
News

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Biographical notes: Zhou Xuefan is a Doctoral candidate of Department of Anthropology and Ethnology at Xiamen University. She received her Master's degree in School of Hotel and Tourism Management of Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2010. Her research interests are ethnic culture and heritage, cultural tourism, and ethnic tourism.

The seminar on the Major Program of National Social Science Foundation of China 2011 – “*Exploration and Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage System of China*” was held on December 3rd 2011, in Xiamen University. Zhou Xiaopu (the Deputy Director of Committee of experts of National Intangible Heritage Protection), Professor Xu Yiyi (the committee member of Committee of experts of National Intangible Heritage Protection), and Yuan Li (the researcher of Art Research Institute of China), etc. attended the seminar. The chief expert of the program is Professor Peng Zhaorong of College of Humanities, Xiamen University.

The orientation of the program bases on three aspects. Firstly, the theme of the program is “Exploration and Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage System of China”, and the fact is there are heritages but no heritage system in China. Secondly, the amount of the heritage of our country is in the top three of United Nation's World Heritage List; thirdly, our government has done a lot of work to promote and develop distribution and systematic strategy of intangible cultural heritage, but the theoretical hysteresis is obvious. Our government has also made a great progress in heritage protection in a short time, but it is under the condition of no theoretical preparation, no constructed institutions, no related and completed laws, and no imitable models. According to these, this major program tries to construct basic theories to solve the theoretical hysteresis and to find a heritage system of China which presents Chinese characters. This program is conducted in the field of Ethnology, and the relevant research fields are Cultural Anthropology and Heritage Studies; the research is classified as significant basic theory research of the country's major tendering program.

The research object is: firstly, construct an intangible cultural heritage system with Chinese characters; secondly, solve the problems of heritage in practise; thirdly, make a voice of China on the world stage.

The chief expert Professor Peng Zhaorong said: “We need to participate in the worldwide heritage research with our own perspectives and knowledge systems, as well as to line with the international standards”. In the research, the program group members

need to study western intangible cultural heritage theories, systems and disciplines comprehensively. In the program, they will compare Japanese, Korean, Australian systems, as well as French system which is the representative of western cultural system. Despite theoretical hysteresis, there is also a disciplinary hysteresis of heritage studies. How to build a disciplinary system of heritage studies in China? How to educate students in universities or museums, even correspond Chinese disciplinary system to western disciplinary system? It is needed to summarise foreign systems and clear Chinese system up. To solve these problems, group members will consider synchronic and diachronic issues. For synchronic issues, group members sort foreign intangible cultural heritage systems and compare them with the materials China already has. How to compare? There are four aspects, in a word, which are Dao (principlum), Xiang (phenomenon), Ji (technology), and Fa (method).

Dao (principlum) is the core value of Chinese intangible cultural heritage which the group members try to find on the philosophy level.

Xiang (phenomenon) means the group members will try to inspect whether Chinese heritage system corresponds to the existed five classifications or new classifications of United Nations on the level of Phenomenology, experiences and categories, and if Chinese system has more things, how to devote them to United nations' classification system. Actually, many things of China, such as Shao Lin Temple, Chinese traditional religious cognitions Chinese Medicine, Zhenjiu, Chinese ethnics and different cultural expressions of different ethnics, they are not included in United Nations' five classifications. They are important elements of Chinese cultural heritage, but if China consults United Nations' classifications completely, China has to cut out many precious things. So group members try to find Chinese own heritage system on the level of Phenomenology, experiences and categories.

Ji (technology) is the skills of using objects, and Chinese people who are pragmatic, always integrate their knowledge systems and cogitations with skills of using objects. For example, Chinese people do not separate medicine with food. The food Chinese people eat everyday is not only for living, but also for health protection even for treatment. So it is important to summarise those Chinese systematic characters.

Fa (method) is the issue of methods and methodology. Many kinds of Chinese cultural heritages conduct in their own way, and we do not realise that there are hidden technology system and technical fascination. The uniqueness of a heritage is mainly because of there is a technical system behind it, and this is what the group members need to find.

