



A Study on the Measures for the Archival Protection of the Intangible Cultural Heritage - "Chinese Painting Pigment Making Technique"

NI NI*^{1, 2}

¹ Hubei Minzu University, Hubei.China

²Philippine Christian University Center for International Education, Manila, 1004, Philippines

* Corresponding author:NI NI (Email:172783449@qq.com)

Abstract: Chinese painting pigments are essential for creating Chinese paintings and are an integral part of Chinese national culture, as they embody the spirit of Chinese painting. The technique of making Chinese painting pigments was included in the third batch of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List by the State Council in 2011, emphasizing the significance of Chinese traditional culture. However, as a "living" culture, it is susceptible to change or extinction due to various factors such as inheritance, the social environment, and conservation measures. The art of making Chinese painting pigments is a unique art form that is primarily passed down orally. However, due to the increasing scarcity of raw materials and the decreasing number of artisan heirs, this art form is facing a challenging dilemma. In light of the current situation of Chinese painting pigment making techniques, this paper proposes several feasible solutions for archival protection. One solution is to use the regional characteristics of Chinese painting pigment making for publicity. This strategy would involve promoting the unique aspects of Chinese painting pigment making in various regions to increase awareness and appreciation of the art form. Another solution is to build an archival talent team for Chinese painting pigment technique. This approach would involve identifying and training a group of experts in Chinese painting pigment making to ensure the continued preservation and development of the art form. Finally, building an online resource for Chinese painting pigment making technique would make the information accessible to a wider audience and facilitate the dissemination of knowledge about this art form.

Keywords: Chinese painting pigment making technique, intangible cultural heritage, archival protection

Introduction

Chinese painting pigments are an essential tool in the creation of Chinese painting and embody the spirit of Chinese culture. They have a special place among the "Four Treasures" of the Chinese study, along with brush, tusche, rice paper, and inkstone. To create a masterpiece of Chinese painting that can last for generations, the artist needs to possess not only the skills of traditional Chinese painting but also the pigments that will retain their colors for hundreds of years. Craftsmen who traveled all over the hills and mountains to explore the ores, animals, and plants of nature as raw materials, extracted the colors of nature and turned them into pigments. This process resulted in the vivid and colorful pigments that could last for even over a thousand years.

The tradition of Chinese painting pigments dates back to the Tang Dynasty (618 BC-907BC), as evidenced by the Dunhuang Mural in Gansu. The mural depicts the use of natural mineral pigments such as vermilion, stone green, and lead powder in painting for hundreds of years, making paintings a classical art form in the history of China^[1]. Many classical paintings have been created using natural pigments, such as the True Pearl Relic Baozhuang from the Northern Song Dynasty (1127 BC-1279BC) and the Purple Gold Nunnery Buddhist arhat statue at Dongshan, which was made by the artists Lei Chao and his wife during the Southern Song Dynasty. During the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty (1736 BC-1796 BC), the artist Xuang's painting "Prosperity of Gusu City" showed the shop signs "Vermilion Sand" and "Dan Powder." The demand for pigments for traditional Chinese painting increased with the emergence of famous artists from the Wu school of painting, such as Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, Tang Yin, and Qiu Ying, during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Initially, artists and painters made their pigments. However, due to the growing demand of the painters and artists, workshops specializing in pigment production began to emerge [2].

In 2011, the Chinese painting pigment making technique was approved by the State Council and it was listed in the third batch of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List^[3]. It is a unique hand-made technique with complicated procedures, usually going through more than ten processes such as crushing, water bleaching, grinding, gumming, precipitation, leather feet, decocting, spreading paste, cutting paste, cold drying, weighing and packaging before finally

[Received 14 Feb 2023; Accepted 23 Feb 2023; Published (online) 31 Mar 2023]



Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

producing the finished Chinese painting pigments. In the CCTV variety show "National Treasures", the famous Suzhou National Intangible Cultural Heritage Heir, Mr Qiu Qingnian, who has been engaged in the research and production of Chinese painting pigments for nearly 60 years, continues the ancient technique of making pigments by ancient painters, week after week, which usually takes more than a month, taking the grinding as an example, not only does it take a lot of strength to grind once, but it also takes about eight hours a day to grind. Depending on the hardness of the texture, it can take from half a month to a month. He has developed fade-proof Frost Green Pigment, Chinese Painting Pigment in Brocade Box, Chinese Painting Pigment in Tube, High-grade Five-Colour Printing Clay and Ancient Colour Printing Clay, making a great contribution to the preservation and transmission of the art of Chinese painting pigments.

