

Cultural Background, Inheritance and Exploration of the Performance Form of “Hengshan Old Waist Drum”

Jiawen Liu

Shaanxi Art Vocational College, Shaanxi Province, China

398423368@qq.com

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Abstract: “Hengshan old waist drum” is a traditional form of waist drum spread in Hengshan area of Yulin. It is one of the sources of waist drum performance in Northern Shaanxi. It was listed in the national intangible cultural heritage list in 2008. It not only has a high ornamental and artistic value in performance, but also has a very heavy value in cultural research. As an intangible cultural heritage, “Hengshan old waist drum” plays an important role in promoting socialist culture and excellent traditional culture. By studying the cultural background and performance form of “Hengshan old waist drum”, this paper analyzes the current situation and problems in the process of inheritance of “Hengshan old waist drum”, and provides some suggestions and countermeasures for the future inheritance and development of “Hengshan old waist drum”.

1. Introduction

“Hengshan old waist drum” is a traditional form of waist drum spread in Hengshan area of Yulin. It is one of the sources of waist drum performance in Northern Shaanxi. It has a long history, wide spread and strong mass base. It not only has high ornamental and artistic value in performance, but also has very heavy value in cultural research. In 2008, it was listed in the national intangible cultural heritage list. “Hengshan old waist drum”, as an intangible cultural heritage, plays an important role in promoting socialist culture. Due to the relatively remote and closed geographical location, “Hengshan old waist drum” retains the most traditional and simple state in clothing, movement and other aspects. In the current rapid development of society, the inheritance and development of this traditional art form is of great significance.

By studying the cultural background and performance form of “Hengshan old waist drum”, this paper analyzes the current situation and problems in the process of inheritance of “Hengshan old waist drum”, and provides some suggestions and countermeasures for the future inheritance and development of “Hengshan old waist drum”.

2. Cultural Background of “Hengshan Old Waist Drum”

2.1 Remains of Ancient Sacrificial Rites

The performance forms of the old waist drum in Hengshan are representation of the ancient sacrificial rites, such as “Ye Temple” and “Yanmenzi”. “Ye Temple” is to offer sacrifices to the gods, and “Yanmenzi” is to enter the courtyard to play, sing and dance. These are all relics of ancient sacrificial rites.

There are two purposes in the performance of “Ye Temple”. One is the worship at the festival, praying for the harvest of the next year, bringing people healthy and safe. The other is praying for rain. The time of the sacrifice performance is uncertain. In the drought, the village will perform the waist drum to pray for rain. “Yanmenzi” expresses people’s good expectation of dispelling the misfortune. People hope to get rid of the bad things at home and bring good luck to their families through the playing, singing and dancing of waist drum team.

2.2 Good Wishes of Blessing and Auspiciousness

“Hengshan old waist drum” has been a folk custom activity closely related to sacrifice and praying for blessings since ancient times. Every year, before Yangko, the “Ye Temple” activities should be carried out to worship the gods. There is no specific limitation on the gods. The waist drum team will generally choose the most influential ancestral temples in the village to offer sacrifice. Women are not allowed to participate in the activities of “Ye Temple”, but only by men. The dancers in the performance of “Ye Temple” should be solemn when dancing and keep their awe for the gods. The activity of “Ye Temple” is not only a kind of simple performance activity, but also should be understood as a kind of activity of “entertaining God”, and it is a folk custom sacrifice ceremony. People pray for the harvest of the next year to the gods through “Ye Temple”, and pray for the blessing of the gods, placing strong spiritual beliefs. “Yanmenzi” is an activity for New Year’s greetings after the worship activity of “Ye Temple”, which is carried out from door to door by the waist drum team led by “Santou” (the leading dancer and singer in Yangko dance). There are three implications of the performance activities of “Yanmenzi”. The first is to pray for blessings for the family and to protect the family for good luck. The second is to pray for the harvest of the next year to the gods. The third is to eliminate the evil disasters, ghosts and exorcise evil.

