

MULAO FOLK SONGS FROM A PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

Wei WEI¹, Liu LINGLING¹, Chutima MANEEWATTANA¹, Sudawan SOMJAI² and Akaramanee SOMJAI²

1 Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand;
vincent4152637@163.com (W. W.); liulingling7905@163.com (L. L.);
chutima.ma@ssru.ac.th (C. M.)

2 College of Innovation and Management, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand; sudawan.so@ssru.ac.th (S. S.); Akramanee.so@ssru.ac.th (A. S.)

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the development history of pragmatism as a philosophical school, as well as the definition and influence of pragmatism on art. The article observes the folk songs of the Mulao people in northwest Guangxi from the standpoint of pragmatism philosophy, analyzes the humanistic thoughts in the folk songs, the ethnic identity widely existing in group consciousness, and the national optimism of putting life first, highlighting the relationship between the national culture of the Mulao people and the historical inheritance of the Chinese nation.

Keywords: Pragmatism, People-Oriented, Group Consciousness

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INTRODUCTION

Pragmatic Art

Regarding art, the most commentaries of pragmatist philosophers are Dewey and Shusterman. Dewey directly appealed to his artistic insights in his book "Art as Experience". The influence of experience on artistic creation is not difficult to understand. This is why when we study a work, we always have to observe the era in which the work is located and the artist's life practice. Art can be the extension of experience and the means of art. Ancient humans carved their hunting experience in caves, and the frightened running bison was clearly visible; the Dunhuang murals witnessed the great history of cultural exchanges between China and the West, and "Along the River During the Qingming Festival" reproduced the busy scene of commercial prosperity in the Song Dynasty. These works of art are the experience of the times, or the experience of the group, or the experience of the individual. The experience of human activities is the most important source of motivation for the birth of works of art. In Dewey's own words, "No matter how different the objects of each experience are in detail, there are common patterns in various experiences. There are some conditions that must be met, without which an experience cannot be formed. The main principle of this common pattern is determined by the fact that every experience is the result of the interaction between a living creature and some aspect of the world in which he lives."

Therefore, Dewey's experience must be continuous and holistic. "An experience has a whole, which gives it a name, that meal, that storm, that breakup of friendship. The existence of this whole is composed of a single, although the changes in its parts are pervasive in the nature of the entire experience." Continuity guarantees the perfection of experience, and integrity is the unity of the changes in experience. Beethoven's "Heroic" Symphony first comes from his idol Napoleon, and the humanistic spirit and practical actions represented by Napoleon that say no to authority and monarchs. "Hero" is a vigorous force, the sadness of sacrifice, and a group experience from darkness to light, from suffering to happiness. We can experience every change of emotion from the tonality of the music, feel greatness and sadness, growth and decay from the contrast between the main and secondary themes, follow the continuity of change and every key turn of emotion from the transition of strength and weakness, high and low, and finally in performance practice, realize everyone's thinking about life and living, ideals and society, the present and the future, and the artwork is completed in aesthetics. To paraphrase Dewey, all that is needed is to replace "that meal and that storm" with that concert.

There is a misunderstanding in the understanding of pragmatic art. People are used to calling useful art pragmatic art, and over-emphasizing the practicality of art. For example, for sculpture, does this sculpture look good when placed here? This is aesthetic practicality, can it be sold? This is economic practicality. The same is true for opera art. Will this opera become popular? This is the practicality of fame, will it sell well? This is the practicality of profit, over-emphasizing utilitarianism, which does not conform to the principles of pragmatism. Utility and function are only part of pragmatic art, far from representing pragmatism, and of course it cannot be called pragmatic art. This is a kind of "used in daily life, used to describe a utilitarianism that only values personal interests and focuses on the immediate reality. Whether in English or in the context of modern Chinese, the word "practical" has a derogatory meaning, and even Dewey is reluctant to use it." So what does Dewey himself say? Dewey seemed to have encountered these situations. "The aversion to utilitarianism popular in moral philosophy is largely due to the exaggeration of pure calculation.... The "ideal" has been severed from reality, people only pursue reality, and life becomes dull. "Spirituality" can only find a place to settle down and obtain a formal reality necessary for aesthetic nature when it is embodied in things that are practical in a certain sense." Obviously, art is a means and a container. When a work of art is created or performed, the five senses of hearing and seeing are mobilized by the artistic entity. "Formal reality" itself is functional, but functionality is attached to the form.

