

Exploration on the Modern Value and Path of the Inheritance of Minnan Gezi Opera from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization

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Abstract

Against the background of the new era, the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy is an inevitable requirement for solving the existing major social contradictions in China and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The richness of farmers' ideological and cultural qualities is directly related to the effectiveness of rural revitalization and affects the overall process of rural modernization. "Cultural revitalization" in rural revitalization provides an inexhaustible spiritual driving force for enhancing the spiritual outlook of villagers. Therefore, guided by cultural revitalization, fully exploring the values contained in local folk culture represented by Minnan Gezi Opera is a practical need for further realizing rural revitalization and also one of the core meanings of enabling the rural cultural industry to transform into a modernization-oriented model.

Keywords

Rural Revitalization, Minnan Gezi Opera, Modern Value, Path Exploration

1. Introduction

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that "to promote rural revitalization and strengthen the ideological and moral construction in rural areas, it is necessary to be led by the core socialist values and deeply explore the humanistic spirit and ideological concepts contained in excellent traditional culture." (Tan & Tan, 2021: p. 50). With the in-depth promotion of the rural revitalization strategy, cultural revitalization has gradually become an important part of rural revitalization. As a local folk culture, Minnan Gezi Opera contains values that are the deep-seated memories of the people in Fujian, Taiwan region and rural areas, and it is a com-

mon emotional bond connecting Fujian and Taiwan region. “Among the more than 20 million compatriots in Taiwan region, those whose ancestral hometown is Zhangzhou account for 35.8%, with a population of more than 8 million, ranking first in the proportion of the population of the ancestral hometowns of compatriots in Taiwan region”. (He, 2011: p. 1) Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to giving play to the role of local folk culture, influencing people with culture, and injecting new vitality into rural revitalization. At present, the exploration of the values contained in Minnan Gezi Opera in China is not deep enough, and in the digital age, the research on its dissemination and promotion paths is not perfect enough. Therefore, on the basis of further consolidating the achievements of rural revitalization, it is necessary to comprehensively strengthen the Party’s unified leadership over rural cultural construction and make full use of local folk culture to empower the construction of the rural cultural industry, so as to meet the growing spiritual needs of the people.

2. Overview of Minnan Gezi Opera

2.1. History and Current Situation of Minnan Gezi Opera

Minnan Gezi Opera originated in southern Fujian and took shape in Taiwan region. “It is a local opera genre sung in the Minnan dialect, mainly popular in the Xiangjiang River Basin of Zhangzhou Plain in the lower reaches of the Jiulong River in Fujian Province, and is one of the five major opera genres in Fujian Province.” (Gao & Fang, 2016: p. 10). Its origin can be traced back to the early 20th century. It originally evolved from a series of folk song, dance and folk art forms such as “Chegu Nong” and “Zasui Xi” in the local area, and gradually became an independent form of opera art. At the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, in order to avoid the chaos of war, the people in southern Fujian had no choice but to go to sea and enter Taiwan region to reclaim wasteland. Along with them, a series of opera art forms from southern Fujian were also brought to Taiwan region. Locally, the “Gezi Zhen” was gradually formed, which later evolved into today’s “Gezi Opera”. “Although Minnan Gezi Opera was also renamed ‘Xiang Opera’ in the 1950s, the term ‘Gezi Opera’ is obviously more widely recognized across the Taiwan Strait in the long historical evolution.” (Li, 2020: p. 82). This is because the term “Gezi Opera” is filled with a strong sense of nostalgia, and it naturally has become a great opera that serves as a bond of family affection connecting the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. Influenced by the integration of cultural diversity, in order to keep up with the development of the times, while retaining its traditional essence, Gezi Opera has also incorporated many modern elements to achieve its own innovative development. Nowadays, Minnan Gezi Opera has become one of the five major opera genres in Fujian Province and was listed in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2006. “Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is a crucial component of human culture, representing the accumulation of human civilization and wisdom.” (Wu et al., 2024: p. 2). As a member of the intangible cultural heritage, Minnan Gezi Opera show-

cases the local customs and practices of southern Fujian in various art forms, demonstrating strong cultural inheritance power.

