

Research on the Script of Huazhou "Tiaohuapeng"

Jiana Wang

School of music, Zhaoqing University, Zhaoqing 526061, China

Abstract

The Huazhou Folk Dance "Tiaohuapeng" in Guangdong is a national intangible cultural heritage. During the Cultural Revolution, all the masks, costumes, props, and written materials for the performances were destroyed. Only a hand-copied script was preserved. This script was copied in the early 1950s by the artists based on the script from the Qing Dynasty and is a precious historical relic. This article analyzes and studies the origin, the characteristics of the script itself, and its cultural value.

Keywords

Huazhou, "Tiaohuapeng", Script.

1. Origin and Preservation

The Tiaohuapeng originated from Changweigong and Juantangwei Villages of Zhonghuozhang Village Committee at the foot of Zhonghuozhang Mountain in Shiwan Sub-district Office, Huazhou City. Shiwan Sub-district Office is located about ten kilometers northwest of the urban area of Huazhou City, with an area of about 86 square kilometers under its jurisdiction and a population of about 56,000 people, including ten village committees. This area is a hilly region. There is the famous Zhonghuozhang Mountain in the west of its territory, and the Luo River flowing smoothly in the east. The Meishi Line Highway runs through the hinterland, providing convenient transportation. It has always been a bustling place with numerous merchants gathering here. Changweigong and Juantangwei Villages now have a population of several thousand people. There are more mountains and fewer fields here, and the villagers make a living by farming. The folk customs are simple and honest.

During the Cultural Revolution, the Tiaohuapeng was regarded as a feudal superstitious activity and was banned. All the masks, costumes, props, and written materials for the performances were destroyed. Yao Maotai[1], a villager from Changweigong and Juantangwei Villages in Shiwan Sub-district Office, Huazhou City, where the Tiaohuapeng dance originated, is a national inheritor of the Tiaohuapeng dance. During the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, he risked his life to preserve the hand-copied script of the Tiaohuapeng. After the reform and opening up, he played a crucial role in excavating, rescuing, and rehearsing the Tiaohuapeng dance and was a key figure in passing on this ancient Nuo dance, the Tiaohuapeng, which was on the verge of being lost. In the early 1950s, based on the script from the Qing Dynasty, Mr. Yao copied it by hand. Due to historical changes, the names of the country and some places were slightly altered during the copying process. Nowadays, Mr. Yao Maotai is quite old and his memory has become blurred. He only remembers that the script was always preserved by the late artist Yao Guanghua[2]. Since 1979, the Huazhou County Government has been excavating and protecting the Tiaohuapeng, a folk dance. In 1981, the script was handed over to the Huazhou Cultural Center for preservation. After an investigation of the script preserved in the Huazhou Cultural Center, it was found that the original script could no longer be located. The materials collected in the cultural center are just copies of the original script, and the script it publicizes and claims to have in its collection is also a copy of the original script. Now, based on the copy of this script, an analysis will be carried out.

According to the materials, the script of the Tiaohuapeng dance was deposited in 1981. The materials were sourced from Yao Guanghua in Changweigong and Juantangwei Villages of Dagang, Guanqiao. Judging from the cover and the inner pages, they are all hand-copied. The cover was rewritten by the Cultural Center for the purpose of collecting materials, which reads "Script of the Tiaohuapeng Dance, Deposited in 1981, Source of Materials: Yao Guanghua in Changweigong and Juantangwei Villages of Dagang, Guanqiao". Starting from the second page, there are copies of the script. The cover of the original script has the five handwritten characters "Script of the Tiaohuapeng" on a thirty-two-mo paper. It can be seen from the copies that the preservation condition of the original script is not quite good. There is a one-tenth defect in the upper left corner of the first page and the upper right corner of the second page. There is also a one-tenth defect in the upper left corner of the third page and the upper right corner of the fourth page. There is a one-tenth defect between the sixty-third page and the sixty-fourth page. Some parts of the Baxian Section are missing. The Chaipeng Section and the Dujiaoheshang Section have been lost [It is known from the Application Form for the Masterpieces of National Intangible Cultural Heritage that the application project category is the Tiaohuapeng of folk dance. The Tiaohuapeng dance has a total of eighteen sections (scenes), and the Chaipeng Section and the One-legged Monk Section are among these eighteen sections[3]. The handwriting in most parts of the materials of other sections is very blurred because they are hand-copied versions, have been around for a long time, and the preservation environment was not good.