Function is not the purpose of art. Extracting spirit from artistic form through aesthetics is pragmatic art. Just like the pragmatism mentioned above, the principles are living, present, experiential, and holistic. These also apply to art, and art must be attributed to real life. Art starts from people and finally returns to people, and functionality is only a part of human life. So how does Shusterman view this issue?

When summarizing the ten principles of pragmatism, Shusterman talked about the ninth principle, "holism", "holism refers to the totality of beliefs, desires, practices and purposes.... The meaning of action does not lie in the specific behavior itself, but in the entire contextual function including intention, situation, expected reaction and the result of behavior. The identity of an individual is not the product of individual autonomy, but the product of the relationship between the individual and others." Same. First, it is affirmed here that the action/behavior has continuity and integrity. An action is not only in the present, but also includes the context of cause and effect. Then, the sculpture or opera art mentioned above needs to include the intention, situation, expected reaction and the result of the creation/performance. This is an art of the whole process and also a holistic art. It cannot be simply summarized as utilitarianism or functionality. However, the purpose or functionality is included and is affirmed by both. Therefore, Shusterman and Dewey are consistent in their approach to this issue. Then, the principle of pragmatism is an important guarantee for pragmatism to become pragmatism.

Secondly, behavior and identity are a pair of dialectically unified relationships. Behavior can determine identity, and vice versa. Identity can also determine behavior. Personal identity and social identity. Individuals are autonomous, but also social. Individuals can influence society, and society can also influence individuals. Therefore, in the eyes of pragmatists, the social relationship between individuals and others is higher than that between individuals, and groups are higher than individuals. This is very "socialist" and very "Eastern", especially the Mohist idea of "universal love and mutual benefit".

It can be argued that even if pragmatic art contains functionality, it is more inclined to group functionality, facing the broad masses of the people. Now let's look back at opera art. Is it good to watch? This is aesthetics. Can it be popular? This is the reaction. The audience's ears are the judges, and the actors are also the containers; is it a hit? This is the result. Can these three questions be separated? According to Dewey and Shusterman's principles, they cannot. They are the unity of process and result, the totalism of intention and practice, means and content. Perhaps, we should not ask this question.

On the issue of functionality, Dewey and Shusterman have the same view, but Shusterman, as a latecomer and leader of the new pragmatism, has put forward a completely opposite view to the old predecessors who belong to the pragmatism camp, which is in line with the "reformism" that pragmatists have always adhered to. Shusterman said in an academic interview, "I disagree with Dewey's definition of art: art is experience. I think experience is not a good way to define art. I have a new definition: art is dramatization. However, I do not agree with giving a definition to art." The new pragmatist Shusterman agrees to call his body aesthetics body experience, but does not agree that art is experience. In Shusterman's view, specific issues should be analyzed specifically. Art can be experience, but it cannot be equal to experience. Aesthetics based on the body, such as the numerous performing arts, is of course human experience, and it is appropriate to call it body experience. But giving a definition to art is for the convenience of understanding and dissemination. For example, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is not a title music, but later generations and publishers named it the "Fate" Symphony for the same reason. Similar examples are everywhere in the history of music. Therefore, harmony but difference is Shusterman's inheritance from his predecessor Dewey. The principles and theories of pragmatism have not changed, but the way of looking at problems has changed. This is also the result of Shusterman absorbing the analytical

philosophy of his contemporaries. Analytical aesthetics has become Shusterman's new means and new perspective in the pragmatist camp. Body aesthetics is the product of the combination of pragmatism principles and analytical philosophy.