It is a unique handicraft technique with complicated procedures, usually going through more than ten processes such as crushing, water bleaching, grinding, gumming, precipitation, leathering, decocting, spreading paste, cutting paste, cold drying, weighing and packaging. In the CCTV (China Central Television) TV program "National Treasures", a famous Suzhou National Intangible Cultural Heritage Heir, Mr Qiu Qingnian, was introduced to the public^[4]. He has been engaged in the research and production of Chinese painting pigments for nearly 60 years by using the ancient technique of making pigments passed down from ancient painters. It usually takes him weeks and months to make Chinese painting pigment with this handicraft technique. For example, when it comes to grinding, he has not only to grind the materials with great strength, but he also has to do it at least eight hours a day. Depending on the hardness of the texture, it sometimes can take two -4 weeks to finish the job. He has developed many new products including fade-proof Frost Green Pigments, Chinese Painting Pigments in Brocade Box, Chinese Painting Pigments in Tube, High-grade Five-Colour Printing Clay and Ancient Colour Printing Clay, making a great contribution to the preservation and transmission of the art of Chinese painting pigment production.

II. Literature Review

Domestic studies

To have a good understanding of the domestic studies on the topic, the author searched the biggest data base in China, CNKI, by the key words "Chinese painting pigment production techniques" and "intangible cultural heritage archiving". The result showed that only 3 and 63 articles reflectively. In the article titled "Suzhou Traditional Chinese Painting Pigments and Their Production Techniques", the author describes the historical development and current situation of traditional Chinese painting pigments in Suzhou, and the production techniques of Chinese painting pigments as intangible cultural heritage, with detailed descriptions of the production methods and steps; the article "Grinding the Life of Danqing" is an interview with Mr. Qiu Jiyan, an inheritor of the Chinese painting pigment production techniques. In this article, Mr. Qiu answers questions about the varieties of traditional Chinese painting pigments, the ways to obtain raw materials and the achievements of Chinese painting pigment making. The article "A Compendium of the Use and Production Techniques of Mineral Pigments in Chinese Painting" introduces the history and origins of Chinese painting pigments, as well as the selection and production of traditional Chinese painting pigments, which has important social and human values in promoting the use and production of mineral pigments in Chinese painting. However, there are very few ways to promote the art of Chinese painting, so an archive of the art of making Chinese painting pigments would help to find heirs and markets for the art of Chinese painting. Out of the 60 academic articles on 'archiving and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage' that have been examined, the earliest academic study on archiving and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in China was published in 2006, describing the close relationship between art archives and intangible cultural heritage as well as the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage through the creation of archives^[5]. Based on the above domestic studies, the author comes to the conclusion that the study on this field is not deep and it has more space to develop. On the one hand, domestic researchers should conduct more future studies on this field on the other hand, they should be experienced in reviewing and compiling documents. It is only by doing so that the researchers can produce a high level of academic results and propose archival protection feasible measures.^[6]

Foreign Studies

For decades, the international community attached great importance to the protection of intangible cultural heritage with a series of rules and laws including "Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" in 1972^[7] and "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" in 2003^[8], all of which have clearly defined the content of intangible cultural heritage protection. In 2001, the concept of "Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" was given by UNESCO officially. Since then, a growing number of international scholars conducted research on intangible cultural heritage. However, there is little literature on the archival protection of intangible cultural heritage, and most of the countries protect intangible culture through policies and laws, such as the Cultural Property Protection Law in Japan, the "Cultural Heritage Days" and "Historical and Cultural Heritage Reserves" in France, and the "Cultural Heritage Protection Zones" in Italy. As for the study of the intangible cultural heritage of Chinese painting technique, no relevant literature was found.

III. The need to archive and protect Chinese painting techniques

As a "living" culture, Intangible cultural heritage features for mobility and intangibility. It is easily to be affected to live or die by changes in inheritors, social environment, protection measures, etc. In studying, recording, promoting and

protecting intangible cultural heritage, archives can be established to achieve authenticity, integrity and inheritance of Intangible cultural heritage protection^[9].

III. The need for archival protection of Chinese painting pigment making techniques

It is reflected in the following three aspects: First, due to the increasing scarcity of the raw materials used in the production of Chinese painting pigments, and the complicated handmade procedure, young people are unwilling to learn this technique. The traditional Chinese painting pigment craft is facing the dilemma of dying out. The use of archival protection of it can solve the problems mentioned above. Secondly, handmade Chinese painting pigments are featured by being lustrous, light as dust, instantly melting in water, blending with ink, harmonising with the paper, and long lasting, so the Chinese painting pigment craft is famous both at home and abroad. It is important to introduce this Chinese treasure to other parts of the world. By building archival protection of it, which involves words archiving, and file archiving, this national treasure can be publicized more comprehensively and systematically. Thirdly, the raw materials for traditional Chinese painting pigments are mostly taken from minerals, animals and plants, with natural minerals being the main source. The main mineral raw materials include malachite, blue copper ore, lapis lazuli, cinnabar, ochre and estrogen, and most of these minerals are produced in the deep forests of remote areas. In order to obtain the good quality mineral raw materials, people had to travel north and south with a hammer to find the ores in remote areas. Many of the ores are used for jewellery decoration, so the cost of the raw materials is becoming increasingly expensive. By organizing cultural and educational exhibitions of intangible cultural heritage archives through images and vides, local government can educate the public know about the hardship of making Chinese painting pigments, thus reducing mining and to protect raw materials.

