

From Tradition to Modern: Study on the Evolution of the Culture Space of Daoqing Shadow Play in Huanxian County

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Abstract: Based on the theory of image and artistic conception, this paper analyzes the evolutionary mechanism of the culture space of Daoqing shadow play as well as its motive force by means of in-depth interview, observation and online text analysis. In the context of social transformation, the direction of reshaping intangible culture spaces should be the focus of attention, which has important guiding functions for understanding the coordinated and sustainable development of intangible culture space.

1. Introduction

The development of globalization and the evolution of human society from tradition to modern times have brought profound changes to intangible culture space. However, most scholars lack in-depth attention to the evolution of intangible culture space; the current research cannot properly solve emerging problems, which hinders researchers from exploring the essence of intangible culture space's evolution. Therefore, it is necessary to use new perspectives and new methods to build a more appropriate research thinking pattern and framework. In view of this, from the perspective of traditional Chinese image and artistic conception theory, and combined with the in-depth interview, participatory observation and online text analysis, this paper discusses the mechanism and motivation of the evolution of Huanxian Daoqing shadow puppet's culture space caused by social transformation, theoretically deepens the research on the evolution of non-material culture space caused by changes of the image and artistic conception, and puts forward suggestions on the coordinated and sustainable development of Daoqing shadow play in Huanxian County in practice.

2. Image, Artistic Conception and Culture Space

2.1 Image and Artistic Conception

Images, as unique “oriental symbols”^[1], are the implied figures of objective things generated by subjective consciousness. Artistic conception is another important category in China, which is formed by the combined action of images. The basic framework of the image and artistic conception theory consists of three core concepts and their relations, namely figures (Shixiang), images (Yixiang) and artistic conceptions (Yijing) of the “intention (or mind)”. The basic content can be expressed as follows. Artistic conception is formed by a series of images attached to certain thoughts and feelings through certain relations, while the image is formed by a series of historical and cultural relations “accumulated” in one's body and mind. Its form includes all kinds of physical and mental schemata of thought, emotion and meaning about figures of things. There is a relationship of “ontological match” between the objective figure in reality and the subjective image and artistic conception.

2.2 Culture Space

“Culture space” or “cultural place” is a proper term used by UNESCO in the protection of intangible cultural heritage, which refers to the forms and styles of representative human oral works and intangible heritage; it is a type of intangible cultural heritage with strong integrity and

inclusiveness.^[2] Space can be regarded as a network of geographical relationships among related factors, while culture can be regarded as a “special space” in the large space of society. Cultural evolution constructs a multiple space; space affects the cultural evolution. They interact as both cause and effect, and shape each other. Huanxian Daoqing shadow play runs through the unique “social relationship network”^[3] formed around the occurrence and development process, or be involved in the field with various unique relationship in cultural activities. They can be regarded as special “culture space”.

3. Research Methods

First of all, using the method of literature analysis, the author collects and analyzes relevant literature on the culture space of Daoqing shadow play, and grasps its development sequence as well as gains and losses. Secondly, through in-depth interviews and participatory observation, in-depth facts, complex details and first-hand information are obtained. Researchers have visited Huanxian County five times for investigation; the time span is from September 2015 to October 2019. We interviewed 16 managers and members of the troupe, 63 villagers and 40 audiences, and watched 16 performances. Interview materials with 32000 words are obtained. In addition, by using the method of network data analysis, this paper studies and analyzes information on Baidu news database which is led by the government and related to media, as well as data from Baidu Tieba which is dominated by the interests of the grassroots class. Until March 31, 2020, about 4180 pieces of relevant reports are found through Baidu search engine; 1007 pieces of relevant posts are found in Baidu Tieba.

4. Constructing the Culture Space of Huanxian Daoqing Shadow Play in the View of History

Daoqing shadow play in Huanxian county is one of the most complete, representative and successful shadow play in China. As an important part of Qinlong culture, it has gone through the formation period during Song and Yuan Dynasties, the mature and prosperous period from Ming and Qing Dynasties to the Republic of China, the fluctuated renaissance period since the second half of the 20th century, and the general investigation and protection period since the 21st century. It absorbed the nutrition of local culture and folk culture nearby, and thus formed a kind of “comprehensive folk art” with Daoqing singing as the melody, shadow play as the performance form, as well as folklore, historical story and local customs as the content.^[4] From the perspective of history, the culture space of Daoqing shadow puppet in Huanxian county belongs to the “endogenous and self-generating ontological space” between folk custom and religion. The internal space structures and forms are relatively simple. The space is local and original ecological; it has less flow. It is a self consistent “unitary local traditional structure”, and has the following four aspects of characteristics in image and artistic conception construction.