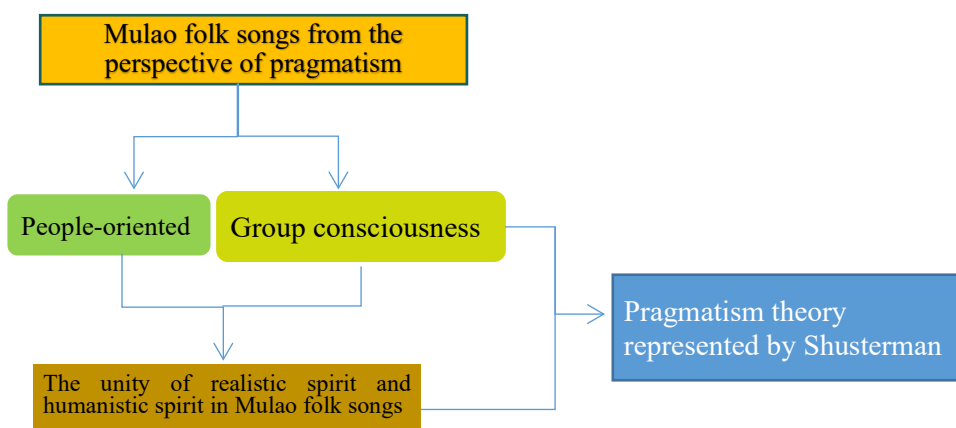
Of course, pragmatic philosophy can also be applied to other disciplines, such as historical pragmatism and political pragmatism, but the principles are the same, that is, history or politics under the guidance of pragmatic philosophical principles and ideas.

Related Theories and Concepts

John Dewey (1859-1952) is the master of pragmatism. He developed the ideas of classical pragmatism to the peak in many fields, including history, politics, philosophy, education, art, religious ethics, etc. Dewey was first and foremost a thorough naturalist. He stood on the shoulders of Darwin's theory of evolution and looked at philosophy from a scientific perspective. He always attached importance to the relationship between man and the environment, believing that reality is experience, experience is life, and life is the reflection of man's sociality and naturalness in reality, which is the result of mutual communication and adaptation between man and the environment. Therefore, Dewey's pragmatism starts from life and will eventually return to life. If Piiltdown and James' pragmatism still emphasizes duality, Dewey's "unity of knowledge and action" clearly carries the connotation of Chinese philosophy. Experience and action are unified in Dewey's view. Of course, artistic activities also follow this principle. Dewey said in his famous book "Art as Experience" that "spirituality" can only find a place to settle down and obtain a formal reality necessary for aesthetic nature when it is embodied in things that are practical in a certain sense. Even angels need to add bodies and wings in imagination."

Richard Shusterman (1948) is the most important contemporary leader of pragmatism. He combines pragmatism with the body and creatively opens a new chapter of pragmatism-body aesthetics, which has a huge impact on performing arts. His philosophical thoughts are mainly concentrated in his book "Emotion and Action: The Way of Pragmatism". On the basis of fully absorbing classical pragmatism, Shusterman summarized the "Ten Principles" of pragmatism and transformed analytical aesthetics into a unique personal style of body aesthetics, which established his important representative position of new pragmatism. In the "Ten Principles", Shusterman proposed that since the world is constantly changing and full of contingencies, philosophy/aesthetics should not be single and constant. He advocates openness, agrees with reformism, and embraces diversity and pluralism with open arms.

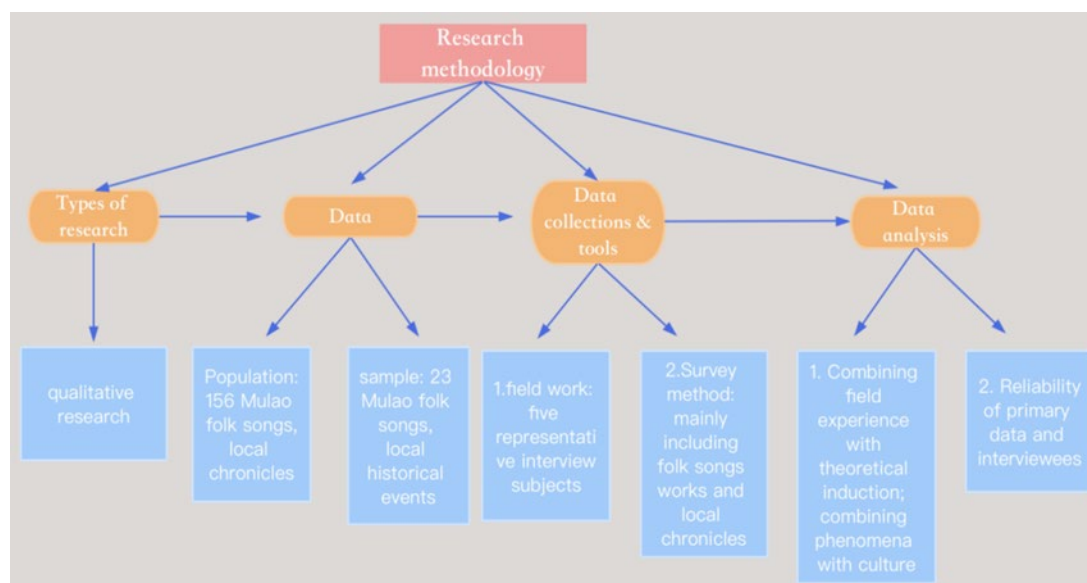
Conceptual Framework



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methods and types

Research methods: See the table below



Type of Research: This paper adopts qualitative research.