2. Ontology Research

2.1. Structure and content

2.1.1. Structure

The script includes a total of eighteen sections (scenes), namely the Welcoming the Gods Section, the Seating the Gods Section, the Opening the Shed Door Section, the Children Section, the Taoist Uncle Section, the Scholar Section, the Young Men Singing Section, the Yikun Section, the Chenjiu Section, the Hoeing the Field Section, the Fishing Section, the Judge Section, the Supervising the Shed Section, the Sending off the Insects Section, the Measuring the Shed Section, the Eight Immortals Section, the Dismantling the Shed Section, and the One-legged Monk Section. During the performance of the Tiaohuapeng, the sacrificial rites are carried out in the order of these eighteen sections, in the form of dancing while chanting [Chanting: Taoist priests present the content in the form of humming and singing through the rhyme of level and oblique tones. This form of expression has the advantages of being catchy and highly emotional, and is mostly accompanied by suona, representing the etiquette and system of emperors in the ancient feudal era. This form of expression is the transformation of what has been passed down and accumulated over thousands of years, mixed with a mythical flavor[4] the content on the script. These eighteen sections are divided into three parts according to the singing form:

The first part (the opening part): The Welcoming the Gods Section, The Seating the Gods Section, The Opening the Shed Section.

The second part (the narrative part): The Children Section, The Taoist Uncle Section, The Scholar Section, The Young Men Singing Section, The Yikun Section, The Chenjiu Section, The Hoeing the Field Section, The Fishing Section, The Judge Section, The Supervising the Shed Section, The Sending off the Insects Section, The Measuring the Shed Section, The Eight Immortals Section.

The third part (the closing part): The Dismantling the Shed Section, The One-legged Monk Section.

The structure of each section and scene is shown in the Table1.

Table 1. Section Structure

Section	Part	sentence	Sentence Pattern	Performance form
Welcoming the Gods Section	One	20	Seven-character lines	chanting
Seating the Gods Section	One	20	Seven-character lines	chanting
Opening the Shed Door Section	One	1	Long sentence	Recitation
	Two	66	Seven-character lines	chanting
Children Section	One	20	Seven-character lines	chanting
Taoist Uncle Section	One	6+X[5]+24	Short sentence+Long sentence+Seven-character lines	Prelude+Recitation+chanting
	Two	1+18	Long sentence+Seven-character lines	Recitation+chanting
	Three	1+3+1+16	Long sentence+Seven-character lines+Long sentence+Seven-character lines	Prelude+chanting+Recitation+chanting
	Four	1+48	Long sentence+Seven-character lines	Prelude+chanting
	Five	1+72	Long sentence+Seven-character lines	Prelude+chanting
Scholar Section	One	16	Seven-character lines	chanting
	Two	1	Long sentence	Recitation
Young Men Singing Section	One	1+6	Long sentence+Seven-character lines	Recitation+chanting
Before Section	One	2+54	Long sentence+Seven-character lines	Recitation+chanting
	Two	1	Long sentence	Question and answer
Chenjiu Section	One	16+1+16	Seven-character lines+Long sentence+Seven-character lines	chanting+conversation+chanting
	Two	1++14	Long sentence+Seven-character lines	conversation+chanting
	Three	1++14	Long sentence+Seven-character lines	conversation+chanting
Hoeing the Field Section	One	1+1+1+4+1	Long sentence+Long sentence+Long sentence+Seven-character lines+Long sentence	Recitation+chanting+Recitation+chanting+Recitation
Fishing Section	One	4+1+12+1	Seven-character lines+Long sentence+Seven-character lines+Long sentence	chanting+Recitation+chanting+Recitation
Judge Section	One	19+11+14	Seven-character lines+Seven-character lines+Seven-character lines	chanting
Supervising the Shed Section	One	18+1+1	Seven-character lines+Long sentence+Long sentence	chanting+Recitation+Recitation
Sending off the Insects Section	One	12+1+18	Seven-character lines+Long sentence+Seven-character lines	chanting+Recitation+chanting
Sending off the Insects Section				
Eight Immortals Section			Missing	

