

Research on the Development Status and Development Path of Shaanxi Shadow Play

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Abstract: *Shadow play is one of the oldest dramas in China, with a long history and wide spread. Nowadays, this ancient art is faced with various difficulties. In order to better inherit the Shaanxi shadow play culture, this ancient traditional art can play its application value in the new era, let more people understand the shadow play culture, inherit the skills of folk artists, and carry forward the excellent folk art culture. We also sorted out the current development status of Shaanxi shadow play, and put forward some solutions and development paths, such as expanding the audience range, increasing the employees, and updating the shadow play plays. These are all methods and measures that we can use. When we inherit the intangible cultural heritage, we should also take its essence and discard its dross. At the same time, bringing forth the new is also an essential means to continue a culture. In the modern society, we should constantly think about this difficult problem, find a modern way to inherit the intangible cultural heritage, and continue this ancient folk art.*

Keywords: *Shaanxi Shadow Play, Non-Genetic Inheritance, Cultural Development*

1. Historical Status and Cultural Value of Shaanxi Shadow Play

1.1 The History of Shadow Puppets in Shaanxi Province

As a part of Chinese traditional culture, Shaanxi shadow play has a profound historical status and cultural value. In the traditional sense, the development of shadow play art in China has experienced three parts. The first stage is the primitive witchcraft culture from the Qin, Han, Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, and finally from the Sui and Tang Dynasties; the second stage is the religious culture from the Tang Dynasty; the third stage is from the late Tang and early Song dynasties, the folk culture [1]. In the process of continuous development, Shaanxi shadow play also reflects the public's aesthetic consciousness and the living conditions of the people. In history, Shaanxi shadow play was also regarded as one of the performances of royal banquets. The details of all aspects show its important position in the field of culture and entertainment.

1.2 Development of Shadow Play in Shaanxi Province

Shaanxi shadow puppetry carries rich traditional cultural elements, including traditional stories, historical legends and folklore. As a unique form, Shaanxi shadow play has its own unique artistic expression [2]. The handmade shadow play, combined with music, performance and other elements, inherit and carry forward the ancient Chinese culture, form its own unique artistic style, and enrich the folk cultural life. Shadow play is also rooted in the people and is closely related to the lives of ordinary people. It reflects the lives, beliefs and emotions of ordinary people (Figure 1). It is an art form popular among the people, showing us the appearance of life. Its plays usually use the ancient literary works, showing the charm of the ancient literature, which helps to preserve and inherit the ancient literary works, so that they can be activated in the performance. As a part of Chinese traditional culture, it reflects the characteristics and national culture of Shaanxi province through the performance, and plays a certain role in carrying forward and strengthening the national identity.

In general, Shaanxi shadow play has an important historical status and cultural value in Chinese traditional culture with its unique artistic expression and profound cultural connotation. Through inheritance and development, this traditional art form can continue to play its important role in the contemporary society.



Figure 1: Part of the scene decoration of a shadow puppet show

2. The Inheritance Status and Challenges of Shadow Play in Shaanxi Province

With the diversification of modernization and entertainment forms, the impact and confusion of social transformation and foreign culture, the folk activities based on traditional culture gradually decline, and the people's aesthetic concept has changed significantly. The art of shadow play cannot change its form in time in this wave, which has been affected to a certain extent. The rise of new media forms also makes the audience have more entertainment. The artistic interest in the traditional form of shadow puppetry has decreased, resulting in fewer performances by some shadow puppetry clubs and unstable economic income. The number of people watching shadow puppetry has also decreased over time, and the intangible heritage of shadow puppetry has been correspondingly affected.

As the older generation of shadow puppets gradually launch the stage, the new generation of young people lack love and learning for this art, and the folk soil on which shadow puppets depend for survival has changed. According to statistics, there are generally about 8 members of shadow play troupes in Shaanxi, and only 15 members have the largest number in Weinan, and only a few non-genetic inheritors. However, the average age is 60 or 70 years old and some people may have no successor, which exposes the problems in the face of shadow play art in the current society.

