

Intangible Cultural Heritage in Northeast China Films

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Abstract

In 2001, UNESCO adopted the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, emphasizing the importance of all cultural heritage including the intangible cultural heritage of all countries and nations in the world for maintaining human cultural diversity and calling for strengthening the protection of the intangible cultural heritage. With the attention to intangible cultural heritage at home and abroad, the concept of intangible cultural heritage has gradually gained popularity. As a mirror of the times, movies also reflect this cultural phenomenon. Many movies use intangible cultural heritage movies as their slogans, forming a new landscape of the movie industry in the new century.

Keywords: intangible cultural heritage, Northeast China films, paper cutting, Er Ren Zhuan, folk culture

1. Introduction

Intangible cultural heritage is an important part of the world's cultural system. To better promote social and cultural development and prosperity, it is necessary to do a good job in the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. By innovating cultural communication methods and enriching the cultural development environment, the work of cultural heritage inheritance permeates the production and life of the masses, to shape the living state of cultural heritage and innovate the live transmission mode of intangible cultural heritage. The Northeast region of China used agriculture, nomadic animal husbandry, and hunting as the main production methods in the early days and created rich historical and cultural heritage in the practice of production and life, especially the wide distribution of intangible cultural heritage.

2. Presentation of Northeast Intangible Cultural Heritage in Northeast Films

2.1 Paper Cutting

Raise the Red Lantern is one of Zhang Yimou's best films and his experimental work that leads to his success. The characters are successfully integrated into the scene in front of the audience. No matter the composition of bright elements or the metaphor of space, they all show a painting of living people with a static composition. For example, the presentation of this movie scene was unprecedented in China in the 1980s. It uses monochrome paper-cutting, using Yin-cut paper-cutting techniques, combined with yin and yang, to draw on the wooden plane in a dramatic hollow way, stylized scenes, and the beautiful meaning of many children and grandchildren are transformed into feudal thoughts of imprisonment. The black paper cut, and the blank space show the conflicting Northwest pride in the symmetrical relationship between plane and space. The fate of women in that era is embedded in this courtyard. The alternation of serial images composed of countless single sheets is a contest between perfection and conflict, and it is also a way of expressing a work of art. It has completely formed an expressionist style in most other arts and opened new horizons in movies. The symmetry, balance, and imagery of paper-cut art displayed by Zhang Yimou in the lens language and bright tones in the work *The Flowers of War*

make the image more beautiful and typical and increase the effect of decoration. In a sense, color also represents culture. Cool colors shrink and warm colors stand out. Black and white segments in color films often create symbolism. As for the portrayal of the typical characters, the exaggerated shape and bold use are the same as the method of highlighting the typical characters and images of the main characters in the paper-cut art, which makes the characters more vivid and embodies the technique of depicting the spirit through its meaning.

The middle shot used in the movie *Red Sorghum* and the long shot used in the movie *Wolf Totem* is like the vast worlds listed in the paper-cut art. The characteristics of characters and things are exaggerated to make them more symbolic. Where the camera is placed is a token of the expressiveness and tension of the film. Houses and railings can also be transformed into various metaphors. We say that this is a form of formalism, and it is explained through the center of the picture.

In both paper-cutting and film, the white cut out by arrangements is the same as the black left on purpose. The art of juxtaposing the white and black makes the rhythm livelier and increases the sense of reality of the scene. Superficial authenticity ignores the real essence. The contour lines formed by white and black are like the beautiful contour of a body. Ingres once said: "A noble outline is enough to offset the lack of inspiration, dull brushwork, and clumsy coloring." This exactly applies to such a picture. The techniques of ancient artists are clumsy, simple, thick, simple, and powerful, which is the deepest taste we pursue in shadows and shapes.

2.2 Er Ren Zhuan

China's first Er Ren Zhuan opera film *The Return of the Concubine*, (directed by Xing Dan, starring Yan Xuejing & Pan Changjiang, 2010) is a Northeast Er Ren Zhuan comedy film. *The Return of the Royal Concubine* tells the story of the imperial concubine Lang Lihua (played by Yan Xuejing) who was homesick during the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty. The emperor allowed her to return to the Northeast to visit her relatives. Lang Lihua was disguised as a normal citizen, dressed in simple clothes. The dirty money received by eunuchs was allocated by the concubine to build bridges for the people but was reported by the accompanying eunuchs. Thanks to Tong Zhixian (played by Pan Changjiang) who risked his life to go to the imperial palace to plead for orders, the corrupt officials were finally punished, and justice was done.

