

The Characteristics of the Cultural Space of Junzhuang Yangge

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Abstract:

This study examines the cultural space of Junzhuang Yangge by delineating its three primary dimensions: material, social, and spiritual. The material space is characterized by its enduring stability, evidenced by the persistent presence and stable development of natural, performance, and residential spaces within the original context. In terms of social space, Junzhuang Yangge occupies a canal space that embodies openness, integration, and interactivity, fostering a dynamic cultural milieu. The spiritual dimension is sustained through adherence to the Fire God belief system underpinning Junzhuang Yangge, alongside the enduring ethos of mutual respect, love, and concession, a reflection of millennia-old Chinese village life.

Keywords: Henan Canal; Junzhuang Yangge; Cultural Space

1.Introduction

Junzhuang Yangge originated in the village Junzhuang of Daokou near the Henan Canal. Junzhuang was built along the canal and was a dock of the Henan Canal. The Henan Canal is an important part of the world heritage of China's Grand Canal. The river, the city, the ancient town, the cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage have built up the Henan Canal cultural space. Junzhuang Yangge is a product of the exchange and integration of the Henan Canal cultural space. As a water transportation mode, the canal provides material conditions for the cultural interaction along the route. On the other hand, the canal cultural space is an open and integrated cultural space, forming inter-regional interaction of cultures along the route. Junzhuang is a microcosm of the Henan Canal cultural space, and Junzhuang Yangge is a form of Yangge performance introduced from Tianjin due to the canal. In recent years, some scholars, such as Tian Qian (2014), Zhao Shufeng (2021), Ye Di (2021), Hu Xiaodong (2022), etc., have begun to focus on the artistic study of linear cultural space.

At present, there are more study results in the form of "case study", and there are fewer linear cultural study results that are multifaceted, integrated, dynamic and multi-point. The study of linear cultural space is a new transformation of the perspective of art study (Zhao Shufeng, 2021, p. 94). What kind of study results will be presented by combining the fusion of Junzhuang Yangge cultural space with the concept of linear cultural space? In this study, the study question presented from this perspective is that what influences of linear cultural space on Junzhuang Yangge are. And what are the characteristics of the cultural space of Junzhuang Yangge? Therefore, three research objectives are shown as follows.

- (1) To explore the material space characteristics of the Junzhuang Yangge.
- (2) To explore the social space characteristics of Junzhuang Yangge.
- (3) To explore the spiritual space characteristics of Junzhuang Yangge.

In this study, the textual analysis method, interview method and case study method were used to collect relevant study data. The textual analysis method was to summarize and conclude the theory of spatial tripartite dialectics, the theory and study trend of linear cultural space. The semi-structured interview method was used to interview Guo Shuxiang, who is the organizer, manager and performer in the long-term development of Junzhuang Yangge, and who is recognized and protected by the state as the inheritor of the dance. The interview was conducted on December 21, 2022, using a one-on-one telephone interview. The research content were Junzhuang Yangge's origin, generation, inheritance and development, which were based on the content of the cultural space of Junzhuang Yangge. Then the systematic analysis of case study of Junzhuang Yangge was conducted to support the argument in this study.

In this study, three aspects of literature were collected. The first one is the theoretical study of the spatial triadic dialectic involved in this study, the second is the study related to linear cultural space and the third is the study related to Junzhuang Yangge. The cultural space originated from social theory's emphasis on and reshaping of space issues. French scholar Henri Lefebvre (1974) first introduced the concept of "cultural space" in his work *The Production of Space*. The space theory of Lefebvre corrected the deficiency of traditional philosophy that divided space into material and spiritual dualism, and complemented social space by proposing the triadic dialectic of the material space, the spiritual space and the social space (Sun Quansheng, 2015, p. 6). He believed that natural space supported the social space. And the social space originated from the natural space, reflected the natural space and its operation mechanism, and was the result of continuous transformation of the natural space forms by human beings. On the one hand, Lefebvre recognized the natural space. On the other hand, space is no longer a dichotomy in the traditional sense, and space itself carries historicity, culture and production, so we should pay more attention to the influence of the social space and the cultural space on the human development.

This study addresses a significant gap in the scholarly exploration of cultural spaces, particularly focusing on Lichao Liu and Phakamas Jirajarupat (2023) within the context of the Henan

Canal. Despite recent scholarly attention to the concept of linear cultural spaces, there remains a dearth of referable results regarding this specific phenomenon. Scholars such as Yang Mingli et al, (2022) have begun to shed light on the interconnectedness and dynamics of cultural exchange within linear cultural spaces, emphasizing the fluidity and relational nature of traditional music and dance cultures along transportation lines and geographical corridors. Notably, while scholars like Qifei, Yang and Sayam Chuangprakhon (2022) has investigated ethnic dance interactions in the Yangtze River basin, research specifically on Lichao Liu and Phakamas Jirajarupat (2023) remains scant. Xiang Yunju (2009) examination of the survival status, artistic characteristics, and cultural value of Lichao Liu and Phakamas Jirajarupat (2023) stands as a lone reference.