2.1.2. Content

After the late rice harvest every year, specifically during the period from Minor Snow to Major Snow solar terms, the villagers of Changweigong and Juantangwei villages would ask the gods to select a performance day in the form of "Beijiao"[6] by Taoist priests. This day is what the village calls the "Art Appreciation Day"[7] for performing Tiaohuapeng. The village also regards this day as solemn as the local "Nianli" (annual celebration)[8]. A few days before the "Art Appreciation Day", highly respected veteran artists would select thirty to fifty men aged sixteen or above who are good at singing and dancing throughout the village for a "gathering" (rehearsal) that lasts for three days. The performance would start on the evening of the fourth day, which is the "Art Appreciation Day", and would go on throughout the night. The purpose of performing Tiaohuapeng is to celebrate the harvest after a bountiful harvest, drive away evil spirits and eliminate wickedness, pray for favorable weather in the coming year, and protect the villagers' families to be happy and healthy.

Usually, the villagers will build a huge platform for the flower shed dance in the place where the activity is held. In front of the shed are the spectators, and behind the spectators, a shed for the ancestral gods' seats is set up. During the process of the flower shed dance, it will be presided over by someone playing the role of a Taoist priest[9] (that is, the Taoist Uncle mentioned in the script). According to the order of the sections in the script, first of all, the Taoist priest will recite the lines of "Welcoming the Gods" in a chanting way. The villagers will beat drums and gongs and go to the temple to invite each god (there is more than one immortal enshrined in a temple) to the Supervising Shed in the gods' seat shed to watch the flower shed dance. During the process of inviting the gods, drums and gongs should be beaten, wine should be sprinkled in front of the gods, and paper money should be burned to inform the gods that they are being invited to the gods' seat shed. Then comes the Seating of the Gods. The gods will be seated on the lotus platforms in the gods' seat shed. The Taoist priest will recite the lines in a chanting way to inform the gods: "You are the immortals sincerely enshrined by our villagers. On this important day today, we have invited you to the mortal world. We offer you incense, oil, and paper money. Please bless our villagers in the future with no disasters, a prosperous population, good health, and wealth and prosperity."

When it comes to the scene of "Opening the Shed Door", the Taoist priest will do the recitation, describing the name of the place and the environment around the flower shed platform. When the little devils start to put on masks and dance with props in their hands, the Taoist priest will inform the gods about the location of this grand event. Meanwhile, he will also tell what has happened in the village during the year before the flower shed dance activity, such as what unlucky and unfilial things have occurred. Through this grand event of the flower shed dance today, all the bad luck should be eliminated. From today on, good luck will come knocking, and there will be no need to consult the oracle or have divinations anymore.

Next comes the Children Section. There are only four sentences in this section. The Taoist priest will chant and recite the lines. Then a child playing the role of the Children Section will come out. This is not an ordinary child. He/She is the spiritual child in the Tiaohuapeng dance, representing purity and innocence. After that, it will transition to the Taoist Uncle Section through this spiritual child.

The Taoist Uncle Section is the one with the most chanting in the whole Tiaohuapeng performance. The characteristic of this section is that the atmosphere is set off by the spoken parts first and then transitions to chanting, which is not seen in other sections. The Taoist Uncle first introduces the roles of the drummers in the Tiaohuapeng, the spectators, the terrain around the shed, as well as the living habits, appearance characteristics and costumes of the little devils. Then, the feelings of missing relatives far away are expressed by using allusions. Next, the weather in each month is described, and then historical allusions are introduced in

the form of riddles. These historical allusions include the love story of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, Meng Jiangnu's search for her husband thousands of miles away, Shi Chong's wealth and status, Mu Lian's rescue of his mother and other stories. These historical allusions have the educational significance of encouraging the world to be steadfast in loyalty, not overly pursuing wealth and status, and being filial to parents.

The Scholar Section wishes that there will be more virtuous and talented disciples emerging every year.

The Youngsters' Singing Section presents interesting things in life as well as the pursuit of love by young men and women. It is publicized in the form of dialogues using local sayings, which are catchy, witty and humorous, and quite close to real life.

The Chenjiu Section depicts ordinary people engaging in lawsuits, with the hope of eliminating evil and suppressing wickedness.

The Hoeing the Field Section and the Fishing Section showcase production activities and the prayer for peace.