2.2. Values Embodied in Minnan Gezai Opera

Minnan Gezai Opera has been passed down from ancient times to the present, and it contains many excellent traditional values, such as the concepts of “integrity”, “loyalty and filial piety”, “friendliness”, etc., which reflect the unique humanistic spirit and social outlook of the Minnan region. With the changes of the times, Gezai Opera has been endowed with a lot of content rich in local characteristics. It is a microcosm of the historical and cultural development of a nation and bears the cultural mission of connecting the family affection of compatriots in Fujian and Taiwan region.

Firstly, the “concept of integrity”. As an important moral criterion in Minnan culture, integrity is mainly presented through the construction of dramatic plots. For example, the Gezai Opera “Qiaopi” is a work with integrity as its core theme. It tells the story of overseas Chinese compatriots who have been struggling abroad for many years sending Qiaopi (letters and remittances sent to their hometowns) back to their hometowns. It vividly portrays a picture of the “people waiting for Qiaopi” who are eagerly anticipating and the “Qiaopi senders” and “Qiaopi deliverers” who are bravely striving. In the opera, even though the overseas Chinese compatriots face difficult lives overseas, they always insist on sending Qiaopi to their relatives, demonstrating their emphasis on the promises made to their families. In addition, the “Shuiké” (people who deliver Qiaopi) in the opera are also the key focus. “Shuiké are the bridge of ‘Qiaopi’. Every time they ‘deliver Qiaopi’, they need to entrust their lives to the unpredictable sea, which is a struggle against fate.” (Li, 2022: p. 54). No matter how difficult it is, they can always insist on delivering the “Qiaopi” to the other party, reflecting the powerful spiritual core of the people in Minnan, which is “dare to strive and win, and establish a career with integrity”.

Secondly, the “concept of loyalty and filial piety”. “In the survey, it can be found that the ancestral hall in southern Fujian embodies strong features such as worship of Confucianism and emphasis on roots” (Liu & Zhang, 2024: p. 83). Minnan Gezai Opera originated in the Fujian and Taiwan regions. The “concept of loyalty and filial piety” embedded in it is a inheritance of the “loyalty, filial piety, integrity, and righteousness” in Confucian culture, and a manifestation of the deep integration of traditional ethics and regional culture. “From the perspective of its development and evolution, works that advocate loyalty, filial piety, propriety, and righteousness account for the vast majority, which can be evidenced by traditional Minnan Gezai Opera works such as ‘Asking for Tuition Fees’, ‘An’an Rescuing His Mother’, and ‘The Blessings of Three Families’.” (Jian, 2022: p. 162). In the opera, through the use of artistic forms such as “speaking, singing, chanting, fighting, and acting” and the creation of classic character images, it presents loyalty to the country and the nation and conveys the value concept that “filial piety

comes first among all virtues”. This act of concretizing the concept of loyalty and filial piety has made Gezai Opera a unique spiritual symbol in the Minnan cultural ecosystem, and it has also become a crucial medium for maintaining cultural identity in the Fujian and Taiwan regions.

Thirdly, the “concept of friendliness”. The concept of friendliness in Minnan Gezai Opera is presented through precise details and multiple perspectives. For example, the newly compiled Gezai Opera “The New Bride” is a work full of love and kindness. The story of the peddler Zhou Acheng and Xu Wanyu in this opera reveals the beautiful side of human nature. When facing family changes, Xu Wanyu unhesitatingly sticks to her family and silently makes sacrifices for it. This decision reflects her inner kindness and decisiveness. When the peddler Zhou Acheng learns about the changes in Xu Wanyu’s family, he always adheres to his kindness. Gradually, a sense of pity arises in his heart, which prompts him to selflessly offer a helping hand. “It enables the audience to feel the brilliance of human nature while enjoying the opera, and further triggers their pursuit and perseverance of truth, goodness and beauty.” (Fu, 2024: p. 19). The content presented in this opera truly explores the beauty of human nature from the perspective of “love and kindness”, and the values of “truth, goodness and beauty” it conveys echo the core socialist values in the new era.