Many opera films are made after the stage play. The stage used in the opera is often put into the film, which makes the audience feel that there are great traces of stage performance in the film. The difference in *The Return of the Concubine* is that there is no stage limitation, and the film script is directly created, which is completely completed by the film production. It is a feature film shot with the montage technique.

Operas have rhymes and use percussion music, so the rhythm of the film must be slowed down, and the rhymes of operas are more difficult for young people to listen to than foreign languages. In the Northeast dialect, there is no use of rhyme, and the film's language is very wonderful. Now, the Er Ren Zhuan performances that audiences watch are all fashion and entertainment versions of Er Ren Zhuan. Er Ren Zhuan's truly beautiful singing and dancing are rarely performed on stage. You can see it on the Internet. *The Return of the Concubine* presents Er Ren Zhuan's *Nine Tune Eighteen Tune* and *Seventy-two Coughs*, the most beautiful and original Er Ren Zhuan to the audience. Bai and others carried out bold reforms, selected several tunes, and filled some traditional arias into catchy lines, and carried out meaningful explorations on the essence of traditional Er Ren Zhuan, such as singing skills, dance forms, and character expressions.

2.3 Northeast Shadow Puppets

Northeast Donkey Shadow Puppet is a film that tells the story of an old shadow puppet artist who has nostalgia and overcomes many difficulties, finally leading to the successful performance of a shadow puppet play that is not easy to see now and the process of fulfilling his wish. After a long period of historical baptism, traditional culture has been passed down and inherited, and it is often the cultural essence that can directly capture people's hearts and emotions. The humanistic concern of traditional culture for the current society is the keynote of this film. The important props used in shadow puppetry performances—*Shadow Man* is a masterpiece of art because of its exquisite handicraft production and profound historical and cultural accumulation. This is also a precious and rare cultural heritage in the current era of fast-food culture.

Northeast shadow puppet art adopts vivid and concrete shapes in the creation process, and at the same time extracts abstract patterns with profound meanings. People's refinement and summary of abstract patterns can be traced back to the primitive period. People analyzed the visual language and design elements of Northeast shadow puppets in their daily work. The frequency of cloud patterns, fish patterns, sun patterns, and flower patterns in Northeast shadow puppets is very high, because Northeast China is in a minority folk area, and ethnic minorities are very respectful of natural phenomena, such as animal and plant worship. The pattern of flowers can be seen on the clothing because flowers symbolize vitality. Through abstract image extraction, not only can shadow puppets be decorated but also the beautiful meaning of flowers can be written in the shadow puppets culture. In the vast Northeast region, there are Manchu, Hezhen, Xibe, and so on who believe in fishing and

hunting culture. They mainly rely on fishing and hunting as their main source of food. Therefore, animal elements such as fish, shrimp, and deer appear in the Northeast shadow art. People used these animals as tribal totems, and then further evolved the totems. To reflect the meanings of life, sacrifice, good luck, etc., abstract symbols are extracted from natural images, and abstract symbols of masculine, feminine, and yin and yang are extracted. Masculine symbols: sun pattern, hook cloud pattern, wishful pattern, etc. Feminine symbols: gourd pattern, penetrating money pattern, square pattern, etc. Abstract symbols of yin and yang complexities: peacock feather pattern, Pisces double diamond pattern, gourd pattern, etc. Generally, the overall presentation of shadow puppets is to integrate and output these elements, and integrate the yin and yang symbols, to achieve the implication of yin and yang balance, mutual growth of the two, and harmony with nature.

2.4 Folk Culture

The living habits of ethnic minorities in the movie *Genghis Khan* have repeatedly appeared on movie screens. The indigenous people in the Northeast include Jurchen, Khitan, and other ethnic minorities. The main way they live is fishing and hunting, so this requires them must have a sense of collectivism and understand the spirit of teamwork, so that they can maintain a kind of simple national customs for a long time, such as honesty and trustworthiness, emphasizing friendship, etc. These have still become the distinctive characteristics of the folk customs of the Northeast. They all feel that the Northeast people are exquisite. In addition, barbaric survival, backward customs, and harsh living environment make the Northeast culture lack some gentleness, which also affects the aura, psychology, and concepts of the Northeast people and is also the inevitable result of the changes in the Northeast. When making some Northeast-themed movies, the movies often create patterns of labor and life with local characteristics such as winter hunting, hunting, and discharging, and the alternate and repeated creative techniques reflect the characteristics of the film. The emphasis on the characteristics of the era and characters can also allow the audience to feel the unique regional culture when appreciating the works. The application of folk culture in Northeast China's films can truly restore the sense of age and character characteristics at that time for film works. It is also possible to emphasize the special regional culture by repeating the local characteristic language, local characteristic site setting, etc.