The Judge Section reflects people's good wishes and the pursuit of a beautiful life.

The Sending off the Insects Section shows the elimination of insect pests to ensure a bountiful harvest.

2.2. Language and Rhyme

2.2.1. Language

In the script, the chanting and the spoken parts have obvious differences in their language characteristics. The lyrics often use the sentence pattern of seven characters, with well-organized sentences, rhyming at the end of the sentences, and frequently employing historical and literary allusions to enhance the persuasiveness of the script. For example, there is a lyric in the Taoist Uncle Section: "In the first month of the lunar year, by removing the character 'kou' from 'ke', it becomes 'ding'. Ding Lan used plants and trees as his mother, and Du Kang made wine and offered it to Liu Ling."

However, the spoken parts make more use of the catchphrases, common sayings, vulgar language of Huazhou local area, and the metaphors are rather exaggerated. But precisely because of this, it is close to the daily life of the local people. There are also spoken parts that expose the darkness of the local government at that time. For example, in the Chenjiu Section, there is a line: "Lang says: Fighting against the government, fighting against the government. Who would have thought that the government would beat me up until my butt was a mess." [10] In a line in the Taoist Uncle Section, "In spring, people in big houses raise duck hens", the term "duck hen" has a specific meaning. In standard Mandarin, ducks are not distinguished by gender and are all called ducks. However, in Huazhou local area, male ducks are called "duck gong" and female ducks are called "duck na" (female). In Fujian, where the predecessor of the Tiaohuapeng dance, the "Nuo" dance, originated, male ducks are called "duck gong" and female ducks are called "water duck hen". Such naming methods are also reflected in other regions. For example, in Sichuan dialect, male ducks are called "duck gong" and female ducks are called "duck po". In Gansu dialect, male ducks are called "male duck" and female ducks are called "female duck". In Zhejiang dialect, male ducks are called "male drake" and female ducks are called "female duck". The Hunan dialect is the same as that of Sichuan, also calling them "duck gong" and "duck po". In Fujian dialect, female ducks are called "water duck hen". This naming method has been passed down in this script, and the way of calling female ducks has not changed until now, which indicates that the Huazhou Tiaohuapeng dance has been inherited from the Fujian flower shed dance and has not changed with the passage of time and the change of regions.

The handwritten copy of the script records: "According to Yao Guanghua, an elderly person, the script was from the Qing Dynasty. This copy was made in the early 1950s, following the script of the Qing Dynasty. During the copying process, due to historical changes, the names of the country and places were altered." Based on this, it can be inferred that due to the hand-copying method, the limited educational level of the copyist, and the lack of proofreading and organization after copying, there are obvious phenomena of misspelled words, omitted words, and omitted sentences in the script. For example, in the third and seventh sentences of the Welcoming the Gods Section on page 1 of the script, the character (bao) in "The Spirit King of this realm sits in the splendid palace." should actually be (bao). In the tenth sentence of the Opening the Shed Door Section on page 7, the two characters "stroll" in "The descendants of Chen Ping were wandering around." should correctly be "wander" . The following is a compilation of all the misspelled words.

Table 2. Comparison of Incorrect and Correct Characters

Misspell	He	Paixi	Sa	Zhu	Lao	Liu	Fan	Shu	Pao	Shi	Chang	Zhang	Oi	Fengwa	la	Wu	Wu	Sheng	Ke	ia	Oiu	Oine	He	You	ke
Correct	Exactly	Wander	Liquor	Stay	Guv	Canton	Step	Occasion	Full	Worship	Child	Canopy	Ride	Phoenix	Altar	Mist	No	Hill	Rough	Drive	Beg	Please	Standing	Have	Lotus

The situations of omitted words and omitted sentences are as follows.

Table 3. Situations of Missing Words and Missing Sentences

Original text	Errors and omissions	Correct	Position
The ? of gongs and drums enter the temple together.	The character "sounds" is omitted.	The sounds of gongs and drums enter the temple together.	The fifth sentence on the first page.
The ? of Spirits in this realm is sitting on the altar.	The character "King" is omitted.	The King of Spirits in this realm is sitting on the altar.	The fifth sentence on the tenth page.
Dude, ? month is it?	The character "what" is omitted.	Dude, what month is it?	The third line on page thirty-six.
Please come to the front of the horn-blowing shed.	The sentence is incomplete.	Please come to the front of the horn-blowing shed. Please play the horn more to pay respects to the gods.	The eighth sentence on page seventy-eight.
An'xin	Reverse the order	Xin'an	At the end of the third sentence on page forty-five.
The three Spirit ? of the Stone Clan and Shi Gu embrace the wood.	The character "Kings" is omitted.	The three Spirit Kings of the Stone Clan and Shi Gu embrace the wood.	The fourth line on page seventy-nine.