3. The Modern Value of the Inheritance of Minnan Gezai Opera from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization

“Rural Revitalization aims to build rural China into a place with industrial prosperity, environmental-friendly living, civilized culture, effective governance, and abundant life.” (Xin & Deng, 2025: p. 1). The inheritance and promotion of Minnan Gezai Opera can, to a certain extent, boost the effectiveness of the rural revitalization strategy. As one of the components of local folk culture, it demonstrates tenacious vitality at the economic, cultural, and educational levels. The values it contains provide a source of strength for the revitalization of rural cultural industries.

3.1. Economic Value: Gathering the Strength of the People and Boosting Rural Economic Development

“It confirms that the revitalization of rural industries plays a pivotal role in reducing income inequality.” (Chen & Wu, 2025: p. 2). As a local folk culture, Gezai Opera contains profound cultural heritage and unique artistic charm. It is an important source for the development of local cultural tourism resources and the main force in the revitalization of rural cultural industries. To a certain extent, it affects the development of local cultural industries and the income level of residents, and plays a role in promoting economic development. A key way to further realize its economic value is to deeply integrate Gezai Opera with local tourism resources to form cultural tourism resources and use digital media for dissemination, so as to attract more tourists to watch. Firstly, elements such as the “props,

costumes, and music” in Minnan Gezai Opera are integrated into rural characteristic industries to form new consumption hotspots. By holding cultural festivals, it helps to create the characteristic brand of the “hometown of opera culture”, thereby increasing public attention. In addition, on this basis, it is necessary to comprehensively create an integrated characteristic industrial chain of “opera + culture + catering + accommodation + transportation” to create a good rural tourism base, so as to improve the overall economic benefits of the countryside and better drive local economic development. Secondly, with the advent of the digital and intelligent era, the value concepts contained in Gezai Opera can be widely disseminated through digital media, allowing more audiences to understand the cultural heritage of Gezai Opera. Use intelligent technology to develop digital products and cultural and creative products related to Gezai Opera, and integrate the excellent value elements contained in Gezai Opera into them. Publicize and sell them through online e-commerce platforms, continuously expand its sales market, and thus extend the economic value it creates.

3.2. Cultural Value: Inheriting Excellent Chinese Culture and Promoting Cultural Identity between Fujian and Taiwan Region

Minnan Gezai Opera originates from the people and is deeply rooted in the rural areas of southern Fujian. It carries cultural contents such as the living customs, historical beliefs, and folk customs of compatriots in Fujian and Taiwan region. It is the crystallization of the wisdom of generations of people in Fujian and Taiwan region and serves as a bridge for cultural exchanges between compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. As the main cultural base that gave birth to Gezai Opera, Minnan culture can be regarded as the cultural root of Gezai Opera. What Minnan Gezai Opera embodies is not only the inheritance of Minnan culture but also the inheritance of excellent traditional Chinese culture. In order to have a deeper understanding of the cultural origin of Gezai Opera, we need to start with Minnan culture. Firstly, “the germination of Minnan culture began when a large number of Han people from the Central Plains migrated to southern Fujian during the Yongjia period of the Jin Dynasty. Minnan culture was precisely nurtured on the basis of the Central Plains culture that was introduced into Fujian from the Jin Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty”. (Chen et al., 1997: p. 17) On the basis of preserving the Central Plains culture, integrating the Minyue culture, and absorbing the Nan-yang culture, it has constructed a cultural ecological system with its own characteristics. The Central Plains culture within it retains a large number of ancient Confucian cultural ideas. For example, values such as “loyalty, filial piety, integrity, righteousness” and “benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faith” are its connotations, which are in the same vein as the excellent traditional Chinese culture. This lays a cultural foundation for striving to build a harmonious society. Secondly, given that compatriots in Fujian and Taiwan region share the same local language, cultural background, and folk customs, and under the com-

bined influence of the immigrant spirit and cultural needs, Minnan Gezai Opera has gradually become a spiritual bond that connects compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Many of its plays are derived from reality and can accurately reflect the corresponding character stories and historical plots, thus deepening the in-depth understanding of compatriots in Fujian and Taiwan region of their common cultural background and historical memory. It is a crucial medium for promoting cultural identity between Fujian and Taiwan region.

