

Chinese Everyday Life¹ and (Post)Modern Encounters: A Story of “Cultural Survivals”

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**Paper prepared for the conference “Culture Archives and the State:
Between Nationalism, Socialism, and the Global Market,”
May 3-5, 2007, Mershon Center, Ohio State University, USA.**

*The Prince turns into a frog, and the fairy into a field snail.
Fortunately, the stories don't end so.*

Abstract: This paper discusses the relationship between Chinese intellectual and political elites and common people, as well as that between the ideological sphere and everyday life. A brief narration of two transformations between everyday life and cultural survivals in China will serve as the basis for representing such relationships. One is the modern transformation of traditional everyday life into folklore (1840-1950) which was then followed by its degeneration into cultural survivals after the socialist elimination of “outdated” folklore (1950-1976); the other is the postmodern transformation of the survivals first into the folklore of the peasantry and then into everyday life as public culture (since 1976). In this process, folklore also moved like a pendulum between everyday life and archives. A case study of Chinese traditional festivals which first degenerated into cultural survivals and were then revived as intangible heritage will substantiate my point of view. Based on the scrutiny of this whole process, the ultimate concern of this paper is to explore the new orientation for the development of Chinese folklore studies. Justifying the legitimacy of everyday life with the aid of postmodern ideas, folklorists in today's China are contributing to the challenging and promising undertaking to create an everyday life with more positive significance.

Keyword: Everyday Life, Cultural Survival, Public Culture, Elite and Peasantry, Modern China

¹ “Everyday life” is a key concept of modern philosophy and social science. It is the starting point of the researching orientation from Husserl, which focused on common people and the normalcy of life in order to attach significance to them. Heller defined “everyday life” as “the aggregate of those individual reproduction factors which, *pari passu*, make social reproduction possible” (1984: 3-7). It is namely activities and their process as well as conditions which make individuals themselves. There are two antithetical positions concerning this definition. One pursues a modernizing “critique of everyday life.” As stated by Yi Junqing, “the problem that we face is how to eliminate the cultural resistance of the self-contained and spontaneous traditional everyday life to the modernizing process” (Yi Junqing 2005:3). The other reflects on the impact of modernization on everyday life. Heidegger and Lefebvre's critique of the profound dissimulation of the world of everyday life in the modern condition of industrial civilization should have belonged to this reflective position. To criticize the common people's everyday life is a habitual orientation in the modern age, and it will continue to demonstrate its significance as a practical tool in a long run. From the innovative perspective, however, to reflect on this kind of critique does not necessarily mean to terminate it. Instead, it can conjure up a probability: critique creates the tension between the criticizer and the criticized as well as the passivity of the latter, which keeps the aim of the critique from being fulfilled. If the intellectuals reflect on the problems raised by the critique and search for new alternatives, namely creating the condition in which the criticized can self-reflect and be willing to optimize their everyday life, a better result is possible. In order to make the criticized reflect effectively, we have to ensure their status as a subject of thinking and of action (the critique of everyday life in the modern age really undermined the condition for the criticized to become such subjects). Folklorists should participate actively in the intellectual and social processes in order to make the “folk” the subject of social actions. This is the starting point of this essay.

Foreword: In Search of an Academic Framework Steering the Development of Folklore

Studies in China

Social sciences in China came into being with the motivation of answering the questions posed by modernization. While fulfilling self-development through answering these questions, social sciences in China have also created many questions which they, nonetheless, have made commitments to keep answering. Such an internally tense and somewhat bizarre condition is discernible through the disciplinary history of folklore studies. The academic discipline of folklore studies claimed its position as a core social science not only because of its key role in molding Chinese everyday life in the past as well as in reconstructing the relationship between social thought and everyday reality in the long run, but also because the “-lore”, the totality of traditional knowledge, is the cultural foundation of a modern state based on nationality, while the “folk-” serves as the political root of the democratic regime. Whilst the everyday life in which folklore takes form is the starting point and foothold of the intellectual interest of the social sciences, folklore’s immediate, intrinsic liaison with everyday life destines its position in the social sciences. We therefore look to the future development of folklore studies in China with optimistic anticipation.

Nevertheless, future prospects will not be available without a profound retrospect of the bumpy road which everyday life in China went through in the past 150 years, full of incessant critiques and recurrent denials. Their everyday life and mentality distorted by continuous impact, the common Chinese people hardly enjoyed life with contentment and composure. People’s everyday life was no longer free of compulsive interference from exterior forces. This is not only a condition that folklore studies have always contributed to,

but also a problem that this academic discipline would now help solve. Once the society develops into one in which people could presume to be contented and free, the everyday life which was previously prone to be sacrificed will take center stage again. Interrelated with both the cause of and the solution to many relevant problems, folklore studies in China are facing an opportunity for modern development.