4.1 Localized and Sacred Actions and Activities

First of all, for local people, Daoqing shadow puppet play is not only a performance, but also a means of praying, worshiping, honoring and entertaining gods. It is a religious and artistic way to communicate with gods. For example, there are ritualistic and stylized shows that must be performed before the main show: the “blessing opera”, the “wishing opera” and the “Guoguan opera”. These operas pray for the realization of wishes, the extinction of disasters or redeeming a vow to the immortal. So far, there are more than 180 plays in Huanxian County, among which there are stories about rural legends, gods, Buddhas, ghosts and the hell. Typical shows include the *Puhong Ditch*, *Loyalty and Filial Piety*, *Sunflower Mirror*, *Quan Liu Offering the Melon*, *Visits the Hell* and *Double Jade Rings*. Secondly, many local “taboos” and “rules” can be found. For example, before the performance, each family should burn incense and kowtow in front of ancestors' memorial tablets, “inviting the ancestors to watch the play with them”. Before the character of God came on the stage, the incense should be burnt. When singing the God play, they need to “inviting the Lord” to supervise the play. The oil lamp could not burn out until the meal after play. On the

New Year's Eve, the troupe should worship the cases of props. All these create the solemn and sacred artistic conception. In addition, shadow play performance is closely related to local culture; its “prototypes” can be found in local customs. For example, there is a ceremony presided over by Yin and Yang in the local area, which is also called “Guoguan”. It is the same as the “Guoguan opera” in terms of clothing, props, as well as speech and behavior manners.

4.2 Folk and Functional Organizational System

In Huanxian County, the cultural places of Daoqing shadow play include temple fairs, ceremonies of worshiping ancestors and inviting gods, as well as funerals and weddings. The main stage is the temple fair. In Huanxian County, every village has a temple; every temple has the temple fair. With village temples as the center, many temple fairs have formed life circles in which the faith and folk customs blend with each other. This is the most extensive local culture space for Daoqing shadow play. Every year, local villagers take turn to manage village temples and organize temple fairs. The host of this year is called as the “president” or the “head of the fair”. Generally, there are many “presidents” to work together. The most important one is called as the “big president”; he coordinates the overall situation. Traditional theatrical troupes are connected by family and geography ties. Each troupe is usually composed of five to six people. Most of the artists are also farmers. Changchun Xie and Jing Family Troupe are the most famous artists and troupes in history. Now, there are still 47 shadow puppet troupes and more than 500 artists in Huanxian County, which composes the culture space of Daoqing shadow puppet play in the broad sense. Its culture space is mainly characterized by “highlighting the functions of belief and folk custom”, and has the spatial shape which is relatively easy to define. Based on the behavioral activities of shadow puppet artists, the interactive pattern with “private space, gray space and public space” is formed on the basis of “residence and workshops, warehouses and the village (streets), township roads and temple fairs, as well as theaters”. The points, lines, surfaces, networks and fields of culture space are established.

4.3 Religious and Harmonious Ideology

First of all, the patriarchal religion originated in ancient times and formed in Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties^[5] is the core of the cultural space of Huanxian Daoqing shadow play. The shadow play clearly and fully embodies the belief systems of patriarchal religion: with the worship of gods and ancestors as the core, with the worship of natural elements as important contents, and with the worship of other kinds of ghosts and immortals as supplementary.^[5] During the investigation, we can hear the stories of gods told by local people at any time. They believe that everything is in the charge of specific gods. There are still cultural relics for sacrificing to mountain gods, local guardian gods and ancestors. Secondly, Daoqing shadow play absorbed some elements from the tunes and melody features of Taoist music, and learned the images of gods and monsters from murals in Taoist temples. The time and space scenes of its performance are also closely related to Taoism. Traditional plays such as *Heavenly God Blessing*, *Jindou Kuixing*, *Priest Frock*, and *The King of Medicine* were full of Taoist thoughts. In addition, Huanxian Daoqing shadow puppet play also contains many Buddhist cultural factors. There are a large number of Buddhist stories; *Thousand-Eyed Bodhisattva*, *Avalokitesvara* and *Mu Lian* are typical Buddhist plays. Some play names contain words like “Tu” and “Juan”, showing the connection with Buddhism.^[6] These elements form the rich meaning of its cultural space and constitute the vivid background.