2.3 Blend of Nomadic Culture and Farming Culture

Yulin area, the inheritance place of Hengshan old waist drum, is located at the edge of the intersection of nomadic culture and farming culture. The cultural interaction is very intense, and the collision between nomadic culture and farming culture is fierce. Hengshan is a transitional area between the Ordos grassland and the Loess Plateau. It was ruled by ethnic minorities and Han people successively in history, and different cultural forms left their marks here. There are many theories about the origin of “Hengshan old waist drum”, one of which is that “Hengshan old waist drum” was influenced by the Mongolian ritual of “ghost dance”. “Ghost dance” is a kind of ritual for ancient Mongolian shaman to expel evil spirits. The shaman beat the drum and danced wildly to expel evil spirits and diseases. There is also a saying that “Hengshan old waist drum” was introduced by the southern barbarians in ancient times, which is recorded in the Shaanxi volume of Collection of Chinese Folk Dance.

During the continuous interaction between nomadic culture and farming culture, nomadic culture is constantly being sinicized, and the excellent culture of ethnic minorities is also being absorbed and adopted. In the long historical process, the integration of nomadic culture and farming culture with Han farming civilization as the core has been realized. “Hengshan old waist drum” has formed its own unique performance form and cultural connotation under the influence of this blend of culture.

3. Manifestations of “Hengshan Old Waist Drum”

3.1 Small-Field Waist Drum

The small-field waist drum is performed by a drummer and a female role in the small venue, performing song and dance. This form of performance was popular in the 1930s and 1940s, and then gradually disappeared.

3.2 Four-Person Waist Drum

Four-person waist drum is a kind of emotional dance, which can be interspersed in the activity of “Yanmenzi” as a part of the performance of “Yanmenzi”, or performed alone. During the performance, four drummers stand in the front row, and four female roles stand behind the drummers correspondingly. They can move forward from the back, or they can play “waist drum”, “cross step” and “leg pulling and body turning” with the opposite fork. The female roles always take the zigzag shape with the basic cross step. The main formations are “braided garlic”, “single cross street” and “double cross street”. In the performance, it can be a group of two or four. During the performance, the integrity is emphasized, and the performance action is required to be neat and consistent, and the picture should be coordinated.

3.3 Old Waist Drum

The old waist drum can be divided into “Wen waist drum” and “Wu waist drum”. “Wen waist drum” is composed of the old and children, so it is also called “old people’s waist drum”. It generally consists of three old people and one child, which means to prolong life and rejuvenate. Its action noun is “Xiasanlu”, also known as “turn around”, “pull out the leg” and “wrap around the waist”. The performance gives people a sense of calm and humor, and has a unique charm. “Wu waist drum” is opposite to “Wen waist drum”, which is composed of strong young people, so it is also known as “Young waist drum”. The performance of “Wu waist drum” is “fast and continuous, crazy but not chaotic”, which is very real and powerful.

3.4 New Waist Drum

The new waist drum is a kind of large-scale collective performance form after the “new Yangko movement”. It is completely performed by drummers. The number of performers is not fixed, and it can be performed by dozens to hundreds of people.

4. Current Situation and Existing Problems of the Inheritance of “Hengshan Old Waist Drum”

4.1 Inheritance Status of Hengshan Old Waist Drum

After Hengshan old waist drum was listed in the intangible cultural heritage list, with the continuous expansion of the reputation of “Hengshan old waist drum”, all parts of the country have come to Hengshan County for investigation and visit, and invited the waist drum team to perform. The number of old waist drum performance teams in Hengshan County is increasing. There are not only traditional temple fair waist drum and Yangko team with belief, but also profitable waist drum performance team specially set up for going out to make money, waist drum training class for learning and training “Hengshan old waist drum”, waist drum performance company set up for the commercial value of “Hengshan old waist drum”, etc. In 2008, “Hengshan old waist drum” declared the intangible cultural heritage successfully, which brought new opportunities for the inheritance and protection of “Hengshan old waist drum”.