IV. Research on Countermeasures for Archival Protection of Chinese Painting Pigment Making Techniques

Based on the necessity of archiving and protecting Chinese painting techniques, the author puts forward the following countermeasures from the following aspects.

1. to promote publicity according to the regional characteristics of Chinese painting pigment making techniques

Publicity is one of the most important measures to protect intangible cultural heritage. China's intangible cultural heritage publicity is mainly in the form of exhibitions, and some practical results have been achieved. The current publicity work has been mostly done by the government rather than the public, and the breadth and depth of publicity work needs to be increased. The technique of making Chinese painting pigments is a local traditional technique in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, where there is a long history of painting tradition and making traditional Chinese painting pigments. The earliest workshop specialising in the production of pigments was Jiang's 'Sixutang' shop, which has become nationally known as the 'Jiang Sixutang' Chinese painting pigments of Suzhou. To conduct archival protection work, people need to do the field research and find out how this shop developed in making Chinese painting pigment production techniques. It is necessary to consider the local cultural tourism in Suzhou before developing promotional activities. The Jiang's 'Sixutang' shop can be served as a publicity spot with the visit to Mr Qiu Qingnian, and the Qiu Pigment Clay Research Laboratory he established. Activities including exhibition, lectures and competitions can effectively promote Suzhou's traditional Chinese pigment culture. In terms of online resources, it is a good idea to try blogs and WeChat public account to interact with the public online. These measures can enhance public awareness and participation of Chinese painting pigment making techniques.

2. to build a team of talents for the archives of Chinese painting pigment production techniques.

Currently the types of intangible cultural heritage archives in China include intangible heritage archives, oral archives and audio-visual archives. The academic results mainly focus on the use of current digital means to preserve intangible cultural heritage archives to save and protect intangible cultural heritage. In practice of archiving and preservation, there is a need for archival talents who are able to work according to the theory and to constantly refine it in the process of practice. They are specialised on the origin, development and evolution of Chinese painting, which serve an important part of intangible cultural heritage archives. Mr Qiu Qingnian and his successors are important sources of first-hand information, and their narratives and displays reflect the cultural heritage in its original form. Archives of the art of Chinese painting pigment making need information provided by their successors. Archival managers and staff should be qualified in archival management and learn the relevant skills related to intangible culture, so that archival work can be done effectively.

3. to build website of Chinese painting pigment production techniques

The establishment of an intangible cultural heritage archive is a basic need for scientific management in the information age. It is essential to build a database to record and preserve the oral introduction of their skills, to collect data by filming and recording, and to organise textual information. A good website for intangible heritage archives should integrate features such as virtualisation of information units, digitisation of information resources, networking of information transfer, sharing of information use and diversification of information display^[10]. It is suggested to reduce the psychological and spatial distance with the public for a good publicity purpose. A good website will bring the public the enough understanding to the charm and connotation of the art of making Chinese pigments. In this way, a harmonious human environment between the people who care about and the people who support it is built.

V. SUMMARY

Intangible cultural heritage is an important part of our national culture, and it is the responsibility and duty of every citizen to pass on and promote it. This study on the archival protection of Chinese painting pigment production techniques is lacking in both depth and breadth. In terms of depth, the structural relationship between the various elements of intangible cultural heritage in terms of protection, recording and preservation, and the way in which they operate, need to be studied in depth. In terms of breadth, there is still room for future study on social participation in the archiving and protection and the digital management of intangible cultural heritage archives. It is hoped that through the accumulation of theory and practice, the study can provide more insights to the academic issues from a broad academic perspective.

REFERENCES

- [1] Zhou Chunlong and Mu Zhenyi. Chemistry and technology of organic pigments. Sinopec Press Co., Ltd. [M]. 2014.06.
- [2] . A life of grinding and painting - an interview with Qiu Qingnian, the heir to the Chinese painting pigment making technique [J]. Journal of Suzhou College of Arts and Crafts, 2020 (04)
- [3] Heritage project code: VIII-198. The third batch of national intangible cultural heritage list.
- [4] National Treasure: 20180207. China Center Television. <https://tv.cctv.com/2018/02/07/VIDE2P60ZBFBiMz2Ef2s84wA180207.shtml>, [Accessed on February 10th, 2023)
- [5] Peng Yi. Experimental discussion on art archives in the protection of intangible cultural heritage [J]. Archives and Construction, 2006 (5)
- [6] Wang Honglei, Xu Haijing . A literature review on archival protection of intangible cultural heritage in China [J]. Lantai World, 2021 (11)
- [7] Compilation of amendments from Member States concerning the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO Doc. CLT — 2003 /CONF.
- [8] ibid
- [9] Xu Fang. Reflections on the content of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law concerning archival protection [J]. Office business, 2018 (09)
- [10] Su R. Exploring the archival protection of Henan opera and its countermeasures in the context of intangible cultural heritage [J]. Archives management, 2019 (10)