2.1 Mass Production of Shadow Puppets, With a Small Audience Range

Most of the traditional shadow play handicrafts are made by hand, which is high cost and difficult to make. However, the images of the shadow play works are very delicate, which can better show the character of a character through the appearance and make the character vivid. However, with the progress and development of science and technology, there is also mass production of shadow puppets by machine production in the market. This phenomenon greatly damages the artistic image of shadow puppets, and the effect is far less than the handmade shadow puppets made before. The audience range of shadow play is mainly the elderly. Although its performance is simple in melody, the lines in the script are difficult to understand. Many young people will not understand or understand the true meaning of it. Over time, they will feel that it is a very boring skill and will no longer watch it. The small audience range makes the development of shadow play art in the plot relatively slow, which affects the promotion and popularization of shadow play.

2.2 Employees are Old and Few

Since the 1990s, shadow play has gradually cooled down, and the influence of the generation caused by improper protection has gradually emerged. It is difficult for the young generation to change careers or become talents, and it is also a common phenomenon for the young generation to go out to work. In the 1980s and 1990s, shadow puppets were popular in various places. There were many troupes in the region, many different clubs in each county and city, and a large number of performers. Now, in the whole Weinan region, there are no more than 15 shadow play clubs, and the number of participants is no more than 150. This problem has not been effectively solved, and the crisis facing the shadow play industry will become more and more severe in the future.

2.3 The Script Is Being Lost, and the Play Lacks Renewal

Shadow play performance requires very high skills, and most of the scripts required by traditional shadow play performance rely on word of mouth by old artists and are carried out by hand. With the death of old artists, many scripts have been lost. With the change of lifestyle, young people's interests are more inclined to modern forms of entertainment, and they have lost interest in the scripts of shadow puppetry. Young people's innovation of shadow play lacks relatively professional scriptwriters. Most of the shadow puppets on the existing market pay attention to short plays and entertainment, greatly reducing the touching lyrical elements, and the original functions of shadow puppets are gradually disappearing. For this traditional art, it is also faced with the problem of lack of funds, and its related inheritance and training activities are also limited, so the script inheritance is more difficult to sustain.

3. The Application and Development Trend of Shaanxi Shadow Play in the Contemporary Society

As an important part of Chinese traditional opera art, Shaanxi shadow play has a wide application and development trend in the contemporary society. It has important cultural value and is a treasure of traditional culture. While constantly adapting to the contemporary needs and development trend, it has some new applications and development directions [3].

The first is the cultural inheritance and protection. Shaanxi shadow play as part of Chinese traditional culture, continue to play the role of cultural inheritance and protection in contemporary society, efforts to retain and inheriting the traditional skills, drama and story, combined with modern technology constantly explore innovation form, to enhance the audience's viewing experience, to ensure that the precious cultural heritage.

The second is to use shadow play to do some cultural and creative industries. By combining shadow play with other cultural elements and creative products, it will promote the development of related industries and create economic value. Shaanxi shadow play should be included in the educational curriculum to cultivate the new generation of interest in traditional culture, convey positive energy and values to them, guide them to establish a correct outlook on life and values, make shadow play a part of cultural tourism, and attract tourists to promote the development of local culture and economy.

Finally, organize shadow play performances, workshops and other activities in the community (Figure 2). This can increase the community residents of traditional culture participation and identity, promote the prosperity of community culture, in the process of these activities using the Internet and digital media platform to the wider masses, online video, social media and other channels also makes the traditional art form get wider attention [4].

In general, the development trend of Shaanxi shadow play in the contemporary society is to better integrate the tradition into the contemporary cultural life through innovation, integration and adaptation, and give full play to its multiple roles in the cultural, economic and social aspects.



Figure 2: The bronze figures in shadow puppetry

4. Effective Measures and Development Paths of Inheriting Shaanxi Shadow Play

The shadow play industry is a long-term and complex process, which is difficult to work in a short

time, so it can be seen that it is also very difficult and costly to cultivate a inheritor of shadow play. There are three main problems in the inheritance of shadow play. Moreover, due to the impact, the opportunities of shadow play troupe to perform outside are reduced, and the attraction of the industry is relatively low. However, there is no other reliable income channel, and the economic income is low and unstable. After shadow play became an intangible cultural heritage, inheritance was faced with the problem that the class club had no spare money and the apprentices had no source of income. Therefore, these are the problems we need to solve.