Resource data

1) Population:

The research of this paper includes 156 Mulao folk songs. Mulao folk songs have many genres and forms according to the performance venues and the functions of folk songs. The main types include "Gu Tiao" songs, "Suikoudao", "Koufeng" songs and ritual songs. In the course of historical development, Mulao folk songs have combined the artistic forms and cultural genes of other ethnic groups and gradually formed their own artistic characteristics. Below, the author will mainly classify Mulao folk songs according to the performance time, song content and number of sentences/words, which will make it easier for readers to understand the overall situation of Mulao folk songs.

2) Sample:

On the basis of ensuring the overall comprehensiveness, this paper selected a total of 23 representative Mulao folk songs for key analysis. The reason for choosing these 23 as samples is that these 23 songs concentrate on the three major arguments of this paper, namely, the holistic art, polytheism and pragmatism in Mulao folk songs. These include 4 ancient Mulao songs, 5 Mulao Yifan Festival songs, 5 Zoupo songs, 3 modern songs, 2 life songs, 1 etiquette song, 1 crying wedding song, 1 Zhuang love song and 1 ritual song.

Data collection and tools

This study adopts two qualitative research methods, namely fieldwork method and survey method, one is practice-oriented and the other is theory-oriented. Theory and practice are combined and support each other.

1) Fieldwork (interview)

The author's fieldwork mainly involves face-to-face interviews with people related to Mulao folk songs, among which five interviewers are important representatives.

The first representative is Xie Zhonghou, the inheritor of the Yifan Festival intangible cultural heritage and a Mulao. He has two inspirations and help for this paper: 1) Ritual songs in the Yifan Festival, 2) Performance practice.

2) Local chronicles and local documents

The author visited folk artists and collected a total of five local folk song scores, including two ancient singers' manuscripts, one Yifan song, and two ritual songs; he consulted Luocheng County chronicles, festivals and folklore records in Luocheng County Library and Press and Publication Bureau. These documents pose considerable difficulties for ancient Chinese translation. The author focuses on the historical events of the Mulao people, which are important documents for studying the development of Mulao culture and regional social changes.

Data Analysis and Induction

How to analyze: By analyzing and comparing 156 works, 23 representative works were selected from them, striving to represent the various themes, genres and forms of Mulao folk songs, so as to identify the overall picture of Mulao folk songs from all levels and angles, and extract arguments from them;

As a qualitative analysis research method, this study focuses on field work and literature induction. Selective interviews in field work ensure the authenticity and reliability of data. The researchers will check the interview recordings and videos of all interviewees, and then classify and summarize the questions and works in the interviews. In order to observe and verify the content of Mulao folk songs, the researchers went deep into Luocheng County to consult relevant local literature records, experience the history, natural scenery and festival customs of the Mulao people, and in order to be able to contact the research objects more intuitively and directly, so as to condense the widespread pragmatism in Mulao folk songs, the group consciousness in the development of historical and cultural development, and the ubiquitous worship of gods. Problems come from practice and solve problems in practice. The combination of phenomena and language culture is the most important research idea of this study.

Reliability: Data collection and its tools mainly include two aspects. The first is information. Whether it is the performance of works or literature, they are basically first-hand information, especially the on-site interviews and impromptu singing, which are supported by text, recordings and videos. Even online works are official audio-visual works and are reliable.

The second is interviews. The interviewees are from folk song intangible cultural heritage inheritors and professional folk song singing teachers. They are real and reliable in identity and profession.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Is there any connection between Mulao folk songs and pragmatic art? If so, in what aspects is the connection manifested? And how is it related?

Based on the above analysis of pragmatism and pragmatic art, we can basically make the following judgments. It is appropriate to observe Mulao folk songs from the perspective of pragmatic art. First of all, Mulao folk songs are related to pragmatic art, which is mainly manifested in two aspects, namely people-oriented and group consciousness.