The concept of “survivals” proves to be useful in understanding the role of folklore studies, considering the experience of Chinese everyday life under the framework of the social sciences in China. As one of the key concepts of western anthropology and folklore studies in their formative years, the concept of survivals has long been in disuse after its theoretical root of evolutionism was violently challenged by the functionalist school from 1920s to 1950s, and scholars lost interest in obtaining information on ancient and even primitive societies through studying survivals. Nevertheless, the concept of survivals has a different story in China. Although it has been outmoded for more than a decade, we are nowadays trying to reactivate this concept and attach new theoretical significance to it. Nonetheless, in placing it into the temporal dimension, we use it as a tool to observe social processes instead of as a concept to reconstruct the history.

Folklore studies in China got inspirations and opportunities for development from the two transformational processes which changed survivals’ status in the society, namely one in which everyday life became survival, and then vice versa. Folklore studies in China came into being around 1920 under European influences. Since the modernized notions of history and the theories of survivals were essential to folklore studies, it is widely accepted in China that this academic discipline benefited from the concept of survivals. My point here is that

with the help of postmodern theories, we have a brand-new perspective through which to understand folklore, and survivals are not doomed to extinction anymore with a reversed temporal correlation. Time is not what leads survivals into senescence but what really enhances their vigor. As evident in current Chinese society, time revives folk traditions which have already become survivals and then makes them thrive. On this basis, I am advancing towards my second point: people who identify themselves with the “folk” are not represented merely by peasantry anymore. They are now occupying a territory as broad as the whole public. Instead of being considered as the culture of marginalized people, folklore is getting more and more acknowledgement as the public culture of the whole society as well as one of the essences of a nation-state. For example, people no longer consider traditional festivals as “the peasantry’s custom” but the festivals of the whole public which should be designated as legal holidays. Art forms which were previously practiced and enjoyed by peasants in remote areas as makeshift entertainments due to the absence of modern ones such as TV and concerts have now been granted the title of “intangible cultural heritage” on the national and even the universal level.

Folklore and everyday life link up with each other. According to folklore studies, folklore is that part of everyday life that is identified and represented by the folklorists with certain genres or cultural forms². Folklore studies begin generally with the identification of the object, written or not. The folklorists have to first identify the “folk-” in order to choose the suitable target groups for the research. Then, they have to identify the “-lore” in order to

² Some textbooks on folklore fieldwork instruct the students directly in how to identify folklore in everyday life. From the perspective of the onlookers and judging from the result of the fieldwork, folklore sprouts nevertheless from everyday life. (Schoemaker 1990)

find out what to study. When we connect this beginning of folklore studies with the concept of “everyday life,” we will take notice of the selectivity which is inherent in the identification of “folklore.” Beyond this scope of the “folk” concept are there many people (groups) whose everyday life hardly bears any relevance for folklore studies. It is a commonly accepted fact which I would like to develop in my query here. As folklore studies deal with everyday life, we have to keep our consideration commuting between “folklore” and “everyday life” instead of waving the latter aside once we dig the former out of it.

The subject of folklore studies doesn't always tally with the community to which “folklore” is supposed to apply. Research on “Chinese folklore” is never carried out with purely random samplings among Chinese people. Instead, folklorists keep inquiring eyes on the “folk” whom they believe to live bodily in current time, but, in a cultural sense, as an anachronism. They keep documents of these people's ritual and linguistic performances as well as everyday activities, and then consider these documents as the folklore of a congregation of people or a community with a wider scope. The actual performing subject of folklore thus always differs from the titular one. The existence of these differences as well as their varying scope and intensity should all be brought into consideration. Who, being considered the subject of folklore, comes under the academic scrutiny of the folklorists, whose everyday life is the object of folklore studies, and the possible impact of objectification on their everyday life are all questions of academic significance³.

³ Here is another bizarre condition: civilized folklorists are warmly entertained by villagers and deeply moved by the situation which differs greatly from that in their own society full of distant strangers. Nevertheless, the achievements of these folklorists, especially with the general effect of these achievements as a whole, push the village communities into an unfavorable position of discourse and make them the representative of many negative values and deprive them of any chance to appeal in response. The observed become the object of value negation as well as a social movement while their chance to become the subject is wearing off. Only a reflection on how folklore studies accompanied the modernizing process can enhance the professional ethic of folklorists to a commanding position in the present age.

When folklore studies first emerged in western countries such as Germany (with the Grimms) and the UK (with William Thoms), the folklore left behind by traditional societies was becoming a minor part of contemporary everyday life and hence was prone to be regarded as survivals which just existed in everyday life instead of really belonging to it. The actual subject of folklore was merely a portion of the community, predominantly the undereducated peasantry.