2.2.2. Rhyme

The sentence pattern of seven characters is frequently used in the lyrics. The logical organization of the sentences is good, and they rhyme at the end of the sentences. For example, there is a lyric in the Welcoming the Gods Section.

Table 4. The Rhyme of the Lyrics in the "Jieshenke"

Verses	Rhyme	Rhyme
The sounds of gongs and drums enter the temple together.	tang	Jiangyang Rhyme
The king sits in the imperial court with a smile on his face.	tang	Jiangyang Rhyme
The Spirit King of this realm sits in the splendid hall.	dian	Yanqian Rhyme
The various household gods protect the people.	ding	Zhongdong Rhyme
Offer three cups of wine to invite the gods to mount their steeds.	bei	Huidui Rhyme
The paper money turns into ashes after being burned in the fire.	hui	Yiqi Rhyme
XX[11]The paper money goes up to the heavens.	qu	Gusu Rhyme
Send the gods back after the flower shed is completed.	hui	Yiqi Rhyme
XXXX Pour the wine again.	zhen	Renchen Rhyme
The paper money turns into gold after being burned in the fire.	jin	Renchen Rhyme
XX The paper money for the dead ascends to the heavens.	qu	Gusu Rhyme
Send the gods back after the flower shed event is successfully completed.	hui	Yiqi Rhyme
First invited, the great king will step out of his position.	wei	Huidui Rhyme
Second invited, the great king will set out on a journey.	xing	Zhongdong Rhyme
Third invited, Let the great king mount the horse together.	ma	Fahua Rhyme
The gods have inspected the fine flower shed.	peng	Zhongdong Rhyme

In this section of lyrics, the Jiangyang Rhyme (ang), Zhongdong Rhyme (ing, eng), Yanqian Rhyme (ian), Huidui Rhyme (ei), Gusu Rhyme (u), Yiqi Rhyme (i), Renchen Rhyme (en, in), and Fahua Rhyme (a) are used. The whole lyrics generally adopt the method of rhyming every other line, with the rhymes on the Jiangyang Rhyme, Zhongdong Rhyme, Huidui Rhyme, Yiqi Rhyme, and Renchen Rhyme.

In the "Opening the Shed Door" Section, when stating place names and personal names, there will be sentence patterns like "Old so-and-so" and "Incense-bearing Descendant so-and-so". This is because during the Shed Jumping performance, Taoist priests will randomly add these according to the names of the organizers and participants who are different for each year and each event. Since the personnel are not fixed, these are not written in the script but are

improvised by the Taoist priests when chanting the lyrics. Meanwhile, they will try their best to take into account the rhyming of place names and personal names.

2.3. Music and dance

2.3.1. Music

The Tiaohuapeng Dance is mainly accompanied by percussion instruments such as tang drums, medium cymbals, high-sided gongs, and high-pitched dings. Melodic instruments are seldom used, but occasionally suona horns, erhu fiddles, and qin qins are used to enhance the on-site atmosphere.

Score1: Nuo Sacrificial Score of the Seven Ghost Kids Rhythmic Patterns of Gongs and Drums

The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows rhythmic patterns for Percussion Instrument Notation, Chinese Drum, Medium Cymbals, and High Gong. The second system continues these patterns. The third system includes a vocal line with lyrics in English and a tempo marking 'Moderato'.

System 1:

- Percussion Instrument Notation: Cha Dong Cheng Cheng Dong Cha Dong Cheng Cha Dong Cheng Cheng Dong Cha Dong Cheng
- Chinese Drum: [Musical notation]
- Medium Cymbals: [Musical notation]
- High Gong: [Musical notation]

System 2:

- Percussion Instrument Notation: Cheng Cheng Cheng Cheng Cheng Cheng Cheng Cheng Cheng Cheng Cheng
- Chinese Drum: [Musical notation]
- Medium Cymbals: [Musical notation]
- High Gong: [Musical notation]

System 3:

Moderato

Boy has always been fickle in love. Sing all the way to Grandma's house from outside.
 Boy are born not to wear head-scarves. Never be flir-ta-tious or dissi--pa-----ted.