3.3. Educational Value: Enriching the Forms of Rural Education and Enhancing the Effectiveness of Cultural Education

Minnan Gezai Opera contains concepts that are in line with the core socialist values. For example, concepts such as “getting rich through hard work, establishing a career with integrity, and being harmonious and friendly” can be integrated with rural ideological and political education to carry out ideological education for people in society. This enriches new forms of rural education, guides villagers to establish correct values, and conducts moral and aesthetic education for them, so as to enhance the effectiveness of cultural education. Firstly, carry forward traditional virtues and achieve “moral education”. From the perspective of rural revitalization, the moral enlightenment function of Minnan Gezai Opera has become increasingly prominent. Many of its scripts are drawn from folk legends and contain rich ethical and aesthetic values. For example, “Chen San and the Fifth Lady” promotes a loyal and romantic view of love; “Liu Xiu’s Restoration of the Country” presents the ethical concept of loyalty and filial piety; “Qiaopi” conveys the values of diligence, hard work, honesty and trustworthiness. By learning Gezai Opera and being influenced by traditional virtues, the moral and humanistic qualities of rural residents can be continuously improved, and the cultivation of their own good qualities can be realized, which helps to build a harmonious and beautiful society. Secondly, attach importance to traditional art forms and cultivate one’s own aesthetic qualities. Minnan Gezai Opera includes various art forms such as “costumes, makeup, and music”. Through performances with simple makeup, it shows the essential beauty of folk art. By making use of the beauty of styling and performance, a multi-level aesthetic education system can be further established, enabling villagers to better experience the aesthetic value brought by traditional art, so as to meet the aesthetic needs of villagers at the spiritual level.

4. Practical Exploration of the Inheritance of Minnan Gezai Opera from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization

The cultural values embodied in Minnan Gezai Opera play an important role in empowering the construction of civilized rural customs from the perspective of rural revitalization, especially in aspects such as cultural “inheritance, construction, and development”. At present, Minnan Gezai Opera faces difficulties in terms of “policy and system, funding, talent, and cultural education”. Therefore, taking these aspects as the overall focus, it is necessary to actively construct an

inheritance mechanism for Gezai Opera, a local folk culture, and actively respond to the call for the protection of intangible cultural heritage.

4.1. Resource Integration: Increasing Capital Investment and Enhancing Cultural Influence

Currently, in addition to formulating corresponding laws, regulations and policies for the inheritance of Gezai Opera, an intangible cultural heritage, it is also necessary to increase capital investment and continuously reshape the vitality of the inheritance of Minnan Gezai Opera. This has already become one of the important links in the protection of intangible cultural heritage and is a key way to enable Minnan Gezai Opera to showcase the unique charm of Chinese culture to the world. Mr. Li Yiwen proposed in the article “My Vision for the Management of the Troupe” that “Taking the path of industrial operation in the reform is an inevitable choice for the survival and development of the Zhangzhou Xiang Opera Troupe.” (Li, 2014: p. 122) Therefore, the government needs to increase the capital investment in the inheritance of Minnan Gezai Opera and incorporate it into the plan for the revitalization of rural cultural industries, so that the cultural inheritance of Minnan Gezai Opera can continuously drive the development of rural cultural industries. At the same time, it is also necessary to establish special funds, broaden the publicity channels, and strengthen exchanges with external enterprises, etc., to continuously achieve the innovative development of Minnan Gezai Opera. In addition, on the basis of increasing the investment in the inheritance of Minnan Gezai Opera, it can also rely on the tourism industry to achieve a two-way win-win development model of “cultural industry + tourism industry”, create cultural and creative products with its own regional characteristics, and through international cultural exchange activities, promote them to the world stage, and strive to create a unique and beautiful business card for traditional Chinese culture. In short, the inheritance of Minnan Gezai Opera needs to cooperate more with other industries, continuously achieve its own creative transformation and innovative development, strive to build its own brand, improve its own popularity, and at the same time, continuously enhance the international influence of traditional Chinese culture.