As for the relationship between folklore and everyday life, as well as that between the actual subject and the titular subject of folklore, the case of Chinese folklore studies was quite different at the time of its historical emergence. If we define folklore as the everyday life of traditional societies, then it is true that folklore almost tallied with people's everyday life in the 1910s in China. At that time, the western lifestyle was still confined to a small population and the modern, industrial, urban everyday life had not yet broken off the traditional one. If the endeavor made by the teachers and students of Peking University to glean folk ballads for publication in the university journal symbolized the naissance of folklore studies in China, it is obvious that "folklore" referred then not to the cultural survivals which had lost their original functions, but to an organic part of contemporary people's everyday life. Almost everybody belonged to the subject of then so-called "folklore," which was part of everyday life instead of degenerated survivals. Therefore, folklorists did not have to resort to old people in remote areas in their search for folklore. It took some time before everyday life finally degenerated into survivals, especially with the catalyst of revolutions. It would thus be more academically rational if the folklore studies with the bedrock of the "survival" concept had not emerged in the 1910s but after the 1960s. This untimely advent of this academic

discipline made its relationship with Chinese society different from that in the western countries. It is this difference that serves as a stimulus to our inquiry.

Folklore: from everyday life to survivals, and then vice versa

With a consideration of the concept of “survivals,” we can discern an interesting phenomenon in the occurrence and evolution of the category of “Chinese Folklore” and relevant studies in modern times. Before being imported into China, folklore studies constituted an academic discipline dealing with cultural survivals in its industrialized, western homeland. When he created the concept of Folk-lore in 1846, William Thoms used it to represent “popular antiquities” which is a concept that had been used even earlier by other scholars (Brand 1777, from Dorson 1968:6). Scholars also often used “remains” and “relics” to refer to the same subject. The concept of “cultural survivals” became more popular through Edward Taylor who, in the third chapter of *Primitive Culture*, used this concept in connecting the primitive beliefs and behaviors with modern peasantry’s folklore, and considered folklore of all types to be the modern survivals of primitive cultures. Such a concept was inherited by Andrew Lang who, in the first chapter of *Custom and Myth*, published in 1884, argued that “There is a science, Archeology, which collects and compares the material relics of old races, the axes and arrow-heads. There is a form of study, Folklore, which collects and compares the similar but immaterial relics of old races, the surviving superstitions and stories, the ideas which are in our time but not of it” (Dorson 1968:219). Representing the British Folklore Society, the *Handbook of Folklore* was revised and expanded by Charlotte Sophia Burne who wrote in its foreword that “the word Folk-lore” has replaced “the earlier expression ‘popular antiquities’”. It has established itself as the generic term under which the traditional Beliefs,

Customs, Stories, Songs and Sayings current among backward peoples, or retained by the uncultured classes of more advanced peoples, are comprehended and included” (Burne 1914).

“Cultural survivals” were supposed to be those cultural items which could not fully exert their functions, with dramatically abated importance, incomplete forms, or missing original meanings. In a few words, this concept referred to those cultural factors which lost their essential constituent status and became dispensable, and hence appeared often as bizarre cultural phenomena in actuality.

When Chinese people imported the concept of “folklore,” which originally represented cultural survivals, they applied it to realistic everyday life instead of survivals. Being practiced widely as everyday life, folklore did not degenerate into so-called cultural survivals under the impact of modernization in China around 1920. Folk beliefs, festivals, rites of passage, lifestyles (concerning the basic necessities), and oral literature, far from being regarded as cultural survivals, all composed a complete form of culture in its normal status.

Folklorists, among others, identified “folklore” in China and created the concept of “Chinese folklore” in the ensuing years, and hence made folklore studies play a key role in the everyday life’s transition towards survivals. Chinese people used to live at ease in the everyday world and consider it normal to follow rules and logic of everyday life as well as to identify with it. Although differences in life forms and styles, with the antithesis between “elegant” and “vulgar” as well as that between “delicate” and “simple,” existed among different families and communities, people shared the basic notions of and attitudes towards everyday life. However, the knowledge production of folklore studies, together with some

other factors, led to the social consequence of the stratification of everyday life and the grading of its value. Intentionally, some people began to lead an everyday life which was different from that of the others with a sense of being advanced or superior.

The slogan, “Allowing some people to...first”, represents a typical mode of many social changes in modern China. For example, the slogan, “Allowing some people to get rich first,” witnessed some people shaking off poverty. Furthermore, some people took the lead in becoming atheist, saying goodbye to superstitions, while some others took the lead in getting modern, discarding old customs. Folklorists shared the credit in creating the social awareness of the antithesis between “the advanced” and “the backward” according to which those who broke away from folklore were among “the advanced” while those who kept tight connection with it were considered “the backward.” In other words, by isolating folklore from realistic everyday life, folklorists offered the members of the society an object to which to bid farewell. Through investigating folklore and making archives, they were actually identifying objects for the society to forget and abandon, and ascertaining for the government the cultural items which were subjected to eradication. Although these archives might have had an original function of facilitating conservation, they turned out to constitute a list containing the cultural items which were supposed to be first eradicated by the society.