At present, “Hengshan old waist drum” is mainly inherited in the following three ways. The first is the family inheritance mode. “Hengshan old waist drum” mainly depends on father and brother, uncle and neighbor in the inheritance of family mode. The second is the inheritance mode of temple fair. Yulin area in Northern Shaanxi has been in awe of gods since ancient times. Almost every village has temple fairs. At the temple fairs, waist drum teams perform to offer sacrifice for gods and pray for good harvest and good weather in the coming year. The third kind is to go out for training and inheritance.

4.2 Problems in the Inheritance of “Hengshan Old Waist Drum”

4.2.1 Uneven Levels of Performers and Broken Inheritance of Stunts

The inheritors of “Hengshan old waist drum” are excellent talents who master the exquisite technology of “Hengshan old waist drum”, and they are the key to pass on the culture of “Hengshan old waist drum” from generation to generation. The most important thing to inherit and protect “Hengshan old waist drum” is to protect the inheritors. However, performance activities often can’t get a higher income. Many inheritors choose to engage in other industries to make a living, and can’t concentrate on the inheritance of Ansai waist drum. There are few young drummers who are willing to learn the skills of the old waist drum. Because they are busy making a living, they have no time and are not willing to learn complex traditional stunts, which leads to many faults of stunt inheritance, and many difficult movements are not mastered.

4.2.2 Low Degree of Popularity

Although the promotion of Hengshan old waist drum is a characteristic cultural heritage in Yulin area of Northern Shaanxi, which is well-known in the local area, it can be seen from the

investigation that few people really know about Hengshan old waist drum. Most of them just have a simple general understanding of the old waist drum. There are not many people who are good at playing Hengshan old waist drum, and most of them are middle-aged and old people. From the perspective of age structure, there is an aging trend. In other words, the popularity of Hengshan old waist drum is not enough. The main reasons are as follows. The people's thought in Yulin area of Northern Shaanxi is not advanced enough, and they don't pay enough attention to the old waist drum. Many people don't realize the cultural and economic value of Hengshan old waist drum. Moreover, the inheritance of Hengshan old waist drum is mainly based on the family model. If the parents can't play, there will be the danger of losing the skills in the generation. What's more, the old waist drum inheritance way is relatively old, lacking innovation, so that it is not conducive to the development and inheritance.

5. Inheritance and Development Measures of “Hengshan Old Waist Drum”

5.1 Establish a Stable Inheritance Team

As an intangible cultural heritage, Hengshan old waist drum has important cultural significance and profound cultural connotation, and the education in colleges and universities has a great responsibility for inheriting traditional folk culture. By sending college teachers to Hengshan County to study, and then teaching students in a unified way, it is not only conducive to the promotion of traditional folk sports culture, but also conducive to the reform of higher education physical education. Relying on colleges and universities to promote and inherit Hengshan old waist drum, and then using college physical education resources to carry out standardized transformation and development, is the best way to inherit and develop Hengshan old waist drum.

5.2 Strengthen Media Publicity and Promotion

We can promote the cultural characteristics of Hengshan old waist drum by strengthening media publicity. Here are some suggestions.

Firstly, we can use the Internet to promote Hengshan old waist drum on various media platforms, highlight the wonderful performance and unique cultural characteristics of Hengshan old waist drum.

Secondly, we can cooperate with various colleges and universities, organize regular visits to Hengshan County to collect folk songs or other manifestations of local culture, promote cooperation and exchanges, and it is also an important opportunity to promote Hengshan old waist drum.

Thirdly, we can publish articles describing the historical inheritance, cultural characteristics and wonderful performances of Hengshan old waist drum in newspapers and periodicals to publicize Hengshan old waist drum.

6. Conclusion

Hengshan old waist drum has a profound historical and cultural heritage, and has extremely distinctive artistic characteristics and style characteristics. However, from the perspective of inheritance and development, while vigorously adhering to the tradition, we must also keep pace with the times. According to the characteristics of the times, we must constantly enrich its connotation. It may no longer meet the needs of the public if we obey the rules. Therefore, in order to better inherit and carry forward this precious traditional culture, it is necessary to pay more attention and attention to the culture itself and the direction of cultural development.

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