



Art under the North Wind and the Scorching Sun: Analysis of the Aesthetic Elements of Heilongjiang Yangge

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Abstract. With the changes of the times, the traditional art form of Northeast Yangge has shown its unique charm in various activities such as square dance and festivals. From an aesthetic perspective, this article explores the reasons for the continuous prosperity of Northeast Yangge in various activities, and whether it is artistically ornamental. This article aims to have a deeper understanding of the reasons for the long-lasting development of Northeast paddy songs through the investigation of geographical differences, vitality and inheritance development of different dance steps and styles, visual and auditory experiences. Over the years, the Northeast Yangge has taken root and sprouted on the Northeast Icefield, bringing infinite joy to people's lives and deeply loved by local residents. I hope more people can experience the unique beauty of Northeast Yangge. As a comprehensive art form, the Northeast Paddy Song has taken root, sprouted and blossomed in the northeast. To some extent, the Northeast Yangge reflects the common characteristics and attitude towards life of the local people. Despite the parallel development of various art forms, Northeast Yangge has been renewed for a long time with its unique charm and distinctive style, which has important aesthetic value.

Keywords: Northeast Yangge; Origin and Development; Characteristic Style; Inheritance

1 Introduction

Northeast Rice-planting Song, as a traditional folk art form, has long been a cultural hallmark of the Northeastern region of China. Combining elements of dance, music, and theatre, it reflects the vitality and resilience of the people living in this cold and harsh environment. Over time, this art form has evolved to adapt to modern contexts such as festivals and square dances, continuing to charm audiences with its distinct aesthetic qualities. This paper aims to explore the reasons behind its sustained popularity, examining its unique stylistic characteristics, aesthetic value, and challenges in inheritance and modernization. "Traditional folk art forms such as Northeast Yangge serve as both cultural and social mirrors, reflecting the community's identity and val-

ues.”[1] By doing so, it seeks to offer insights into the cultural significance of Northeast Rice-planting Song in contemporary society. “As the most representative folk art form in Northeast China, the development of Northeast Yangge is inseparable from the unique geographical and cultural background of Northeast China.”[2]

2 Overview of Northeast Yangge

Northeast Yangge is a comprehensive art form integrating dance, acrobatics and drama. It has a variety of performance styles and displays a variety of art forms. The Northeast Yangge evolved on the basis of absorbing the essence of various songs, dances, operas and acrobatics in various places. It has gradually formed the Northeast Yangge influenced by the folk culture of the Northeast and the Central Plains, and has become a popular fitness activity for middle-aged and elderly people. However, with the collision of multiculturalism in modern society, Northeast Yangge has gradually faded out of the mainstream stage.

3 Characteristics of Northeast Yangge

3.1 The "Big" of the Northeast Yangge

In the cultural process of thousands of years, Northeasters seem to have a deep connection with the word "big". They are hot-tempered, unrestrained, rough and generous, and pay attention to drinking big bowls and eating meat. In the long and harsh winter, people like to gather together and eat a pot of stew, which is characterized by "big iron pots, big spoons, big mouthfuls of wine, big mouthfuls of meat". Therefore, the Northeast Great Paddy Song also inherits this feature and is known as the "Big" Paddy Song, which can fully reflect the personality characteristics of Northeast people. "Big" not only refers to their preference for the word "big", but also because of the large scale of the performance. These characters need to move and even jump, which requires a certain amount of space. If the performance venue is too small, the Yangge team cannot move freely. The instruments used by the band include drums, cymbals and horns. Although the volume of these instruments is small, they make a very loud sound, which can also be called "big".

3.2 The "Role" of the Northeast Yangge

The role of characters in Northeast Paddy Song is very important. Although it seems that people only wave a fan in their left hand and hold a handkerchief in their right hand, in fact, there is a division of roles in dance. “In many traditional folk performances, role-based narratives allow for complex expressions of social hierarchy and communal values, as seen in performances like Northeast Yangge.”[3] Each dance team has an excellent "old man" in the big paddy song in Jixi, Heilongjiang. "Lao Yu" is the name of the old wife in the Northeast. The old actors in the Yangge team are usually male actors in women's clothes. They can freely shuttle between dance teams,

not limited by the formation, and play with the characters of stupid pillars or princes. There are two types of old people, Wen Lao people and Wu Lao people, which are distinguished according to the props they carry. Wen Laoyu held a cigarette bag and a folding fan, and Wu Laoyu held a wooden hammer. This shows that Wen Laoqi's character is humorous, while Wu Laoqi's character is strong and aggressive.