The social consequence of modern folklore knowledge came into being in the current political situation and constituted a part of the strategy which was adopted by the intellectual and political elites in dealing with the contemporary predicament that China faced. Having China’s lagging behind its western counterparts represented in the intellectual sphere by the

peasantry, the elite also made the peasantry stand for Chinese folklore⁴ and imposed an image of “backwardness” on the latter consequently. As “common” and “normal” everyday life turned into “backward” folklore, more and more people who were educated in the modern school system shook off their identification with this “backward Chinese folklore” and learned to or imagined to live in a kind of everyday life which was defined as “modern.” While a profound correlation was established between the definitions and categories of folklore studies and Chinese reality, the knowledge production and politics of the time made mainstream society (though it might be the minority of the population) acquire the imagination of modernity and an unwillingness to identify with Chinese folklore. Modern intellectual discourse and politics made it a widely accepted hypothesis that folklore was a lifestyle belonging to the socially marginalized peasantry in lower classes. Even the peasantry accepted this notion and expected to cast off folklore as soon as possible in order to keep pace with the times. During the course of modernization, more and more Chinese people immediately associated modernity with indices including urban life, modern education, and employment by the government. On one hand, more and more of their imaginations about modernity were realized or came to bear a more realistic sense; on the other hand, their unwillingness to identify with folklore made them prone to accept as modern life whatever lifestyle differed from folklore. As a consequence of this social process, the previous

⁴Folklorists carry out their studies in specific communities through the observation of everyday life. The lifeworld is what people are accustomed to and take for granted (Husserl 1970:43-53), and of which folklore is a component. It is a part of the whole process of the advent and development of modernity in China that everyday life became the object of concern and reflection, which represents the universality and profundity of modernization. This process created the concept of “advanced (modern) vs backward (traditional),” and formed a relationship of powers which used this concept to carry out the categorization of social spaces (hierarchical ranking). This antithesis applied to the relationship between urban and rural areas, citizens and peasantry, the well-educated represented by intellectuals and the undereducated by the peasantry. Just as Myron Cohen discerned years ago, modern intellectuals allied with political powers in coining the category of “the peasantry” which bore various ideological labels. With such an understanding, we would not treat the issues of the peasantry in an objective and self-contained history.

everyday life kept losing its ubiquity and really degenerated into cultural survivals in social life.

It is a complex process for some activities in social life to be identified as “folklore” or “old customs” and to be ostracized from the society. During this course, some people took the lead in entering “modern times” both ideologically and behaviorally. This is vividly demonstrated by the accounts about the “Lunar New Year” in the diary of Lu Xun (1881-1936), the famous Chinese writer, with reference to the change of festival customs in the whole society.

The first Lunar New Year described in Lu’s diary is that in the year of 1913 (Lu Xun 14:43). According to the diary, he went to work both on the day of Lunar New Year’s Eve and on Lunar New Year’s Day. As staff members of the Ministry of Education, a state organ where the celebration of Lunar New Year was out of consideration, Lu and his colleagues abandoned the tradition of celebrating the Lunar New Year. However, judging from his accounts that stores were opened only till the Lunar New Year’s Eve and closed on the ensuing day, it is obvious that the traditional celebration did exist in the society then.

In the following year of 1914, the state designated a three-day holiday for the western New Year as opposed to a one-day holiday for the Lunar New Year. During the western New Year holiday, Lu and his friends and colleagues visited each other and held feasts. On the first work day, they “hold a brief tea party on 9 a.m., enjoying tea and stone-hard cookies, and not having much to talk about. Mr. Tang Erhe visits me at the Ministry, which bears a sense of New Year’s visit.” (14:96) During the Lunar New Year holiday, eight friends visited him on the day of Lunar New Year’s Eve, some bringing foodstuff as gifts. He slept away the Lunar

New Year's Day when he had only one visitor. When he went to work on the following day, he met only one colleague in office. It is obvious that the government then attached importance to the western New Year holiday which most civil servants took seriously as the substitute for the traditional one. On the other hand, although the Lunar New Year holiday became officially a one-day "Spring Festival" from this year on, some people still carried on the old customs and squeezed attending traditional familial rituals into their working schedules.

According to Lu's accounts in the year of 1917, several relatives and friends visited him during the Lunar New Year holiday, though he already felt the old customs as well as the sense of Lunar New Year celebration rather alien. He wrote in the diary "Lunar New Year's Eve, transcribing the epigraph alone to the night, I hardly felt the old sentimentality for the change of years" (14:263).