3. The Cultural Process of Northeast Intangible Cultural Heritage in Films

Intangible cultural heritage culture has accumulated many years of history. However, due to the time limit of our movies, it is often a microcosm of a long chapter in the history of intangible cultural heritage. As a chapter in the historical process of intangible cultural heritage in Northeast China, the intangible cultural heritage of Northeast China is even less reflected in movies, and even the number of independent films that reflect intangible cultural heritage in Northeast China is very small. Appears as an element in each movie. For the development of a mass culture of intangible cultural heritage in Northeast China, it is more difficult to integrate intangible cultural heritage culture into real life to preach. If it can be done in a way that is popular to hear and see, the masses can efficiently get acquainted with the historical process of intangible cultural heritage and highlight the process of intangible cultural heritage in a limited film space. Filmmakers don't have to deliberately pursue the presentation of intangible cultural heritage in sections. The key is to stimulate the audience's love and yearning for intangible cultural heritage and to explore the historical heritage of intangible cultural heritage. This is not only good for the film itself, but it can also profoundly spread the excellent intangible cultural heritage of Northeast China.

4. The Modern Cultural Psychology Revealed by Northeast Intangible Cultural Heritage Films

Cultures are not isolated from each other. They are the result of mutual exchanges, and many differences will naturally collide in this process. This is an objective reality, and we should face it squarely. In the process of dissemination of Northeast non-heritage culture, there has been a collision with modern cultural psychology. It is necessary to analyze the relationship between the two cultures, and not just observe a certain cultural phenomenon one-sidedly. Only by arousing the interest of modern cultural psychology can the intangible cultural heritage of Northeast China be better reflected in the film. "Seeking common ground while reserving differences" also lies in fully respecting the living habits and ways of thinking of modern people, to achieve cultural coordination and find a platform and bridge between Northeast intangible cultural heritage films and modern cultural psychology. In addition to film shooting techniques and narrative methods, it is also essential to improve the comprehensive quality of screenwriters, because they play a vital role in spreading excellent traditional culture. Screenwriters of intangible cultural heritage films should pay attention to improving cultural literacy, first figure out what the meaning of intangible cultural heritage is, abandon traditional and unreasonable concepts, and focus on the organic integration of movies and intangible cultural heritage, instead of talking about intangible cultural heritage history, intangible cultural heritage industry development. Film screenwriters should fully respect the culture of intangible cultural heritage, instead of pursuing consistency and maintaining an objective and neutral cultural attitude.

5. Problems and Prospects

There are also many problems in the creation of intangible cultural heritage-themed films in Northeast China. For example, there are few truly influential masterpieces, and masterpieces like *To Live* and *Face Changing* have not yet appeared. The exploration of human nature is not deep enough. There are few things people think about the relationship between characters is too tangled and deliberate, which destroys the overall effect of the film. To make a film for the intangible cultural heritage project, the film loses the texture of the film itself and lacks vitality while producing preaching and advertising suspicions. It has cultural accumulation but no cultural vision. It neglects the traditional Northeast intangible cultural heritage and so on. In addition, in terms of plot design, if too much emphasis is placed on intangible cultural heritage, the film will lack appreciation. If the story of the film is too powerful, it will overwhelm the performance of the intangible cultural heritage. In addition, the scale of investment in intangible cultural heritage films is generally small. Due to a lack of funds, excellent works cannot be produced, which makes the film lose its market competitiveness.

As intangible cultural heritage is getting more and more attention in the world, in the Chinese film industry, using intangible cultural heritage as the subject has gradually become a kind of cultural awareness. In recent years, Hangzhou Jingu Times Film Production Co., Ltd. has planned and produced a series of films on the theme of intangible cultural heritage, such as *Ten Miles of Red Makeup*, *Shadow Puppet King*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Inspiring the World* and so on. French film historian Georges Sadour believes in his book *World Film History* that the shadow puppetry and shadow puppetry that has occupied the Chinese countryside for thousands of years can be called the pioneers of film, “shadow puppetry and slide lanterns, these early childish methods of expressing stories with images, their history has yet to be written”. Shadow puppetry is a precious intangible cultural heritage of mankind and the originator of movies. It was inspired by the mysterious shadow play invented by the Chinese, and Westerners created and invented it by using the scientific principles of electric lights and photography. Modern shadow play—film. Until the beginning of the movie came to our country, people still called it a “movie”. As the oldest film in China, shadow puppetry has a profound impact on the development of Chinese films, but the northeast shadow puppetry derived from shadow puppetry has not been well inherited and developed. Our filmmakers should base themselves on the fertile soil of the Northeast intangible cultural heritage. After all, the height of cultural innovation depends on the depth of excavation of traditional cultural heritage.

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