The Production and Developing Trace of the Xingnuo Parade on the Lantern Festival in Putian—Take Nanpu Village in Putian as an Example

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Abstract. The Xingnuo parade in Putian city is a folk activity among many performances during the traditional Lantern Festival. It plays an important role in terms of creating strong, diverse and interesting festival atmosphere, and brings great inspiration to people. With the development of the society, people's ideas have been changing, along with the improvement of the cultural level. At the same time, the Xingnuo parade activities have been changing too. Taking the Nanpu village in Putian as an example, this article introduces the production and developing trace of the Xingnuo parade on the Lantern Festival in Putian, to show the influence of traditional culture on the formation of the Xingnuo parade and display the unique value of traditional culture in modern economic activities.

1. Introduction

The 15th day of the first month of the lunar calendar is the Lantern Festival in China, but in Putian, Fujian, the Lantern Festival starts from the 1st till the 29th of the first lunar month. It lasts for nearly a month and is called the "Longest Lantern Festival in China" [1]. The Xingnuo parade in Nanpu Village, Putian during the Lantern Festival is a kind of folk activity that connects one or several neighborhood natural villages in the form of sacrificial ceremonies and folk performances, and involves many people. In more than 20 days of the Xingnuo parade, together with the parade team, gongs, firecrackers exploded everywhere permeated with festive holiday, showing a strong local atmosphere.

1.1 The Xingnuo Parade in Nanpu Village

Nanpu Village is located in the eastern coastal area of Hanjiang District, Putian City, Fujian Province, with a thousand years of cultural heritage. The folkway here is unsophisticated, and inherits the farming culture from generation to generation. The most attractive part of the Lantern Festival in Nanpu Village is Xingnuo parade, which is the climax of the festival. The major activity of Xingnuo parade is to bring the statues of gods in the temple out, and to tour around the village. The basic purpose of Xingnuo parade is to pray for peace and ask for blesses.

Figure 1. Typical Scene of the Xingnuo Parade. Figure 2. The Folk Art Team.
Nanpu Village’s Xingnuo parade starts at about 9 am on the first day of the Lantern Festival. The oldest person in the village would set off firecrackers first, as a sign of the departure of the Xingnuo team. The statue of “Zhanggong” sit on the dragon car, as the leading god of other eight gods sitting in the sedan chairs carried by more than 30 men (Fig.1). The folk art team follows after the gods and beat the drums all the way (Fig.2). When the gods are stationed in the ancestral hall or the temple of the village, a ceremony of welcoming the gods will be held. On a certain day after three or four days, the Xingnuo team starts the procession again. The nine gods are going to circle the middle burner table in front of the temple when people return to the temple. People who around the temple would burn incense and set off fireworks. Towards the end of the ceremony, the performers will tread on charcoal fires, and the people who named "Tong Shen" would carry the sedan chairs passing the red charcoal fires on barefoot. At about nine o’clock at night, the program "Tong Shen striking sparks" will be implemented. The liveliest time at night is when everyone drinks, fireworks, gongs and drums sound together, pushing the Lantern Festival to a climax. During the Lantern Festival, Xingnuo team is like a dragon, running through the whole process of the celebration of Putian Lantern Festival. Wherever they go, it is very lively and full of people.

1.2 The Status and Role of the Xingnuo Parade

The Xingnuo parade shows a variety of art such as folk art and dance, as well as multi-cultural characteristics integrating historical culture, modern culture and folk culture, and is an indispensable existence in the Lantern Festival. During the Xingnuo parade, there are thrilling programs, such as climbing ladders made of knives without shoes, treading on charcoal fires etc. These are the classic performances of the Lantern Festival in Putian, which make people feel shocked by the courage of the performers in their performances. This is undoubtedly an effective medicine for curing the current social impetuosity, and could have imperceptible effect on the younger generation in terms of hero worship. At the same time, people’s mind could be restrained and shaped by the Xingnuo parade, thus to promote the integration, cohesion and regulation of the society. The Xingnuo parade is well connected with the community and people’s daily life. It is conducive to unity, promoting loyalty and eliminating evil spirits. Therefore, it plays a positive role in promoting the stability and development of society and strengthening of the cohesiveness of villages and even nations and countries.