4.1 Ensure the Production Personnel of Shadow Play Works, and Expand the Audience Scope of Shadow Play Works

Shadow puppets are difficult and complex to make. We can provide training and technical support for the art inheritors, and provide professional knowledge to improve the skills of the producers, including the traditional shadow puppets skills and modern production tools and techniques (Figure 3). By ensuring that the production staff gets reasonable salary and benefits, they can invest more time and energy into the creation, and they can also provide them with a good creation environment and necessary equipment for the production staff to work efficiently. Nowadays, it is also an era of rapid development of multimedia. Using the Internet and social media platforms for advertising and promotion can increase the popularity of shadow play, and some online platforms can also become an effective means to display their works and interact with the audience. The participation of art inheritors in local cultural festivals has promoted shadow play to a wider audience, helping to enhance its status in the cultural field. The cooperation of art inheritors with schools and community organizations to carry out shadow play workshops and performance education activities is also an important way to solve this problem. The diversified and creative content of shadow play can meet the needs of different audiences to increase young people's interest in the traditional art.



Figure 3: Part of the shadow puppet show

4.2 Attract the Cultural Inheritors of Shadow Play and Increase the Number of Employees

The aging of shadow play practitioners and the lack of recruitment of young employees is a challenge that needs to be addressed specifically. First of all, we can start with education and training programs, including cooperation with schools, skills training, etc., to introduce the shadow play culture and skills to young people, and provide them with systematic shadow play skills training programs, including the use of traditional skills and modern production tools, so that they can have an in-depth understanding of shadow play. Activities related to shadow play in the community can encourage the older generation of artists to teach their skills to young learners, which can also attract young people to participate and enhance their cognition and interest in traditional art. This cross-generation inheritance is an important way to protect traditional culture. Art inheritors use digital means to showcase shadow play and develop novel forms of shadow play to enhance their income and social status. The government provides financial support, incentives or cultural policies to protect and promote traditional arts. More people understand the traditional culture of shadow play and stimulate their interest, which helps attract and cultivate a new generation of practitioners.

4.3 Protect and Inherit the Script, and Update the Shadow Play Play

We can use modern technology, such as audio recording, video recording and digital archives, to preserve traditional shadow play scripts to prevent them from losing [5]. At the same time, we can support and carry out relevant cultural inheritance projects, encourage the older generation of artists to

inherit the scripts to young learners, and establish formal inheritance channels. Use education and training programs related to school and community organizations, and organize related performances, exhibitions and discussion activities to enhance the awareness and interest in the culture of shadow play, and teach the scripts and skills to the younger generation. The government can promote the inheritance and development of shadow play culture by providing funds and resources through cultural policy support. Young people should protect the heritage of the script, but can also participate in the creation of new stories and the interest of the audience. Young people can integrate different cultural elements, music and dance into the play, and use digital technology and projection technology to integrate modern image effects into shadow play to improve visual impact. Young people collaborate with other art forms and cultural fields to draw new ideas and inspiration, cultivate some innovators, reflect contemporary values, and promote innovation in shadow play [6]. When updating the shadow play repertoire, we also need to pay attention to maintaining the respect for the tradition, so that the shadow play can be better inherited and developed in the contemporary culture.

Through comprehensive utilization of these measures, it can help solve the personnel who guarantee the production of shadow play works, expand the audience scope of shadow play, solve the problems of aging personnel, lack of employees and the loss of shadow play scripts, and protect and inherit this important traditional culture and art.

5. Summary

As an important part of Chinese traditional culture, shadow play has a long history and profound cultural connotation. Its non-genetic inheritance is not only the inheritance of an art form, but also the inheritance of the Chinese traditional values, story and folk art tradition. Shadow play culture is a highly skilled art, in the process of inheritance need mentoring or family inheritance, through the way of oral heart, make skills can be preserved and development, but it faces some challenges in the process of inheritance, including the difficulty of the skill inheritance, market demand and the impact of emerging forms of entertainment, how to protect and inheritance shadow play, is a need to study. In addition, its inheritance not only needs the inheritance of technology, but also needs the recognition and promotion of the society, which requires us to constantly publicize and expand our popularity, and also needs us to constantly bring forth the new and find a better and more appropriate way to inherit our shadow play culture.

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