5

Come out and stand by with folded arms. Dressed in a flowery shirt, flower-like sha-----dow.
 The splendor of wealth and honor is eye-catching. The red flowers and the message convey my feelings-to you.

Score1 is a melody excerpted from the county annals. It is selected from the drum and gong beats and the "Ghost Kids Tune" during the Nuo Ritual (Dance) of the Seven Ghost Kids in the "Dao Shu Section". The main accompanying instruments include the erhu fiddle, the qin qin, the suona horn, the tang drum, the medium cymbal, and the high-sided gong. The melody of this "Ghost Kids Tune" is in the four-note national mode of G Gong (lacking Zhi), with a 2/4 time signature. Each sentence consists of 4 measures and is composed of two musical phrases, with a different beginning but the same ending, belonging to a typical square and single-tonality musical passage. The whole melody makes extensive use of the rhythm pattern of small dotted notes before and after, and well combines the relatively concentrated small dotted notes and small syncopated rhythms of "Drum and Gong Beat One". The melody of the "Ghost Kids Tune" cooperates with the drum and gong beats, with a powerful rhythm and clear distinction between strong and weak beats, embodying the simple, vigorous, and generous musical characteristics of the Tiaohuapeng Dance.

2.3.2. ance

According to the Huazhou County Annals, most of the people in Huazhou are immigrants from Fujian. The Tiaohuapeng Dance was introduced along with the migration of immigrants in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties and has been passed down from generation to generation in Huazhou ever since, and it has now taken root in Changweigong Village. The "Nuo" in Fujian originated from the sacrificial rituals of totem worship in primitive society, characterized by wearing wooden masks. First there was the Nuo dance, and then the Nuo opera, which has been passed down to this day. When the villagers in Changweigong Village perform the Shed Jumping, they still retain the flavor of "Nuo". During the dancing process, the dancers wear masks of thirty-six different characters carved from camphor wood, integrating masks, operas, singing and dancing, and chanting into one performance.

When each character appears in the script, there will be corresponding mask prompts, such as "child", "Dao Shu" and so on. The characters will wear the props prompted by the script and hold props to perform the Shed Jumping. There are not many dance props mentioned in the script, and they are all tools for daily farm work, such as "sand knife", "pa head", "golden spear", "hook knife", "moon axe". These are used as props in the Tiaohuapeng Dance, showing the importance of labor tools in the farming society and also having the meaning of celebrating a bountiful harvest. Such a dance is rough and vigorous, reflecting the simple beauty of the working people.

In the "Opening the Shed Door" Section, there is a description of dance movements: "Zou Mazong around the four sides of the mountain and in the carts". Zou Mazong is essentially the horse gait. The horse gait is the basic kung fu of many martial arts schools, mainly for practicing leg strength and internal strength. When performing the Tiaohuapeng Dance, the dancers' horse gait is the foundation of the dance. They walk in the horse gait to harvest, to swing the hoe, to wield the axe... It can be seen that in the farming society, using the strength of the lower body in the labor process became the support for completing the whole labor process. Therefore, the basic and crucial movement of the Tiaohuapeng Dance is the horse gait.

Dancing with masks on the head and props in the hands all shows that the Tiaohuapeng Dance possesses the ancient and simple characteristics of the Nuo Dance.

3. Script Cultural

3.1. Farming culture

The unique cultural characteristics of the farming society are embodied in the script, which are manifested in the following four aspects.

Male superiority and female inferiority. In the "Opening the Shed Door" Section, there are lyrics like "All thirty young gentlemen have danced", reflecting that all the dancers are men and no women are allowed to participate. Even if female roles are needed, they will be played by men in reverse roles, because women were regarded as unlucky in the sacrificial activities in the feudal society. A line of lyrics "If the mistress is good, so should the servant be" reflects that in the feudal farming era, like servants, mistresses had a low social status and the feudal idea of gender inequality was deeply rooted.

