

**Study of Intangible Chinese Cultural Heritage  
Protection and Tourism Development  
The Case of Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection of the Hezhe Nationality**

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*Intangible cultural inheritance is usually determined by local ecological environment, culture, religion, level of production and living, daily life habit and custom. Hezhe nationality is an ethnic minority in Heilongjiang Province. People of Hezhe have created their unique ethnic culture during its long historical period. This paper deals with the development model and content for the folk custom tourism and other issues. It will view the countermeasures for protection of the tourism development target. It will build the innovation platform of intangible cultural heritage protection through a comprehensive, multi-level, three-dimensional integrated protection model. This paradigm will promote the protection and further development of the folk custom resources.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The intangible cultural inheritance resources in China are facing an extinction crisis. How to protect these resources is an urgent problem to be solved. Hezhe nationality has its own language though no writing systems; it has produced a colorful and distinctive ethnic culture. In recent years, with the development of tourism resources around Hezhe nationality residence area, there has to be a protracted and realistic push to explore a protection method of Hezhe nationality culture heritage along with tourism development.

## **WORLDWIDE RESEARCH**

Japan is the first country in the world to pay attention to the protection of their intangible cultural heritage. In the 1950s, the government issued the cultural property protection act, and it put forward the concept of intangible cultural heritage and set out the scope and protection measures for it in law (Zheng, 2007).

Since the 1960s, South Korea began collecting and organizing its traditional ethnic and folk culture and established South Korea's cultural property law in 1962 (Zheng, 2010). The South Korean

government attaches great importance to the use of intangible cultural heritage to promote tourism development and through tourism to promote the protection of intangible cultural heritage and development.

France is the first country in the world to develop historical and cultural heritage protection law in 1840 (Yufan, 2010), France promulgated the historic building act, which is the first the law protecting the cultural relics in the world. It has designated 91 historical and cultural heritage sites in France, which involve more than 40,000 protected areas and 800,000 residences. The French government makes historical heritage areas open doors to enabling people to understand national history and culture.

The Italian government actively develops rural ecotourism, food culture tourism, and promotes intangible cultural heritage protection in the development of a new area. Since the Sicilian puppets were established as a UNESCO human intangible cultural heritage, the Italian government supports training places for young puppet artists, and holds the Sicilian Puppet Award.

Countries in the world attach great importance to the intangible cultural heritage protection. France sets up a "cultural heritage day", which is not only for France, but also for society to strengthen European cultural heritage history. South Korea's cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage protection become commercial and tourism-oriented. Compared with foreign intangible cultural heritage protection, Chinese intangible cultural heritage protection is still in the development stage.

### **Domestic Researches**

Heilongjiang province is a multi-ethnic populated province in the northern borderland of China. Ewenki, Oroqen and Hezhe nationalities mainly live in Tongjiang and Jiamusi in the Heilongjiang province. The population of the Hezhe people is only 4,720. This minority nationality inherited and developed their unique culture. Over some time they gradually formed a local characteristic culture. Various folk activities are colorful. At present, examples of folk activities include Song-and-Dance Duet in the northeast of China, the northeast big drum, birchbark process, the fish leather processing technique and some minority rap, dances and other folk customs. 27 projects have been included in the "Chinese intangible cultural heritage" protection lists. In this list, Olunchun' intangible cultural heritage has 6 items, Hezhe nationality of Yimakan and the fish leather processing technique are included in the first protection list of national "intangible cultural heritage." Because cultural core area of ethnic minorities is small, their ability of keeping the traditional culture alive is weak, and the protection of the cultural heritage is more urgent. Some cultural inheritances which depend on oral and behavioral teaching are continuously disappearing. As some places have been developed into a tourism attraction, cultural heritage was destroyed, and protection work is under great stress. Some of the intangible cultural heritage is in commercial operations. The manufactured products brought to market are often of inferior quality. It is hard to find high quality production. Intangible cultural heritage requires sustainable use of resources which are non-renewable resources. Often these resources are the wisdom of local mankind which gives meaning and context to the cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage is not just a set of economic indicators as an indicator to measure intangible cultural heritage which might just consider only the economic benefits; there is also much value in social benefits. Therefore, with the development of cultural tourism of the intangible cultural heritage, we must adhere to the principle of a win-win social and economic benefit, learn from foreign ideas and mature experiences, establish localization of the theory system and practical framework of intangible cultural heritage and guide the protection of intangible cultural heritage in Heilongjiang province.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH**