4.2. Digital Innovation: Attaching Importance to Talent Cultivation and Achieving Digital Dissemination

With the advent of the digital and intelligent era, the inheritance of Minnan Gezai Opera also needs to rely on modern technological means, especially the application of digital and intelligent technologies, in order to achieve a breakthrough in traditional inheritance methods. “Talent is the primary resource; science and technology are the primary productive forces.” Only with the dual support of talent cultivation and digital technology can Minnan Gezai Opera more effectively achieve its own inheritance and development. Firstly, currently, the main audience of Minnan Gezai Opera is mainly middle-aged and elderly people. Young people are not very interested in traditional operas, and its inheritance is facing a

talent shortage dilemma. Therefore, the government needs to attach importance to the innovative inheritance of folk operas, increase the proportion of relevant courses on local folk operas offered in opera colleges and universities, and set up relevant opera majors such as Minnan Gezai Opera to form a group of professionals dedicated to the study of folk operas and cultivate new-era young people with professional opera skills. (Chen, 2022: p. 147) Encourage the integrated cooperation model of “schools, enterprises and communities”. While providing employment opportunities for students, it also endeavors to cultivate local opera enthusiasts, prompting their transformation from “bystanders” to “participants” and continuously enhancing regional cultural identity. Secondly, “All civilizations are media histories. It is media technology that enables the preservation and dissemination of human historical culture.” (Xu, 2022: p. 93) Folk operas in the digital age can make full use of media technology to achieve their own inheritance and development, especially the integration of digital education and modern media technology. Empower intangible cultural heritage with technology, break through time and space limitations, and make it truly “come alive”. For example, using technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to create virtual stages, virtual scenes and role-playing can bring unique interactions and immersive experiences to the audience and stimulate their interest in traditional folk operas. Only by fully understanding the cultural needs of villagers and the trend of the times can Minnan Gezai Opera be better inherited locally and shine with its due luster. (Huang, 2024: p. 19)

4.3. Educational Inheritance: Empowering Rural Ideological and Political Education and Improving the Effect of Cultural Education

Rural ideological and political education is a long-term project that needs to be in line with the actual needs of farmers and keep pace with the times. Integrating the excellent cultural values contained in Minnan Gezai Opera into the content of rural ideological and political education is an important way to achieve educational localization. By deeply exploring the potential values in local culture that conform to the contemporary mainstream ideology and integrating them with rural ideological and political education, it is an essential way to enhance villagers’ ideological awareness and cultural confidence and improve the effectiveness of cultural education. Firstly, attach importance to the application value of traditional local folk cultural resources. Due to the diverse ideological cognitions of farmers and their lack of active learning awareness, “rural grassroots cadres should make full use of media technology in the information age and explain practical cases, drama performances, etc. to farmers” (Chen & Liu, 2025: p. 8). Local grassroots organizations need to combine the actual situation, fully integrate opera culture with rural ideological and political education and the core socialist values, so as to achieve content innovation and at the same time empower the educational effect of rural ideological and political education. In addition, optimize the good humanistic environment in rural areas. Grassroots governments

can integrate red spiritual culture and red folk culture into the process of opera creation, spread the revolutionary spirit, and realize an integrated education model of “local folk culture + red culture + rural ideological and political education”. For example, they can strengthen the renovation of local characteristic buildings and create unique buildings that condense red culture and folk culture, so as to enhance the attractiveness of rural ideological education. This integrated education model not only enhances the attractiveness of education but also imperceptibly cultivates the cultural confidence of local villagers, thus injecting new spiritual vitality into rural revitalization.

5. Conclusion

At present, the local folk culture, Minnan Gezai Opera, as a treasure of the excellent traditional culture in the Minnan region, continuously injects new vitality into the revitalization of rural culture, and it is of great value and significance for the inheritance of the values it contains. However, the inheritance process of the values of Minnan Gezai Opera is not smooth sailing. It requires the support of the government, schools, social figures and other sectors of society so that Minnan Gezai Opera can shine with new luster in the new era, and gradually drive the development of other aspects of the countryside, providing a source of motivation for comprehensively promoting the all-round revitalization of the countryside.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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