It is obvious in Lu's diary that he either worked at a desk writing letters and essays, translating, or dealing with mail. He went to bookstores and antiquity markets. Now and then, he mentioned buying pastries, toys, alcohol, fireworks and crackers. He always had visitors, some with foodstuff as gifts, while he seldom visited others around this time. He wrote once about practicing the old celebrating customs including ancestor worship and once about overdrinking (in 1924) (14:486). Generally speaking, Lu was familiar with the etiquette and customs concerning the celebration of the Lunar New Year, but he did not follow them actively. Such civil servants and intellectuals didn't take the traditional New Year customs seriously from 1910s. Though they still practiced some customs between times with short shrift, they were emotionally estranged from them to a considerable extent.

Lu's attitude toward traditional everyday life typically represents that of those modern intellectuals. Most of the big names in the modern intellectual and academic spheres participated in the knowledge production and intellectual movements which identified everyday life as "old customs" and relegated them into cultural survivals. Among other pioneers are Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao and Hu shi, who violently criticized the system and value of Chinese everyday life. Under their influence, folklorists who worked in the framework of western folklore studies engaged mainly in a critique of everyday life for academic audiences. After being singled out by these folklorists, the everyday life which used to be "natural" became something that seemed more or less bizarre and thus should be abandoned.

After being identified, folklore items would, instead of maintaining their status as entertaining reading material, blend into the whole social process. It is thus understandable that the government would select some of them as the object for eradication through intellectual and political movements, which is again evident in the case of the Lunar New Year. In the proposal submitted by the Ministry of Interior to the government on May 7, 1928, a social project to "implement the western (Gregorian) calendar and abandon the old lunar calendar" was put forward for the following reasons: "Everyday social life in this decade shows that the masses, short of any rectifying consciousness, still follow the old lunar calendar...ceremonial and holiday practice of them reverting to the old customs, which showcases the great gap between the multi-faceted reforming political scheme and the social status quo. If we do not eradicate the old calendar while introducing the new one as soon as possible, we will not only be treated with contempt by our foreign counterparts, contradicting

our own constitution, but also run counter to our reforming tenets.” Then “eight clauses of suggestion are herewith provided in order to induce a radical reformation.”⁵ Among these eight clauses, the second one prohibits the sale of old calendars and the conversion tables of the old and new; the third forbids the governmental departments, schools, and organizations to arrange holidays according to the traditional calendar; and the fourth orders all the local governments to constitute statutes and declare to the public that all entertainments and ceremonies under the old lunar calendar should be reformed and brought under the framework of the new national calendar. For instance, all the celebrations that were supposed to be held during the Lunar New Year holiday should be adjusted to the dates in January under the Gregorian calendar. The government of the Republic of China and its intellectuals initiated all sorts of reforming movements bearing the intention of “mass education” and “rural construction.” The notions of “folklore,” “old custom,” and “vulgar custom” were thus reiterated in the schemes to reform the life styles represented by the peasantry.

Those “advanced” intellectuals and partisans took the lead in either mild shunning of the old lifestyle or radical disdain and discarding of it. This “unwillingness to identify with the old” then became a widespread social phenomenon as well as an intellectual current of the time, although many still could not help but live the old way. Time and social movements then created a new reality, and old forms of everyday life really degenerated into “survivals” with incomplete functions and fragmented forms.

This degeneration accelerated during the transformation of the socialist China into a collectivistic state. The state kept initiating socialist education movements targeting every

⁵The Second Historical Archives of China: A Compilation of Archives of the Republic of China, Vol. 5, Section I, Culture, Jiangsu Ancient Books Publishing House, 1991, 424—426.

single citizen. After 1958, a condition gradually took shape in which everyone was brought into the system of *dan wei* (collective units) or People's Communes and deprived of time, space and self-controlled resources to practice folklore activities. Folklorists singled out and defined "Chinese folklore" from the everyday life of Chinese people and witnessed the transformation of folklore into survivals in socialist China. During the years of Cultural Revolution, folklore studies became academically restricted and even banned while the traditional everyday life really turned into survivals. Although the reason was always allegedly that they were classified as "reactionary academic activities of the bourgeoisie," we could also ascribe this situation of folklore studies to the fact that they had already finished their contemporary mission of cooperating with the modernizing movements in relegating the original Chinese everyday life into "survivals" and hence exiling their original forms from current everyday life.