Living off the land. The lyrics in the script read: "Good fields, good land, good grains, and many and good poultry are raised." Indeed, in the farming society, only with good fields can good grains be grown. With good grains, people can have a better life. Only by raising a large number of good poultry can they be taken to the market to exchange for other daily necessities and lead a better material life. This fully embodies the characteristic of people in the farming society living off the land and being self-sufficient.

Sacrificing to the gods. Since ancient times, good fortune, longevity, wealth, and nobility have been the eternal expectations of the common people. In the farming society, the common people pinned their hopes of adding good fortune, longevity, wealth, and nobility on the blessings of the gods. They believed that only by sincerely worshiping the Buddha and devoting themselves to making offerings would the gods bestow more good fortune, longevity, wealth, and nobility upon them. Therefore, there are many lyrics about adding good fortune, longevity, wealth, and nobility in the script.

3.2. Western Guangdong Culture

It is repeatedly mentioned in the script that the Tiaohuapeng Dance is of equal significance to the local Nianli Festival. The Nianli Festival is a grand festival held annually during the Spring Festival period in the rural areas of Huazhou, Gaozhou, Maonan, and Wuchuan in Western Guangdong. The time of the Nianli Festival varies from village to village, usually concentrated in the first lunar month after the Spring Festival. According to the elders, the time for each village to hold the Nianli Festival is determined by the Taoist priests in the local temple through the form of "throwing divination blocks" to ask for the will of the gods enshrined in the temple. The traditional Nianli Festival mainly involves worshiping gods, paying respects to ancestors, sacrificing to the god of the land and the god of grains, praying for favorable weather for the crops and peace and prosperity of the country. Essentially, it is a sacrificial activity. Initially, the Nianli Festival was held to commemorate Lady Xian. Lady Xian was a highly influential figure in the local area. She made outstanding contributions to maintaining national unity and ethnic harmony and was praised by Premier Zhou Enlai as "the first Chinese heroine". Among the statues of gods used in the "Parading of Gods" during the Nianli Festival, there is a statue of Lady Xian, which shows her lofty status in the hearts of the local people, as lofty as a god. In the hearts of the local people, the annual Nianli Festival is a very important day, even more important than the Spring Festival. Some families with limited financial means often use their children's tuition fees to hold the Nianli Festival. Families that do not hold the Nianli Festival will lose face in the local area, because the Nianli Festival is like reporting the income status of family members in the previous year to the whole village, relatives, and friends.

3.3. Deities Culture

The people of Huazhou believe that the gods possess supreme power. They can drive away all kinds of diseases, subdue demons and monsters, protect people's health, and attract good fortune. When facing natural disasters, man-made calamities, things beyond their capabilities, and inexplicable events, people all hope to seek the help of the gods through prayer. This is also where people place their hopes for fulfilling their good wishes. Therefore, the worship of the gods has never changed from ancient times to the present, and the activities of celebrating and praying to the gods have been preserved. These are the customs and habits passed down for

thousands of years and have been deeply engraved in the hearts of the people and are hard to erase. There are many ancestral halls and temples in each village where the gods and ancestors are enshrined, and the incense is burning vigorously, which illustrates the important position of the gods in people's hearts. The grand Tiaohuapeng Dance is held every year. In the script, there are sections about welcoming the gods, parading the gods, seating the gods, and sending off the gods. These are the communication activities between people and the gods. At that time, people carried the Bodhisattvas in the temples out on eight-man carried sedans, parading through the streets and alleys for people to worship, gather, and pray, hoping that the gods would avert disasters and unlucky things and bless the coming year with favorable weather for the crops and a bountiful harvest. Such activities are an embodiment of the culture of the gods, a spiritual sustenance that people seek, and also a way of expressing their longing for a better life.

4. Conclusion

As a national intangible cultural heritage, the script of Huazhou's folk dance "Jumping Flower Shed" was hand-copied and preserved by Yao Maotai, a national inheritor, at the risk of being persecuted during the chaotic period of the "Cultural Revolution". During the process of hand-copying, there were some mistakes and omissions in the text as well as some reversed sentences, but these do not affect its performance. The content of the script reflects the beautiful meanings of celebrating the harvest, driving away evil spirits and eliminating evils, praying for favorable weather in the coming year, and blessing the villagers with happy and healthy families. It also shows the Nuo culture in the farming era and the characteristics of the unique annual festival in western Guangdong.

