism and is not only related to the healthy and orderly development of tourism, but also closely related to the survival and development of the intangible cultural heritage itself .. How to turn cultural resources advantage into cultural tourism advantage is extremely important and extremely complicated. Therefore, the cultural resources development of intangible cultural heritage should

be solved with strategic measures for further cultural and ecological tourism. The strategic measures must be based on the full understanding of basic characteristics of the intangible cultural heritage and strictly abide by the basic principles of the protection of intangible cultural heritage. The protection of intangible cultural heritage and the development of cultural resources of intangible cultural heritage are mutually reinforcing. In the development and utilization of intangible cultural heritage, if its characteristics of the living state, ecological state, inheritance and variability are destroyed, deviating from the realistic principle, ecological principle, people-oriented principles, development principles, violating the ecological tourism purposes by interfering with the natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate the history and existing natural and cultural landscape, the damage to intangible cultural heritage will be caused to varying degrees, which will jeopardize the sustainable development of cultural ecological tourism.

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