Accounts in the diary of Ba Jin (1904-2005), another famous Chinese writer, recorded the fading out of these "survivals" from the life of intellectuals during the period of the "Four Clean-ups Movement." According to his diary, Ba did almost the same things at home and in his *dan wei*, China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, during the three consecutive Spring Festivals from 1963 to 1965. These included get-togethers with family members and relatives, watching TV at home, hosting visits by colleagues, and attending celebration parties and banquets in the Federation. While describing the most important dinner on the Lunar New Year's Eve, Ba used the words "*nian fan*" (208) and "*nian ye fan*" (351) (dinner on the New Year's Eve) in 1963 and 1964, but he only used "*chi wan fan*" (476) (to have dinner) in the diary of 1965. He used the traditional word "*bai nian*" (New Year's visit) several times in the

diary of 1963 when referring to the visits between relatives and friends, but he refrained from using it in the diary of the two following years. Still celebrating Spring Festival before the “Four Clean-ups Movement,” the intellectuals continued to use the traditional parlance “*nian fan*” and “*nian ye fan*” with quotation marks, although they already didn’t follow the old customs that much. It’s obviously the “Four Clean-ups Movement” that made them finally abandon the traditional parlance willingly. Still celebrating it, they managed to take Spring Festival as a new cultural activity. That, however, is far from enough: to deal with a cultural phenomenon such as Spring Festival that belonged to old customs, the more radical way was to abolish it, which did happen shortly after the Cultural Revolution broke out. On January 30, 1967, the State Council issued a circular on the abolition of the Spring Festival holiday, allegedly to conform to the current revolutionary situation and the will of the masses. Such a stance was fervently echoed in newspapers throughout the country on the following day. First transformed into the New Year of the old calendar (an obsolete calendar), then into Spring Festival, the traditional Lunar New Year came then right to the verge of extinction. At least, people could no longer “*guo nian*” (to celebrate the Lunar New Year) justifiably. A lifeway thus degenerated into cultural survival, and festival folklore became the descriptions existing only in archives which could aid the imagination only of those with access to the literate record. When New Year customs became the object of archiving efforts as extant but outdated culture, as recorded in the 1920s’ *A National Collection of Chinese Customs* (Hu Pu’an) and the 1930s’ *A Collection of New Year Customs* (Lou Zi Kuang), they were deprived of the temporal dimension of their existence and doomed to confinement within the archives.

Around 1978, folklore studies resumed in colleges and institutes along with national

implementation of the reform and opening up of policy. Folklore studies included basically the search for and the collection of “survivals” in literature and memories. It was just then that Chinese folklore studies began to resemble the British forerunner before 1920s which dealt with survivals. Professionals before my generation used to delve into ancient books of thousands of years, check the survey reports published in newspapers and journals from 1910 to 1950 as well as archives, and interview old people in order to get information on Chinese folklore. It was during this period that a great deal of literature on folklore studies was reprinted, including the above-mentioned monographs written by Hu Pu’an (1986) and Lou Zi Kuang (1989) in the 1920s and 1930s. Cultural survivals which had been socially invisible for more than 10 years reappeared in newly printed books and journals. When I became a student majoring in folklore studies at that time, I was disappointed by this professional direction, a feeling which I have no intention to conceal today. While writing my doctoral dissertation in 1990, one of my main purposes was to criticize the study of survivals in folklore studies.

Nevertheless, it turned out later that making cultural survivals visible in the intellectual sphere during that period was really a key contribution to their final reappearance in social reality. The then rediscovery of “survivals” as cultural phenomena and the representation of the discourse on “survivals” as a legal one both set the bedrock for the following cultural development of the Chinese society. By a seemingly magical mechanism in contemporary China, for an individual and isolated social phenomenon which has only limited popularity to change into a common one, people merely need to voice it (no matter whether positively or negatively) to make it well-known. No matter what and how the

folklorists (certainly not limited to this sphere) said about Chinese folklore as survivals in that period, the discourse itself made it possible for the survivals to become again the organic components of everyday life. While their discourse had been once neglected by their colleagues from other closely related social science disciplines, it was really their academic activities that contributed to the change of cultural reality in the Chinese society, and at least echoed and catalyzed the advent of a new cultural China.

Once considered the result of the degeneration of everyday life and having dominated the discourse of Chinese folklore studies since the resumption of this academic discipline, survivals stepped out of their reclusive niches in historical archives and old people's memories and came back to real life as everyday practices. New temples were erected on the relics of old ones while customs of traditional festivals reentered people's everyday life, and folk songs and dances reappeared in rituals and ceremonies in their traditional forms. The transformation of yesterday's survivals into today's realities is now widely accepted as the "folklore renaissance" in the Chinese intellectual sphere. In light of our clue here, this renaissance refers to the change of survivals into everyday life and is characterized by the facts that texts are practiced again in reality; memories revive in real life; and traditional cultural activities with degenerated functions, incomplete forms, and marginalized status begin to spread actively again and become public culture which can be integrally identified.