Comments

[1] Yao Maotai (1926 -) is male and from Juantangwei Village, Guanqiao, Huazhou City. He started participating in the activities of Tiaohuapeng Dance when he was over ten years old and is one of the main performers of the "Seven Ghost Kids". With rich performing experience and skillful and natural movements, he won the Actor Award in the Folk Art Festival of Zhanjiang Region in 1952. In the work of collecting and sorting out the Tiaohuapeng Dance, despite being old and suffering from various illnesses and giving up a high-income job, he actively provided materials, demonstrated and taught, making important contributions to inheriting the traditional art of Tiaohuapeng Dance.

[2] Yao Guanghua (1927 - 1989) was male and from Juantangwei Village, Guanqiao, Huazhou City. He was the actor with the highest education level (secondary school) among those who participated in the Tiaohuapeng Dance performances at that time. He had a loud voice and was highly skilled in singing, playing an active role in inspiring the emotions of the dancers and enhancing the atmosphere of the scene. In 1981, he voluntarily donated the only remaining hand-copied songbook of the Tiaohuapeng Dance to the local cultural department, making outstanding contributions to the collation and preservation of traditional ethnic art festivals.

[3] Application Form for the Masterpieces of National Intangible Cultural Heritage. Regarding the declared project category: Folk Dance - Tiaohuapeng Dance, it is learned that there are a total of eighteen sections (scenes) in the Tiaohuapeng Dance, among which are the "Dismantling the Shed Section" and the "One-legged Monk Section".

[4] Chanting: Taoist priests present the content in the form of humming and singing by rhyming the level and oblique tones. This form of expression has the advantages of being catchy and highly emotional. It is mostly accompanied by the suona horn and represents the etiquette system of emperors in the ancient feudal era. This form of expression is the transformation of

what has been passed down and accumulated over thousands of years, mixed with a touch of mythological color.

[5] "X" refers to the sentences that the person chanting the script improvises and adds according to the actual situation.

[6] The "Divination Blocks" is a kind of prop used by the local people to inquire about the will of the gods when inviting and returning thanks to the gods. It is made by splitting a section of bamboo joint into two halves. After the person who invites the gods finishes stating the request, they toss the "Divination Blocks" upwards. If one side shows yin and the other yang, or both sides show yin, it means that the gods do not agree to the request. Then the person who invites the gods will continue to make the request until two yangs are shown, which indicates that the gods have agreed to the request.

[7] It is an important day in the local area and also the performance day of the Tiaohuapeng Dance. On that day, the whole village kills chickens and pigs, cooks glutinous rice, and makes glutinous rice cakes.

[8] The Nianli Festival is a grand festival held during the Spring Festival period in the rural areas of Huazhou, Gaozhou, Maonan, and Wuchuan.

[9] Taoist priests play a very important role in the temple fair sacrifices in Western Guangdong. They serve as a bridge of communication between people and the enshrined gods. Taoist priests are also called "Dao Shu", and in the Huazhou area, they are known as "Dao Gong Lao". When performing the Tiaohuapeng Dance, Taoist priests take on multiple roles. When inviting and welcoming the gods from the temple, they play the role of "Jie Shen Lao" (the one who welcomes the gods). When conducting sacrifices, they play the role of "Dao Gong Lao". In large-scale sacrificial activities, there are multiple Taoist priests. In small-scale sacrificial activities, one Taoist priest may play multiple roles.

[10] Going to court, going to court. Who would have known that the authorities would spank my buttocks black and blue.

[11] The script has been preserved for too long, and the preservation methods were improper. As a result, some of the handwriting is blurred and unrecognizable.

References

- [1] (Qing)Yang Fen ; (Qing)Lin Yuye :The Old Gazetteers Series of Prefectures and Counties in Western Guangdong: Huazhou Gazetteer of the Qianlong Reign(Jinan University Publications, China 2023), p.79-83.
- [2] Compilation Committee of Local Chronicles of Maoming City:Maoming City Chronicles (Volume Two) (SDX Joint Publishing Company, China 1997),p.1712-1727.
- [3] Wanyi He:Research on the Values of Traditional Chinese Culture(Jilin Publishing Group Co., Ltd.,China 2024),p.83-110.