People-oriented:

1) Harmony between heaven and man

The earliest idea of harmony between heaven and man in China began in the Western Han Dynasty, but its buds were earlier. For example, the bronze inscription of heaven engraved on the Dameng Ding below belongs to the early Western Zhou Dynasty. However, both the oracle bone inscription and the bronze inscription reflect an important idea-heaven is man, and he is an "adult" with open arms, representing a noble status, while the oracle bone inscription of man with arms hanging down and bowing is much more humble, and there are even images of people working with their backs facing the loess and backs facing the sky. From the evolution of the character shape, the early harmony between heaven and man refers more to the emperor

who represents power, and later it gradually becomes "scholars" and civilians, but the idea of harmony between heaven and man is consistent. The emperor is the eldest son of heaven, and the monarchy is granted by heaven. The monarch is the eldest son of the emperor, and is divided into princes. The doctor is the eldest son of the monarch, and it is passed down layer by layer. Isn't offering sacrifices to heaven the same as offering sacrifices to ancestors? And he is the "ancestor" of all people. The personality of heaven is clearly visible in the text, and the same is true in political and social systems.



Bronze inscriptions on the sky (Da Meng Ding 2837)



Oracle inscriptions on the sky (3690)



Oracle inscriptions on the sky (Yi 6857)

It is not difficult to see that the unity of heaven and man was integrated when the characters were created. Therefore, there is the saying of "Son of Heaven", that is, the eldest son of heaven, who is authorized by heaven. Of course, "the emperor shall obey the will of heaven and say so", and the emperor's worship of heaven becomes the same as worshipping ancestors. Heaven and man have always been close in China since ancient times, and heaven has the supreme personality.

The Mulao people have their own characteristics and are very detailed in their understanding of the unity of heaven and man. First of all, there is the worship of saints. The two kings of Liang and Wu, the White Horse Goddess, etc. are saints. They are real historical figures and have important contributions to the Mulao people. Therefore, they are from people to saints, enjoy the incense and worship of the Mulao people, and naturally have personality.

The second is the worship of gods. The "Qidae" worship represented by Lei Gong Dian Mu, big trees and stones is the Mulao people's personified worship of nature, with gender and personality, and even human behavior.

But in any case, it will eventually be combined with people. Gods and saints must have practical functions and serve people, so they each have their own duties, just like departments, with their own business scope and business responsibilities. This is the humanistic spirit. People, saints and gods, talents are the center and the ultimate goal. Therefore, the polytheism of the Mulao people, from the root, is to serve the Mulao people. Ancestor worship is not negotiable, but you have to choose to worship foreign gods. It is not that you believe in them, but that you believe in them. Therefore, the worship outside the tribe that remains now is all meritorious or effective, or it is to find spiritual support in the gods, such as the Pure Land Sect of Buddhism, the "Three Pure Ones" of Taoism, the Eastern Green Emperor, the Southern Red Emperor, etc. One of the functions of Mulao folk songs is to convey common emotions in the form of folk songs. The unity of family and country and harmonious ethical relationships of the entire Mulao ethnic group are the themes of folk songs. This is a mixed art, which is neither a pure art of "freedom" nor a pan-art like leadership art, management art, speaking art, etc. But the final destination is in people. The thirty-six gods of the Mulao ethnic group are meaningful only when they talk and sing with people.

2) Playing with Romance

In traditional Chinese culture, people's life and development are respected, and everything is centered on people. "Love for one's loved ones" (being close to loved ones, from near to far) is the core of the humanistic spirit. The Mulao people also put the expression of personality and the development of people in the first place.

"Song of Playing with Romance"

The sky is big, the earth is big, and the wind is big. People say that wind is bigger than the sky. Who can change the wind? Change the sun and the sky.

...

If you have unused bills, you don't have to worry about them rotting. If you have unused silver, you don't have to worry about it melting. Don't laugh at the southern snake's head without horns. It will turn into a dragon after a long time.