Naturally, thirty years of folklore renaissance would not rewind everyday life back to that of one hundred and fifty years ago. It is, however, indubitable that these thirty years helped resume the tradition which had once broken off. For instance, in a macrocosmic sense of space and time, the reconstruction of temples and the revival of traditional festivals

restored the historical continuity of both spatial landscape and temporal framework, while in a microcosmic sense, life trivia such as red underwear and girdles, dumplings served during dinner for visitors from afar, and farewell noodles all bear more or less of the essence of traditional folklore and represent in a sense the traditional life values. Although the renaissance of folklore cannot convert current life into the traditional one, the latter is by no means inessential decoration, but a crucial final touch which endows the whole of current life with a unique culture identity.

The justification of everyday life and the developing orientation of folklore studies

Contemporary everyday life is a modern one which links up with the Chinese life tradition. The judgments and comments made on this evolving course by those who speak in the name of either the state or ideology keep veering. From denouncing it violently as the resurgence of evils, to tolerating it out of politically reconciliation (as in the United Front work) and economic considerations, and then to praising it as the revival of precious customs, the evaluations made by people with the right of speech from all walks of life have really changed greatly. In recent years, the government identified the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage as one of the key cultural missions of the state, and intellectuals also look to folklore for reaching the consensus to promote cultural self-consciousness. Folklore studies thus found opportunities and approaches to develop on different levels. It's the basic task of folklore studies to go to the field in search of the revived folklore and then to give due publicity to the cream of it. It is also the right way towards institutional development for folklore studies to dive into the prosperous undertaking of identifying and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Out of the two opportunities mentioned above, the former was

created by the historical choice of the masses, while the latter was made possible by the policies of UNESCO and the Chinese government. These simply offer the Chinese folklore studies a broad space for development, and a chance to become a focus of the media.

Moreover, one more challenging task beckons the folklorists. That is, starting with the concept of “everyday life,” to create public knowledge in China doing justice to the common people’s choice of their everyday life, and thus to promote due respect for this life from the whole society. Intellectuals should no longer impose symbolic violence upon the common people’s everyday life, no longer forcibly mold this everyday life into an “advanced-backward” framework, but let the everyday life of common Chinese people receive due justice on its own terms. With the professional commitment to serve the objects of their studies, folklorists should endeavor to make these notions commonplace consensus as well as basic moral tenets of Chinese society.

Safeguarding projects of intangible cultural heritage might exert an impact on the society’s evaluation of and attitudes towards common people’s everyday life, though it depends on the guiding philosophies adopted by the safeguarding personnel. One of the two probable philosophies resembles that of a gold-digger while the other is that of a flower picker. In the eyes of the former for whom the only thing to care about is gold, sand is simply the trash. But for the latter, flowers, whether picked or left unpicked, could all be nice ones. A safeguarding project under the gold-digger philosophy would not lead to much positive evaluation of common people’s everyday life. If, however, it is guided by the flower picker’s philosophy, it would help in generalizing the positive evaluation of individual cultural items to the whole everyday life sphere. Whether to bring into consideration the everyday life to

which these cultural items inherently belong is a key question that all folklorists should face seriously.

Now that we can incidentally involve the everyday life of relevant communities while carrying out safeguarding projects of intangible cultural heritage, why can't we directly launch on to the subject of "dealing with common people's everyday life properly?" The "folk" have already created a compound everyday life in the past thirty years by reviving traditions as well as importing western lifestyles. It is hence high time that we created an intellectual ambience in which their everyday life could be considered absolutely normal. Here we try to explore the right approach to this aim in three aspects.

We could engage more in the knowledge production about the publicity of the folklore. We could develop our notion to combine folklore and everyday life into an understanding of the relationship between folklore and publicity. Folklore is never an individual phenomenon, and publicity is none other than an inherent characteristic of it. Having thorough publicity on both local and national levels, folklore was equivalent to public culture one hundred fifty years ago. Nevertheless, it lost this status after the "New Culture Movement" created the new dominant culture of the nation, and then was denied and marginalized by the new community who identified themselves with the modern culture. With its cultural publicity eroding, the elite class took the extreme policy against folklore by denying any of the publicity that was claimed by its remaining advocates. Since the elite took hold of all the important public spheres and discourse, the publicity or visibility of folklore was confined to the collectivity of marginalized and underprivileged groups. Such a process reversed however in the past thirty years. Transforming from survivals into the "lore" of peasantry and then into folk customs in

a much broader scope, some folklore finally retrieved the status of nationwide public culture. The social popularity of the major traditional festivals and their media relevance substantiate their current role as public culture, and the implementation of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List serves also as an acknowledgement of folklore's publicity on the national level. All these represent the climax of the folklore renaissance, though still not an integral social situation enjoyed by folklore. If we take advantage of this profession to create new publicity for folklore by dint of the intellectual trend of cultural self-consciousness, the distorted attitudes toward common people's everyday life will change spontaneously.