The traditional drama performance "fan grabbing" is a small form of drama popular in Helen County, Heilongjiang Province and other areas. The main description of the story is the dramatic effect caused by a pair of young men and women to compete for a good viewing place in the performance of the festival paddy song, so fan grabbing is called "place grabbing". In the fan grabbing, the upper dress and the lower dress should be very cooperative. The upper dress is dominated. The lower dress should be the center of the upper dress, which means that the eyes of the lower dress should look at the upper dress, and the movement should be facing up and walk around the upper dress.

The dance form of "double fan" is popular in Suihua, Heilongjiang Province, China. It evolved from the traditional "two-person" fan dance and absorbed the skills of other dances. Double fan dance is mainly used to express the joy and celebration during the harvest and festival. Performers use various techniques, such as "turning the fan" and "flipping the wrist" to manipulate the fan.

"Running donkeys" has different characteristics in various parts of Heilongjiang Province, but the style of running donkeys is generally a humorous and interesting style. "Donkey riders should not only show the gentleness and shyness of a girl, but also vividly perform a good-willed and stubborn donkey. The donkey runners are simple, loyal, optimistic and witty, and have the characteristics of eye-catching and clumsy."

3.3 The "Band" of the Northeast Yangge

Each large paddy singing team has its own accompanying band, usually located on one side of the team. "Music in traditional folk dances often plays a central role in setting the rhythm and mood, integrating seamlessly with the dancers' movements." [4]

The band is mainly composed of percussion instruments, depending on the size of the dance team. Generally speaking, the band consists of two drums, two cymbals, gongs and three or four drums. The sound effect is unique, the rhythm is bright and uniform, and it is integrated with the dance steps of the paddy singing team. In the "walking through the field" and "walking through the street", two people beat the drums while walking.

3.4 The "Dance" of the Northeast Yangge

The dance characteristics of the Northeast Great Yangge are "exaggerated" facial expression and body movements, which is a major feature that distinguishes the Northeast Great Yangge from other dance elements. "Exaggerated movements in folk dance not only serve aesthetic purposes but also communicate emotional intensity and

storytelling, a key feature in many global folk traditions.” [5]Northeast Dayange pays attention to the facial expression close to squeezing eyebrows and eyes. In the dance steps, the body is often slightly bent by stepping on the drum beat. The left foot and the right foot alternately move back and forth, and the head should also shake with the rhythm. In the old dance, the exaggerated style of squeezing eyebrows and eye-catching is vividly reflected. The action of cross-twisting cloth is to go to the right and half-squat. The cheek is leaning to the left, plus the funny expression of throwing charming eyes. In the cross-swing step, the head is forward and the neck and eyes are turned up. The dance action of grabbing the fan is that the female character is in the front and the male character is in the left back. The ugly corner is the male character in a semi-squat state and holds the fan with his left hand. The Dan corner is the female character who squats in the front and grabs the fan with one hand to do the action of grabbing the fan. It is characterized by "funny", "chanting", "gen", "pretty" and "wave". Funny refers to the humorous and enthusiastic performance skills of the bottom. Mei refers to the form of upper dress, which is usually handsome and diverse. The soft, hard and trembling lower limbs are bent and stretched into "gan", and the rhythm of the upper body twisting, swinging and rounding becomes "pretty", and waves are the aesthetic style of Northeast Yangge. Most of the props used in the performance of Northeast Dayange are fans, handkerwels, and colorful belts around the waist of male characters. In terms of gait, the dance characteristics of Northeast Yangge are different from other dances, which is manifested as the characteristics of moving forward but actually retreating, and actually moving forward.