The first phrase, "playing with romance", includes the courtship and joking during singing. The beauty of love is even more important than heaven and earth, and it is human nature. Even if heaven and earth change, the romantic singing and love of the Mulao people cannot be changed. "The emphasis on romance being more important than heaven shows that in the hearts of the Mulao people, human life is more important than heaven." [6] The romanticism of the Mulao people should include two levels. The first is the romanticism in the emotional sense. The most representative is the Zoupo song. The handsome men and beautiful women of the Mulao people sing at the Zoupo Festival. Whoever plays with romance the best will get more admirers and suitors. Once the romance is played to the right taste, there will be another pair of passionate lovers among the eligible Mulao men and women. The second is the romanticism in character, which shows the humor of the Mulao people and rises to an optimistic mental state. Various vivid metaphors and humorous jokes are everywhere in folk songs. When the children who have been raised with great effort grow up, they should go to the Zoupo Festival to show off their talents and the culture of their tribe. That is what true romance is.

"Water has a source and trees have roots. Trees will not grow upside down. Parents raise their children, and children should repay their parents' kindness...."

If there is no firewood at home, go up the mountain to chop it. If there is no water at home, draw water from the well. My younger brothers and sisters are young and weak, so don't let them break their backs."

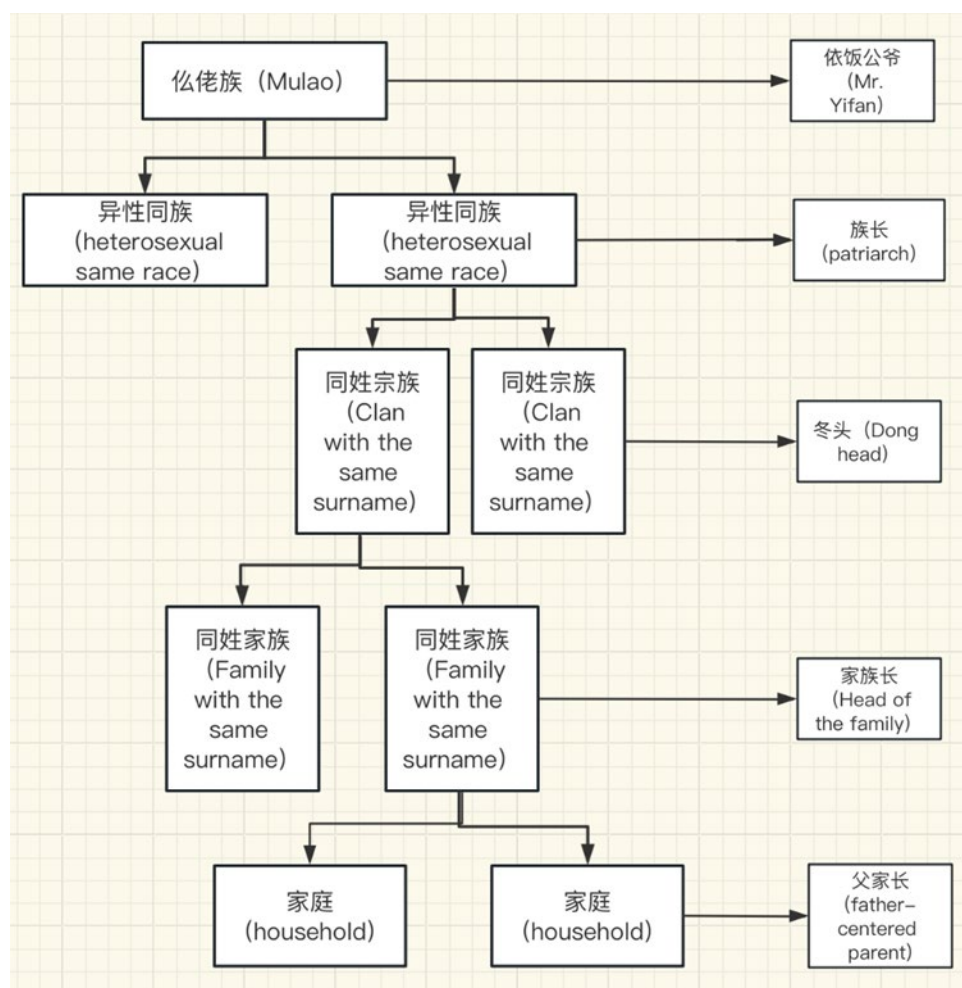
Confucian love is equal. Loving parents is called filial piety, parents loving children is called kindness, the elder brother loves the younger brother, which is called brotherly friendship, and the younger brother loves the elder brother, which is called younger brother respect. Father is kind and son is filial, brother is friendly and younger brother is respectful. From this logic, I have parents and brothers, and others do too. Therefore, loving other people's children and loving other people's parents is "Respect the old and the young, not only my own but also others'." Everyone is loved, and everyone is a recipient of love and a giver of love. This is the love of "kinship", which is also the Chinese humanistic spirit. The Mulao people convey this to their children through folk songs, and the children convey it to their children's children. It has become the most basic humanistic spirit of the entire Mulao society and is also the common cognition of the Mulao nation.