In order to change the negative attitudes towards folklore which formed during the course of modernization, we should also resort to post-modern theories and approaches. In the Chinese intellectual sphere, there are two antithetical positions about the applicability of postmodern ideas: one arguing that debates on postmodernity are premature since modernity has not been fully experienced in China, and the other arguing that because world academia as a whole has been immersed in postmodernity for more than twenty years, we will never have new ideas if we don't keep up with it. In my opinion, modernity and post-modernity in the sense of social development do not have to correspond strictly to their counterparts in the intellectual sense. For the sphere of folklore studies, not only do we have to carry out studies in an intellectual ambience⁶ in which postmodern ideas exert great influence, but also the academic resources provided by postmodernism can lend us innovative power in liberating both the "folk-" and "-lore".

It is really hard for us to claim an orientation to postmodern ideas. What we could do in practice is become aware of the postmodern intellectual ambience while engaging in our academic work and identify our former blind spots with the aid of postmodern ideas. That is, we do not think the way those postmodern thinkers do, but we think with the inspiration from them.

The two edge tools of modern ideas are science and logos. The intellectual sphere made use of them monopolistically through specialization to bring about many unexpected achievements in the world, thus creating a hierarchy in the world according to the distance from science and logos. The consequence of implementing such a system goes well against the value of democracy and human rights. As for the issues relevant in the sphere of folklore studies, the common people's everyday life was badly stifled and given no chance to appeal while folklore turned into cultural survivals in an environment where the functions of science and logos were excessively aggrandized, or even deified. The cultural items which have been revived in today's everyday life include not only traditional festival customs, but also folk religions, folk songs and dances, folk medicine, folk arts and crafts, etc. For those which can be integrated into the market and the governmental framework of economic construction, it is easy to recognize their positive function. At the same time, rituals representing beliefs which are at odds with the national ideology and science can hardly be acknowledged as legitimate by the government, while the value of all kinds of workmanship can only be judged by its material function instead of its intrinsic significance to people.

While we do not have to resort to postmodernity as a tool to fight against science and logos, the queries it raises against them at least offer us the reasons to review their appropriate relationship to everyday life. Postmodern theory criticizes not only the historical impact of scientism and the myth of logos on society, but also the modern ideology which molded the relationship between the practices and subjects of science and those of folklore into an advanced-backward antithesis. These critiques offer common people the space for thinking as well as the condition of knowledge which will help them make use of the

legitimacy of folklore in their everyday life. To keep the living world from being completely colonized by ideology and to safeguard the free everyday life of common people, we should manage to build a firewall of knowledge which could prevent some people from interfering in other's everyday life by means of science and logos. Postmodern ideas also assist the reconceptualization of the current status of folklore and its subject. For example, the postmodern view of time once criticized the view of history rooted in the theory of unilinear evolution. This critique made us better understand the contemporary identity of folklore, refraining from limiting it as well as its subjects to historical status and detaching the label of "feudalism" from it. Postmodern theory engaged in reforming the extant hierarchical structure of knowledge and power. This created an opportunity to reconsider the position of the "folk", folklore, and their sphere, which are always placed at the bottom of a hierarchical structure and at the periphery of a central-marginal relationship.

Under the climate molded by opening up political movements as well as postmodern intellectual movements, an everyday life is forming in Chinese society that blends various cultural elements of all times and from different places while resting on the foundation made by modern technology and fortunes. This is a process which folklorists should actively trace and study. Since questions are being posed concerning everyday life, folklore, and state development in this modern age, folklore studies are supposed to form an academic discipline with increasing importance in China. This opportunity appears due to the uniqueness of the current moment and society, and it makes the condition of knowledge production of Chinese folklore studies differ from that in western countries.

In order to fulfill the intellectual mission of the modern age and conform to the

modernizing current, Chinese folklore studies once participated in the critique of everyday life. However, facing a new condition, folklore studies in China should play a new role. Since it is the aim of both Chinese economic and political policies to guarantee an everyday life with more positive significance for common people, Chinese folklore studies can also participate in this endeavor from the cultural side. To some people, the relationship between modernity and postmodernity is successive while to others, parallel. The renaissance of folklore would not be understandable and excusable if it were not in the postmodern intellectual ambience. Nevertheless, modernization is still an incomplete undertaking for the Chinese in its material and technical aspects. Everyday life thus faces simultaneously the modern and postmodern situation, while both modern and postmodern ideas apply to such a life. Therefore, compared to their forerunner, folklore studies in today's China are both more challenging and more promising.

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