4.4 Humanistic and Moral Aesthetic Taste

Huanxian Daoqing shadow play has become an indispensable part of the basic life of local residents. Shadow play is not only a way of expressing folk custom and belief, but also relates to the protection and inheritance of people's traditional values and aesthetic feelings. In the shadow play of Daoqing, moral standards in the divine world and the human world are consistent; people can build the impartial and harmonious order in human world with the help of gods. But its main purpose is not to extol gods, but to affirm and praise the good deeds of common people. Through the play, people can feel and understand the multi-dimensional space composed of the sacred world

and the secular society. In the solemn ceremony of life, the shadow play protects the traditional belief that good and evil have their own rewards. The play can transcend time and space; it manifests people's perception of the traditional culture spirit and the real life. It can be seen that Huanxian Daoqing shadow play is a human culture system which is full of meaning and is guided by morality, natural bonds and ethical relationships. What fully expresses people's world view is the "unity between man and nature" and the "divine induction". The internal power lies in believes oft "praising virtue and punishing vice" and "tending to good and avoiding disaster". Therefore, if any behavior is consistent with people's pursuit of "well-being", it will get the support. These are the vitality and mass basis of its cultural space.

5. Modern Reconstruction of the Culture Space of Huanxian Daoqing Shadow Play

Since modern times, Daoqing shadow play in Huanxian County has been performed in Beijing for three times and won praise. From 1987 to 2018, it was invited to 19 countries including Italy, France and Germany for exchange performances for 17 times, and was known as the "magic art from the East". In 2006, Huanxian Daoqing shadow play was listed in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage. In any space, when the state changes, the space will be reconstructed. In response to the impact of modernization, the government and scholars have made some achievements in the protection and inheritance after decades of response and operation. The impact of modernization changes the original endogenous space of Huanxian Daoqing shadow play into the juxtaposing of endogenous space and "exogenous embedded construction space". The traditional cultural space has been transformed into a cultural space full of modern elements, and its functional attributes have also changed accordingly. Cultural space has become a social and cultural space that involves a wide range of aspects. It has a complex internal structure and is full of controversy. Through horizontal and vertical investigation and analysis, it can be summarized from the following three aspects.

5.1 Modernization of Figure Space

Figure space is the material support and utilization space of Huanxian Daoqing shadow play. With the development of the times, the figure space of shadow play is being redefined and constructed and becoming more and more modern. At the same time, there are a series of problems. "There are a lot of young people who are learning to carve, so we have enough successors in carving. But there are few people who want to learn perform, since performance cannot earn money."^[7] "Shadow puppet artists have low income. The funds for activities are difficult to raise. Troupes are unable to achieve their own development. Most performing teams do not complete 'tool kits'. The equipment is out-dated. They must make things done with whatever is available. The situation is really difficult."^[8] Compared with the traditional material space, the modern material space is characterized by industrialization, urbanization and informatization. The scope of shadow puppet artists' activities has gradually expanded, showing a progressive pattern of "local, regional, national and globalization", and thus tends to form the "exogenous embedded construction space" of "mass attribute". The spatial form is relatively difficult to be defined; the entertainment function becomes prominent. The culture space is constantly reshaped around the modern and post-modern trend. The spatial structure is becoming even more complex in multiple lines. It belongs to sub ecological, global and mobile space.