### **Theoretical Significance**

There are multi-ethnic groups populating Heilongjiang province. They inherited and developed their distinctive national culture. These minorities live along the northern Chinese border and have the advantage of developing national and exotic scenery tourism. They could rely on local tourism resources to develop diversified tourism, promote the development of emerging industries and improve the standard

of living of the ethnic minority, as well as speed up the process of building a well-off society. Admittedly, there are contradiction between development and protection. It is reasonable that the development itself means destruction, but if the plan is right and arrangement is scientific, both can be accomplished. In a certain sense, development contains protection; therefore, rational development is one of the best protections.

### **Practical Significance**

At present, intangible cultural heritage protection has been of widespread concern in the macro-level. There is little complete comprehensive investigation and research on the micro level. Intangible cultural heritage protection should be implemented for micro cultural protection. Protection and utilization of the national intangible cultural heritage is the key to improve the quality of tourism in Heilongjiang province. As a typical significance of the study, Heilongjiang province's intangible cultural heritage has deep heritage and historical culture meaning. Its endangered condition makes this study become urgent. This research, will contribute to the protection of national intangible cultural heritage and minority areas.

## **THE BASIC PROTECTIVE SITUATION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURE OF HEZHE NATIONALITY**

As one of 22 ethnic minorities in China, Hezhe nationality lives primarily in Tongjiang, Fuyuan, Jiamusi, Raohe, Shuangyashan in the Heilongjiang province. This is a three river area with beautiful scenery composed of mountains and rivers. The Hezhe people have been living here for a long time during which they have created a rich and unique ethnic culture. Hezhe language, storytelling art of “Yimakan”, their religious belief of “Shamanism”, fishbone processing and fish skin clothing technique etc. are the abundant intangible cultural inheritances developed by Hezhe nationality. In addition, the “Yimakan” and fish skin clothing technique has been included in the first national intangible cultural inheritance list. As the Hezhe nationality has no written language, some cultural inheritances which depend on oral and behavioral teaching are continuously disappearing now. Many ethnic techniques are almost extinct; therefore the further development of traditional Hezhe culture is not optimistic.

### **Fish-Hunting Culture of the Hezhe People**

Fishing and hunting was once the main source of food of the Hezhe nationality. The culture of Hezhe nationality was centered on fishing and hunting culture with which the production activities, living customs, spiritual life, literature and art and religion all have close connections. Based on the fish-hunting culture, they have developed their unique ethnic clothes, housing style, food and festivals. In recent years, as the increasing depression of fishing resources, most Hezhe people have given up fishing, hunting careers and the traditional living style and environment have been replace by a more modern living style. The traditional Hezhe people's houses resemble, for example, ‘Dijiaozi (cellar)’, ‘Majiazi (horse like cottage room)’, ‘Cuoluozi (house with pinnacle)’, and the main house which are similar to Manchu's. Models of these homes can only be found in the Hezhe ethnic museum. The Hezhe nationality has only its spoken language which is influenced by the Han and other national groups. Because the population base which use Hezhe language is very small, more and more young people are using Chinese instead of their own language. Presently, there are only about 20 people who can speak the Hezhe language (Ren-yuan, 2013). The traditional life style, handicraft, arts, language and religion are close to becoming extinct. With the change of traditional production and living style, the traditional housing, clothing and ethnic customs related to fish-hunting living style are gradually getting away under the impact of modern culture.