3.5 The "Origin" of the Northeast Great Yangge

Some scholars believe that the Northeast Yangge originated from the shaman. The Tongus people in the northeast believe in shamanism, and shamanism has no specific system. Shaman jumping gods are carried out when curing diseases, teaching new shamans, and sacrificing gods. “Shamanistic roots in dance are a common feature across various cultures, where ritualistic movements evolve into more structured performance traditions, as seen in Northeast Yangge.”[6]

Its musical form and clothing are similar to those of Northeast Great Yangge and Duojuan. For example, dressing up is to be enchanting, enchanting and extraordinary. Paddy songs and shaman dances both emphasize the beauty of "waves", and there are also similarities in accompanying instruments. For example, shaman dance often uses thand drums, golden bells, gongs, etc., and beats while dancing.

4 Aesthetic Characteristics of Northeast Yangge

4.1 The Boldness of the Color Matching of the Northeast Yangge

The color selection of Northeast Da Yangge often shows boldness, with red and green as the main colors of clothing and headdresses, and big pink blush on the cheeks. Although these colors are in sharp contrast, their use in the Northeast Yangge seems to be particularly harmonious, which may be due to regional connections. In the

northeast region, red seems to represent people's enthusiastic character, while green symbolizes the revival of life after a long winter. Both of these colors effectively show the unique style of Northeast culture, making the combination of red and green a perfect match for the Northeast Yangge. "The color matching of Northeast Yangge usually adopts bright red and green. This bold color contrast is the artistic embodiment of the lavish character of the Northeast people." [7]

4.2 The Sense of Beauty and Ugliness of the Northeast Yangge

The traditional dance "Big Yangge" in Northeast China presents a non-traditional beauty, which is characterized by the use of bold and exaggerated facial expressions and makeup, such as bright pink blush and red lipstick. Although it has the characteristics of "ugliness", when combined with twisting, twitching and swinging dance movements, it creates a unique and harmonious beauty. The performers waved colorful fans and handkerchiefs, and wore colorful belts around their waists to show the dynamic movement of their bodies in crossed steps. This fusion of beauty and ugliness creates a unique sense of harmony of Dayang Song.

4.3 Another form of Northeast Yangge

In the northeast, the most famous local feature is the two-person turn, and the two-person turn is the development and change of the form of big paddy song. In terms of form, it is more like a small-scale big paddy song performance. The performers are usually a man and a woman, and the male plays the ugly role of the female actor. The form of the two-person performance is similar to the military drama, and the content is mainly funny. A sentence often said by two-person actors, "Two-person transformation is a comprehensive art", not only has the content of comedy, but also uses the handker silk fan in the big paddy song as a prop to perform local ethnic minor tunes, such as "The Great West Chamber", "The Return to the Cup", "Splashing Water in Front of the Horse", "The Empress Dowager" and so on. In the northeast region, there is a popular saying called "I'd rather give up a meal than two people to turn around". It can be seen that the two-person turn is rooted in Northeast folk culture. In terms of the band, the accompanying instruments include gongs, gongs, cymbals, cymbals, drums, etc., followed by ethnic instruments such as erhu, pipa, flute, flute, as well as Western instruments such as cello and double bass, as electronic piano and other electroacoustic instruments. On the other hand, this also proves that the two people keep pace with the times and are open, inclusive and absorbent. The continuous integration of these instruments also proves that the two are constantly catering to and adapting to the aesthetic requirements of contemporary audiences.

5 Conclusions

The Northeast Great Paddy Song is the product of combining various arts over the years. It is also the crystallization of the wisdom of the people in the northeast. "The challenge of preserving folk traditions like Northeast Yangge in modern times is a global issue, as these art forms face pressures from urbanization and changing cultural dynamics." [8]

It is a manifestation of the hot, bold, righteous and hospitable people in the Northeast. In the performance of the Northeast Yangge, we can see that the people of the Northeast have the courage to express themselves, are full of an optimistic and positive attitude towards life, and the spiritual character of striving for strength. In this black land, although the cold of winter can freeze everything, it cannot seal the hot hearts of the people in the northeast. Nowadays, people's entertainment activities are getting richer and richer, and there are some fitness entertainment activities such as square dance and ghost step dance. With the emergence of various entertainment methods, there is a trend of gradually withdrawing from the public's vision of the Northeast Big Paddy Song and Two-person Turn, and there is also a current situation that Big Paddy Field Song and Two-person Turn are not inherited. How to innovate and develop on the basis of retaining the original characteristics so that young people can also inherit it willingly is a topic we need to consider.

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