1.3 The Origin of the Xingnuo Parade

The origin of the Xingnuo parade is related to Marshal Huang from the southern Song Dynasty. The name of Marshal Huang is Huang Kongying, a great marshal of the Southern Song Dynasty. After Huang was defeated by the Yuan soldiers in the capital, he led the thirty-six battalions to the South with the emperor. As he resisted the enemies with the army behind the emperor and others, he lost contact with them. Afterwards, when he heard the news of the death of the emperor, he was filled with grief and indignation, and committed suicide by jumping into the well in the Hugong Mountain. The soldiers of the thirty-six battalions witnessed the death of the marshal for the country. They settled down incognito in the Hugong Mountain, and gradually formed the famous thirty-six townships in Putian. Therefore, the famous Xingnuo parade of Mingshan palace started parade among the thirty-six townships. Later, as the route was too long, it was turned into a parade in the upper eighteen townships near the Mingshan palace. Every year, three civil official statues and three military statues will be carried out, followed by the guard of honor, the bunting team and the umbrella team. When the gods enter the ancestral hall of each village or the temple community, there will be an opening ceremony of Marshal Huang, as well as a training ceremony of the general and the armed forces and horses. The parade team could last a few miles long, and the grand occasion was very unprecedented and spectacular.

In essence, the parade is a form of expression of people’s belief. Therefore, the production of Xingnuo parade is inseparable from people’s belief since ancient times. At the very beginning, people feared nature in the face of ruthless natural disasters and treated nature as a mysterious existence, and formed the worship to nature simultaneously. Later, people began to use certain species (such as certain plants or animals) as their protectors. They believed that the protectors
could protect them. With the advancement of human consciousness, people began to show worship to the gods from both heaven and earth. They believed that the gods could play divine power and protect them, and they also yearned for divine power. Afterwards, according to their own imagination, people turned the gods into certain appearances. Moreover, people believed that the gods should have their own sanctuary [2]. The Xingnuo parade is a form of faith that has been produced in the process of the awe and worship of the gods in the past. People pray for a harvest in the next year by holding Xingnuo parade.

2. The Developing Trace of the Xingnuo Parade

Everything changes in a certain degree in the process of social development. With the progress and development of the society, people’s ideological concepts have changed, and the Xingnuo parade has also undergone some changes different from the initial ones.

2.1 The Developing Trace of the Performance Content of the Xingnuo Parade

In the previous Xingnuo parade, the “Tong Shen” had a certain superstitious color. The activity of the “Tong Shen” playing iron ball is a performance that uses an iron balls to hit his back, which is full of local wildness. As the advancement of the society, the performance in the Xingnuo parade has been updating, highlighting the innovation in the inheritance of folk culture. In accordance with the characteristics and requirements of modern society, the folk dances such as the Zaoli dance and the Chuanluo dance, which have valuable connotations, the performance such as climbing ladder of knives without shoes and “Tong Shen striking sparks” are all supplemented, and their social influence and appealing effect are strengthened.

During the development of Xingnuo culture, the related crafts of the parade have also changed. In the past Lantern Festival night parade, there were many kinds of good-looking rolling lights and fire dragons everywhere. However, nowadays young people are less interested in the production of various handicrafts, resulting in the limited number of people who can make these handicrafts such as rolling lights and fire dragons. It leads to a decline in the variety and quantity of crafts on the Lantern Festival.

2.2 The Developing Trace of the Xingnuo Parade’s Function

In Putian, people respect the gods. When people see their statues, they will join hands and kowtow. In the past, people feared and admired the gods, and they expressed their respect for the gods by holding Xingnuo parade. At the same time, the Xingnuo parade had another purpose that was to remove evil spirits in the past. In the current Xingnuo parade, the content of exorcism has gradually weakened, and entertainment has become more and more colorful. The activities of the Xingnuo parade are more to relax their feelings, to bring the restless mood back to calm, to celebrate the harvest, and to reward themselves for hard working. In the lively atmosphere of the Xingnuo parade where everyone is involved, it promotes the happiness of a family, the peacefulness of a village, and the harmonious relationship between people and people, as well as between people and nature [3].

2.3 The Developing Trace of the Xingnuo Parade’s Participants

In the long-term feudal society of our country, the phenomenon of male superiority and female subordination existed everywhere in China in the past. Therefore, in the past Xingnuo parade, most of the participants were male, and men took on most of the performance during the parade. However, after the establishment of new China, the Chinese government advocated gender equality, so it broke through the traditional boundaries [4]. Therefore, a large number of women’s performances appeared in the modern Xingnuo parade, which changed the old customs that only male performers involved (Fig.3). Coupled with the unparalleled enthusiasm of women, it has become an irresistible historical trend. This trend has not only increased the continuously fresh blood of Lantern Festival activities, but also reflected the universal characteristics of the Lantern Festival and the principle of “universal participation and universal enjoyment”. Therefore, as the
status of women continues to increase, the gender structure of people involved in the Xingnuo parade has been undergoing a subversive transformation.

Figure 3. Female Performers in the Modern Xingnuo Parade.

3. Conclusion

As a folk activity, the Xingnuo parade brings people a more colorful form of performance, showing people's awe and worship for the gods, and people's good expectations for future life. In the trend of history, with the advancement of the society, the change of people's idea and the improvement of civilization level, the Xingnuo parade on the Lantern Festival has been changing, developing, innovating, and gradually becoming a non-negligible existence in traditional festivals.

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References