### **“Yimakan” of Hezhe Nationality**

Yimakan is a unique storytelling literature of Hezhe nationality which is performed by one person without instruments and fixed rhythm. The various characters in a story have their own songs which will never be mixed. It is very impressive. Yimakan, a primitive folk rap art, taught orally from generation to generation, is regarded as the eternal masterpiece with its tranquil mildness and mysterious stories. It has

played a key role in the Hezhe language, religion, customs and living habits. This ancient culture inheritance passed on from generation to generation is now facing the extinction crisis. Few folk artisans can perform this art now and young singers are a rarity. Statistically, there were more than 20 distinctive master performers of Yimakan in the 1980s. Currently only 5 Yimakan performers can tell particular parts of Yimakan stories; the art is almost extinct (Xiaoxun, 2011). In November 2011, in Bali Indonesia, the sixth meeting of Intangible Cultural Inheritance Protection Inter-government Committee has added Yimakan to the “List of Intangible Cultural Inheritance Needed of Urgent Protection”.

### **The Fish Leather Processing Technique**

Generations of Hezhe people have been living on the shores of the Heilongjiang River, Songhuajiang River and Wusulijiang River. Fishing and hunting have been their living style; all of their people are good at fishing regardless of age and gender. The raw material of fishing skin product comes from the northern cold-water fish of which the skin has certain thickness and toughness therefore can be fashioned into clothing. Fish skin processing technique is a unique culture which exists in areas above 45 degrees north latitude. Although the fish skin culture existed among many peoples in history, it is only kept up now by Hezhe people in Jiejinkou of Tongjiang city in Heilongjiang province (Xiaoxun, 2011). The fish skin processing technique consists of a whole set of complex procedures which have been mastered by Hezhe women. After the 1950s, fish skin products have been replaced by other products and the craft was gradually lost. Although the craft of fish skin processing has been included in the national intangible cultural inheritance list, many who mastered the technique have passed away. The old craft is nearly extinct thus it is in need of protection.

## **THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL INHERITANCE**

Unique abundant ethnic features have created a great potential which can be developed. The residential area of Hezhe people has the geographical advantages for natural ecological and ethnic cultural tourism. To protect and develop intangible culture partially in the form of a featured culture industry can not only support the poor local economy but also can provide a platform for the development of intangible resources.

### **To Develop Tourism Resources Based on the Natural Environment**

The three rivers area in which Hezhe people have been living for generations has been bestowed abundantly by nature. There are mountains and rivers and abundant natural resources. It is a rich field for fishing and hunting since the ancient time. As a sunrise industry of Hezhe people, tourism has provided much wealth and jobs for local people. There are river resources of big boundary rivers. The famous Heilongjiang River, Songhua River and Wusuli River flow over this area. The three main boundary rivers of Heilongjiang River, Songhua River and Wusuli River, the lakes scattered like stars, the intensive networks of rivers and islands have bestowed Hezhe people enough capital for ecological tourism. Tourism must be developed in an ecological way wherein nature and culture exist harmoniously. Tourists can appreciate the scenery of mountains; they can also be boating, fishing and listening to Yimakan. Humans can get along with nature. The Jiejin Mountain in the town of Jiejinkou has been set into a national forest park and a tourism area which is abundant with various kinds of plants and animals as well as other resources. There are marsh resources with their own unique flora and fauna. The Bacha Island in the town of Bacha has been developed into a Heilongjiang provincial national natural protection zone which has distinctive and rare wild plants and animals. These unique abundant natural resources also enable Hezhe people to develop their ecological tourism. Tourism can be developed by combining the rich wetland resources and indigenous cultures. The tourists can enjoy an unique natural world and primitive environment. Also many tourists can learn about the primitive life style of Hezhe people. In this area, there are large waters, big boundary rivers, large forest, wet lands and large grassland; consequently it has rich plants and animal resources. According to partial statistics, there are 295 kind of wild plants and animals just in the Bacha Island National Park, among which there are 7 kinds of national distinctive

plants. Nationally protected animals are the red-crowned cranes and oriental white stork along with 33 various kinds of birds. There are 593 kinds of wild plants like wild soybean, 75 kinds of famous fishes from 16 families, like salmon and cod. (Wang Wei-guang et al., 2010 Study on wetlands eco-tourism development of Bacha Island National Nature Reserve *Territory & Natural Resources Study*, 1) The abundance of animals and plants have laid a solid foundation for developing nature and culture combined ecological tourism in Hezhe residential area.