For diachronic issues, there are the methods of subsisting and the principlum of subsisting. Three diachronic procedures are included in the methods of subsisting, which are methods of maintaining, methods of inheritance and methods of adjusting. Methods of maintaining mean the principles of Chinese traditions. For methods of inheritance, there are several questions: how does China keep unified in such a long history, with so different ethnics, ecological environment, cultures etc.? And how could the traditions be preserved and developed? Beside these, China also needs to deal with contingencies in sustaining and protecting heritage as being confronted with significant globalisation and social change. For principlum of subsisting, it means it is hoped to find the vitality principlum of Chinese heritage.

The framework of the research includes: contrast featured foreign countries' intangible cultural heritage systems with Chinese system; construct theoretical issues of Chinese intangible cultural heritage system; solve practical issues, including regime

issues, discipline issues, laws of survival, etc.; protect our own heritage while respond to the heritage affairs of the world. The research has six sub-issues:

The first sub-issue we need to do is constructive research, which means investigate the heritage system of United Nations, Chinese system and foreign systems and build a database to know how are they going with the cause presently, what are their characteristics and theories, what are they mainly discussing about the discipline of heritage, what is the significant foundation of the theories of the discipline, and how does Chinese system joint with international strategy of heritage system building.

The second sub-issue is to excavate Chinese local knowledge pedigree of heritage. First of all, we need to explore Chinese local knowledge pedigree of heritage, especially those not included in Chinese traditional history, philosophy and literature of Confucian classics, such as ‘The Classic of Mountains and Seas’, ‘Natural History’, ‘Compendium of Materia Medica’, etc.

The third sub-issue is to find the principium of subsisting which is also the cultural principium behind the intangible heritage system, mainly on the level on philosophy, disciplinary theories and logic. It includes the cosmology, the outlook of human beings, the values and Chinese cognition system.

The concepts and rules of heritage system in China all come form western countries, so the forth issue is to construct our own concept of heritage. As the existed concepts of heritage which are recognised internationally are not correspond with Chinese current situation, China needs to find a concept like ‘a case of culture significance’, if there is, whether it goes to be an expression with Chinese characters among several heritage systems? It needs the group members to do a lot of work.

The sixth sub-issue is about the solutions. There are many problems in heritage protection and inheritance. For example, the traditional cultural heritage existed in the integrated community, but there will be changes after the heritage being urbanised; so when the urbanised heritage comes back to the original community, it may cause a lot of problems on traditions. The inheritor mode is efficient but it is hard to say the mode will solve all the problems about inheritance.

The heritage system of China needs to be constructed and improved. This program tries to find a ‘Chinese model’ of heritage system and construct a heritage system with Chinese characters. The concept system, classification system, naming system, knowledge system, practise system and protection system are research subjects of this program. There is a significant breakthrough that finding the basic structure, theoretical elements, basic unions and structural mode of intangible cultural heritage firstly, then searching out Chinese mode of production of intangible cultural heritage knowledge, last and the most important, finding the core values of Chinese culture. And the innovation is to find a Chinese mode of intangible cultural heritage by the three steps mentioned above. The Chinese mode is integrated philosophy, disciplinary theories, experience and methods which faces not only China itself, the United Nations, and the world, but also faces the past, the present and the future.

The research achievements are three books and a thematic report of 30,000 words. The three books are 80 words in all and the core book names “The Essentials of China’s Intangible Cultural Heritage System”. The second book is the comparison of the documents, data and characters of the United Nations’ and five representative countries’ intangible cultural heritage systems; the last book is about ten fieldwork points which are different in ecology, cultural styles, ethnics and regions.

Experts attending the seminar gave constructive comments and advices on the program. They came to an agreement on the program framework, research methods, expected outcomes and program management. Experts also agreed that the exploration and research of the program is significant for the protection of intangible cultural heritage in China, and it can help to develop world's cultural heritage system, which is not only beneficial for the country, but also for the future generations. It is very important and emergent to build an intangible cultural heritage system of China, which supplies strong theoretical support and practical guidance for China to develop comprehensively, it is also important for China to participate in the competition of culture and economy world widely. As heritage promotion becomes one of the most significant international political and social culture phenomenons, the construction of Chinese intangible cultural heritage system will distribute itself to the world heritage affairs.