Group consciousness

China has implemented the feudal system since the Zhou Dynasty. The country finally established by the feudal system is a family-based country based on blood relations. Because all nobles are hereditary, "all people in the four seas are brothers". The titles of people and monarchs have a long history. This is also the most important source of Chinese group consciousness.

China's big society is like this, what about the small society of the Mulao people? In contrast, the social organization relationship of the Mulao people is almost a minority version of this model.

First, let's look at the clan blood relationship society of the Mulao people. The smallest unit of the group consciousness of the Mulao people is the small family, represented by parents, followed by the family, represented by the head of the family, and then the clan, which is the "winter" of the Mulao people. The winter head is generally undertaken by a respected male in the clan. Social organizations that are based on blood ties will eventually face the fact that blood ties become increasingly diluted over time. Liu Bei called himself the emperor's uncle, and Emperor Xian of Han had to order people to look through the family tree. Even the royal family was like this, so how can the Mulao people resist time and emphasize this clan bond? The grand event to commemorate the ancestors of the Mulao people, the Yifan Festival, is held in turn between winters to connect the increasingly scattered descendants of the clan. Therefore, one of the functions of the Yifan Festival is a "large-scale recognition event" to confirm clan identity and national identity.



The group consciousness of the Mulao people is manifested as identity recognition within the ethnic group. The original purpose of the Yifan Festival was to confirm ethnic identity and family ties, such as Yifan Gongye and Liang Wu Erwang. Later, the gods of Han Taoism and the Thunder King and Hua Po of surrounding ethnic minorities were added. Therefore, the group consciousness of the Mulao people is changing. This change is closely related to the regional reality of multi-ethnic coexistence and co-development in the Mulao gathering area.

Among them, intermarriage between ethnic groups has brought two important changes. The first is that the blood relationship of the ethnic group has been gradually weakened. At the same time, the relationship between different ethnic groups has changed from you to us, from fellow villagers to smoke relatives, which is equivalent to a single "tribe" becoming a "tribal alliance". The ethnic identity is gradually transitioning to regional identity, and the relationship between ethnic groups in the region is more harmonious and developing in the direction of integration. This integration includes the local official language, the discourse power of the ethnic group that accounts for the majority of the population, and the highlighting of the regional cultural subject, and the cultural unity between different ethnic groups. For example, in the Zoupo Festival and the Yifan Festival, more local ethnic groups participate in these ethnic customs, which is enough to show the influence of Mulao culture in the local area. At the same time, compared with the closed objective conditions in the outside world, the ethnic relations within the region are open. The ethnic culture and national spirit of the Mulao people are based on their own ethnic group, and the use of various ethnic groups is a manifestation of regional group consciousness. So in fact, this is a "hybrid rice", which is also a group consciousness at the regional ethnic level.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Pragmatism is a school of philosophy that originated in the United States. However, Western philosophical thoughts can find the basis of artistic principles with the folk songs of Eastern ethnic minorities, proving that human emotions and artistic practice are interlinked. Mulao folk songs are songs that follow people, people follow their hearts, and when emotions are deep, they open their mouths and sing about a good life. Every note can find the basis of emotions and reality. Therefore, as an art form, Mulao folk songs are essentially pragmatic and serve the Mulao society and national culture. The content of Mulao folk songs is inseparable from life. It can even be said that life is songs. You have to sing when you travel around the scenery, sing when you fall in love, sing when you get married, sing when you have children, and sing when someone dies. Therefore, the Mulao people live their lives in songs. Every day without singing is a betrayal of life.

Falling in love, getting married and having children are the most important parts in the life of the Mulao people, and they are all carried out in the form of festivals, which are grand and formal. Folk songs are the protagonists, which not only express emotions but also convey wishes. The realistic spirit and humanistic spirit of the Mulao people are unified in folk songs.

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