### **To Develop Tourism Based on Folk-Custom Culture**

The Hezhe people live in Heilongjiang province facing Russia. They live on one side of the river which has the name of the fish skin tribe or Shiquan tribe. The historical culture of Hezhe nationality is featured in fishing-hunting culture. Fishing, birch bark boats, and snow coaches, have made the ancient fishing-hunting culture very unique and attracts a large number of tourists from other parts of China and abroad. This has promoted the development of ethnic featured tourism in this area. Spiritually, Yimakan is a heroic epic of the Hezhe people which can be compared with the Gesar of Tibet, the Jangar of Mongolia, and the Manas of Khalkhas. It is regarded as an encyclopedia of the Hezhe nationality. "Jialingkuo", "Shuohuli", mouth organ, forking grass ball and other sports were all invented by Hezhe people which are unique cultural elements that can distinguish Hezhe people from other Shamanism peoples (Guoxue, 2010). To develop folk-custom, tourism should allow more tourists to join in indigenous activities instead of passive observation. For example, the fish skin cloth is world famous. Tourists can experience the process of making fish skin cloth which can provide a unique tourist experience. As to the food, killing of living fish, sashimi, to make dried fish are very educational in their particular process.

The cellars and other houses have their unique features. There can be more interaction by house/cellar building by allowing tourists to stay in them. With the geographical advantages of locating near the Heilongjiang river, Songhua river and Wusuli river, it can provide tourists the opportunity of driving junks, birch bark boats or dugouts. It can make full use of the two national nature protection zones in Jiejinkou and Bacha. This would allow tourists to experience the field hunting process of Hezhe people. The Hezhe characteristic fishing and hunting culture is still being passed on among their descendants today. If this cultural inheritance can be developed and combined with the local natural ecology, it will generate more motivation for the ethnic ecological tourism as a sustainable model.

## **THE WIN-WIN SOLUTION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL INHERITANCE AND TOURIST DEVELOPMENT**

The protection of intangible cultural inheritance not only emphasizes inheritance and development but also has a spiritual value and economic benefit. On the condition of scientific protection, reasonable and proper tourism development about intangible cultural inheritance can prevent possible negative development phenomenon and benefit promotion of the inheritance. In practice, to pay more attention in win-win development between protection and tourism is very important to assure that protection can grow in a healthy way.

### **Protection and Tourism Development Plans Should be Scientifically Based**

The residential cities of the Hezhe people should always prioritize featured tourism of intangible cultural inheritance protection as key tourism resources. Tongjiang City, Raohe County, Fuyuan County and even Jiamusi City have added Hezhe nationality tourism into local tourism development plans in order to unify the pace of planning and implementation. In 1999, the town of Jinjiekou had already issued "The Ten Years Development Plan of Jinjiekou Tourism" which was to build Jinjiekou village into a Hezhe folk-custom village. As to the town of Bacha, they wanted to build Bacha into a first class holiday resort with unique style, beautiful environment, good ecology, rich contents and complete services (Degang, 2010). Combining with local ethnic culture and customs, the town of Sipai focuses on featured tourism, building border tourism and ecological villages. In the development of Hezhe nationality

tourism, developer and owners should understand the expectations of Hezhe people for their own culture so that they can find the right direction and method for further development. The demand of cultural tourism enables local government and tourism businessman and residents to realize the value of ethnic culture. Therefore, it can interest different parties of society to develop and inherit ethnic culture, which can then promulgate law and policies to be issued gradually. The inheritance of ethnic culture will no longer depend on individual effort. With a scientific development plan, the Hezhe culture will have a higher and more stable platform for development.