5.2 Complexity of Image Space

The image space of intangible culture does not only emphasize the spatial characteristics and the connection among images. It also focuses on the cultural and anthropological significance contained in it. In our investigation and analysis from the perspectives of life dimension, social class dimension and society dimension, it is found that in the increasingly complicated post-modern aesthetic era, image space is reshaped and becomes increasingly complex. First, the life dimension is the feature of the evolution of individual image space. It is found that local images gradually fade out; the space is replaced by modern and post modern global images. For example, "under the

impact of the diversified forms of entertainment such as film, television and video, there is a gap in audiences of Daoqing shadow puppet.”^[8] “Social and economic changes produce huge influence on traditional shadow plays. TV and movies are more common; young people seldom watch shadow puppets.”^[7] Second, the social class dimension is the stratum difference of image space reconstruction and its characteristics. It is found that the stratum differentiation is serious; the space is constantly fragmented and differentiated. For example, “middle-aged and elderly people still like it.”^[9] “There is no expert experience in the show.”^[10] The reaction of young people is more complicated. “The young people are not willing to engage in this art; their thoughts are unstable, and they are eager for quick success and instant benefits”.^[8] “Although I can't understand it, the performance has its charm”.^[11] “Now I can sit still and watch it. It's unique and interesting.”^[12] “I feel a lot about it.”^[13] Third, the social dimension is the comprehensive effect of the interaction between image space and social evolution. People have complex mentality, indicating that the degree of recognition is not greater than the degree of anxiety. For example, “the performers also have problems. The languages are casual, or even cater to the vulgar taste.”^[8] “Nowadays shadow puppet shows usually appear in temple fairs and some large-scale festivals.”^[14] “Temple fair performance is not as prosperous as before, but the temple has become the living space and carrier of traditional culture and art.”^[15]

5.3 Diversity of Artistic Conception Space

All artistic conception spaces have special space-time backgrounds, generation modes and structural characteristics. If the new background, new mode and new characteristics after modernization can not conform to the original atmosphere, mode and structure, the artistic conception space will change. Under the background of globalization, modernization, post-modernism and other trends produce huge impacts on the local and traditional artistic conceptions. The artistic conception space of Daoqing shadow play becomes more diversified and even more disordered. It can be seen from the following representative statement. “Troupe members are temporary; the performance effect is not good. (Some) troupes have little formal scripts; many good traditions have been lost.”^[8] “Only on the basis of inheritance can we take on innovation.”^[16] “Its identification of world intangible cultural heritage is not highlighted.”^[10]

6. Motivation Mechanism of the Evolution of the Culture Space of Huanxian Daoqing Shadow Play

First of all, the evolution of culture space is the result of the joint action of various forces in the space network. Under the mode of market orientation, the government and troupes, as the owners of power and resources, are the leading forces of the evolution of culture space and the main driving force which promotes the evolution of culture space. Secondly, the change and differentiation of local economy in the context of globalization is an important driving force. Globalization has a great impact on the local economy and its growth mode. With the rapid development of globalization, local economy experienced profound transformation and differentiation in its external relations and internal structure, which greatly impacts the culture space. In the same way, the new culture industry and post-modern culture industry are differentiated from modern culture industry, and become major social thrust for the change of the functional characteristics of spatial structure. In addition, cultural characteristics also promote spatial evolution. Culture has certain characteristics of self shaping, self breakthrough, self correction and self innovation, and it always tends to rely on its own vitality to adjust the environment, in order to survive and develop. The inheritance and integration processes determine the continuity and adaptability of culture. Culture can change its own characteristics and space because of its own changes or mutual exchanges.

7. Conclusion

Taking Daoqing shadow play in Huanxian County as an example, and under the guidance of the traditional Chinese theory on image and artistic conception, this paper introduces the concepts of

figures, images and artistic conception to analyze specific situations in the transformation of the culture space of Huanxian Daoqing shadow play from the “unitary and local traditional structure” dominated by “local attribute” to the “multiple and global modern structure” inclined to “public attribute”, and reveals the characteristics and dynamic mechanism of this evolution from the function oriented “endogenous ontological space” to the market-oriented “exogenous embedded construction space”. The culture space of Huanxian Daoqing shadow play is in a complex interactive pattern of from “local to global” and from “tradition to modern”. Under the guidance of the market, factors like the political power, the village, theaters and audiences produce impacts on the space reconstruction. In the face of the reality that the changes of the times lead to the continuous evolution of intangible culture space, the paper reveals the deep relationships and mechanisms in the reconstruction of the intangible culture space. This issue deserves the attention and long-term exploration of the academic community. The reconstruction of intangible culture space does not mean empty space. It is the adjustment of various structures and orders. The image and artistic conception theory should be a new theoretical framework, and the direction of space reconstruction should be the focus of research, which will provide important theoretical and practical guidance in understanding the evolution of intangible culture space as well as its coordination and sustainable development.

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