### **The Integrated Principle of Culture Protection and Tourism Development**

The intangible cultural inheritance is an organically culture growth of integrated and systematic cultural shape which consists of different connected and dependent structures. In tourism development, a culture developing environment should be maintained. Culture should be protected and ethnic culture should be researched and promoted. Tourism developers, tourism customers and culture inheritance should work together and protect the culture according to different structure features. In the tourism development of Hezhe residential area, the policy opportunity of national new rural reconstruction should be embraced. “The action of boosting border economy and enrich local people” of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and “Promotion of poverty alleviation in village units” to promote the road, water and telecommunication supply and cable TV types of infrastructure construction in order to meet the basic needs for ethnic tourism. The town of Jinjekou has devoted all the national and provincial financial support into building an ethnic village. It has built a museum, fishing and hunting statues, hunter families, cellars, “Cuoluozi (house with pinnacle)”, forest cottages, cultural squares and many other attractions. Meanwhile, the tourism lines from Diaoyutai to Hayu beach, Deleqi beach and Wangjiang Island have been developed (Jie, 2014). To highlight the local or ethnic features, they invented many individual and humanized designs about the service birch bark boats being adapted to be sightseeing boats. The thriving forests are adapted to be a natural oxygen bar, which has improved the quality of primitive culture. In order to meet tourists’ personal demand for traditional ethnic handcraft products, they have encouraged local residents who have certain skills to work making fish-skin cloth and other production like fish-skin shoes, fish-skin belts, fish bone craft products production. These developments have met the demands of local people and the tourism market demand as well. The products for tourism are articles for daily use and souvenirs at the same time. Culture is thus protected and the local population has an income source. This way of development and protection is sustainable.

### **To Enhance the Vitality and Self-Adjustment Ability in Development and Protection**

Tourism development and inheritance protection are mutual promoted. The intangible cultural inheritance protection has enriched the content of tourism. Meanwhile, tourism development has promoted the protection and inheritance of the culture. Through tourism development, some faded traditional customs and culture has been redeveloped and traditional folk art has gained new attention and value. Tourism has promoted the deep reflection and study of traditional fishing and hunting culture which is elemental in Hezhe culture for hundreds and thousands of years. Although in recent years, the production method has changed drastically for Hezhe people, fishing culture is still a mainstay of Hezhe culture a spiritual ballast for the local people and a springboard to their customs. Tourism has promoted the growth for culture inheritors’ careers and their interest and ambition of promoting culture. To be an inheritor allows an individual to have time to more deeply understand the culture and promote the traditional arts and language both in school and in life, thus promoting the Hezhe culture (Founding Project, 2016).

The intangible culture inheritance has to be rooted in the masses before there can be real progress in its protection and development. Tourism development has provided enough space for the intangible cultural inheritance protection and allows the self-adjustment ability of ethnic culture to play its role. It also enhances the protection of intangible culture in tourism development which has a win-win solution for protection and development.

## CONCLUSION

Since the 21st century, protecting the diversity of worlds' intangible culture heritage has drawn much attention. More and more intangible culture heritages have entered the World Culture Heritage List. Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage issues the protection necessary to ensure the vitality of the intangible cultural heritage, including confirming, archiving, protecting, publicizing, inheriting and promoting all the cultural elements. Though it belongs to a different historical place and time, traditional culture should not just be placed in a museum. It's a part of people's genetic and racial makeup. Making clear the relationship of protection and development, finding out whether intangible cultural heritage could be a tourist revenue resource, and how to enhance the production of crafts are essential for realizing tourist development and heritage conservation's mutual benefit win-win.

In conclusion, when it comes to Intangible Culture Heritage Tourism, tourism development is an essential way to boost the cultural preservation and experience level of the tourist product.

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