Building upon this foundation and guided by the triadic dialectic theory of space proposed by Levers, this study adopts a comprehensive approach to analyze the cultural space of Lichao Liu and Phakamas Jirajarupat (2023). By subdividing cultural space into material, social, and spiritual dimensions, this research seeks to illuminate the nuanced characteristics of this cultural phenomenon within the broader context of the Henan Canal. Through a spatial stratification study, this research aims to uncover the intricacies of Lichao Liu and Phakamas Jirajarupat (2023) survival, evolution, and development within the dynamic landscape of the Henan Canal cultural space. By examining the specific features of material stability, social openness, and spiritual sustenance, this study endeavors to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on linear cultural spaces and their implications for regional cultural exchange and multicultural interaction.

In summary, this study employs a multidimensional approach to analyze Lichao Liu and Phakamas Jirajarupat (2023) within the framework of the Henan Canal cultural space, drawing upon theoretical perspectives and case studies from the emerging field of linear cultural space research to elucidate the complexities of this cultural phenomenon.

2.The Stability of the Material Space

2.1 The stable natural space

Junzhuang Yangge originated in the village Junzhuang of the ancient town Daokou along the Henan Canal. Junzhuang village was built along the river and was a dock along the Henan Canal (Cui Lanjun, 2016, p6). The canal channel to which Junzhuang village belonged was mainly the natural river of Weihe River, and the opening of the Henan Canal took advantage of the natural river channel. Although the Henan Canal went through the Sui and Tang dynasties (AD 581-907), the Northern Song dynasty (AD 960-1127) and the Ming and Qing dynasties (AD 1368-1911), the canal navigation in Junzhuang never declined. As an important transportation channel connecting Henan with Beijing and Tianjin areas (Beijing and Tianjin), the canal was busy with shipping tasks until after the 1970s, when its transportation function was interrupted by the depletion of water sources and the rapid rise of rail and road transportation. In terms of the production and development of the Junzhuang Yangge, the Junzhuang Yangge has no significant geographical changes. The village Junzhuang develops along the

Henan Canal. The stable natural space is the most important factor of intangible cultural heritage, which has laid the material foundation for the formation and development of Junzhuang Yangge.



Figure 1 The image comes from Baidu satellite map and is edited by Liu Lichao on January 15, 2023

2.2 The stable performance space

Guo Wenxiang, the inheritor of Junzhuang Yangge, stated that Junzhuang Yangge has a fixed performance time and performance area. The performance time of Junzhuang Yangge is during the Chinese Spring Festival, and the performance area is the Fire God Temple or the streets of Junzhuang Village. In the early stage of the formation of Junzhuang Yangge, the performance area was in the ritual activities of the Fire God Temple on January 29 every year, which commemorates the Fire God of Hexi and prays for a good harvest and good weather in the coming year.

The Fire God Fair in Daokou lasts from January 26 to January 30, a total of 5 days. The ritual activities of Fire God Fair in Daokou are a combination of folk dance performance and Fire God beliefs, and the activity name of Fire God Fair is named after the content of the performance, such as the Big Lion of Fire God Fair is the lion dance performance, and the Junzhuang Yangge of Fire God Fair is the performance of the Yangge dance. According to the different content of the performance, it is divided into Wenhui and Wuhui. Wenhui refers to the soft and beautiful dance performance content and Wuhui refers to the increase in the dance performance of martial arts.

The ritual activities of the Fire God Fair in Daokou are shown as follows.

| Ritual procedures | Specific items |
|--|--|
| 1. Build a God shed | The performance area of the show is arranged with the statue of Fire God as the base. |
| 2. Inviting the God | Inviting the gods. The leader of the performance team goes to invite the gods to show respect. |
| 3. Sacrificing to the God | Making offerings and worship the Fire God. |
| 4. Sending invitations | The surrounding villages are invited to participate in the Fire God Fair. |
| 5. Performance in front of the Fire God shed | At this time, Junzhuang Yangge is performed here. |
| 6. Street performance | Junzhuang Yangge will participate in the performance of street patrol according to the street patrol line. The route is not the same every year, but the performance is very powerful and spectacular. |
| 7. Holding a banquet | Organizing the participants to attend the banquet. |
| 8. Sending God | The ceremony of sending the God is to thank the Fire God and pray for a year of peace and abundant crops. |

After the 1980s, in addition to the annual fixed performance at the Fire God Fair, Junzhuang Yangge was also performed at the folklore performance convention held within the village of Junzhuang and at Daokou during the Spring Festival. There are also some irregular performance activities in the performance space. During the Spring Festival, if they accept the neighboring villages' invitation letter, they will also go there. The other party sets up a smoking tea table, burns colored lanterns and sets off firecrackers to welcome them (Chinese Folk Dance Integration Editorial Department, 1998, p60). Irregular performance activities are more random, such as the folklore performance competition held in Daokou, whose activities are not fixed, and the performance location is also not fixed.

2.3 The stable living space for inheritors

In terms of the nationally recognized inheritors of Junzhuang Yangge, the inheritors of Junzhuang Yangge still live in Junzhuang, maintaining the tradition passed down from generation to generation within the village. In terms of the performers of Junzhuang Yangge, the performers are from Junzhuang. The living space of the inheritors and performers has not changed and is more

stable. The rehearsal site is in the village of Junzhuang, and the stable living space is the basis for the long-term inheritance of Junzhuang Yangge. The disappearance of the living space or the disappearance of the inheritors will have an incalculable impact on Junzhuang Yangge. For example, in the study of "Duan Gong" by Wang Haitao and Li Jia Ni (2019, p59), it was found that the construction of the Three Gorges Water Conservancy Project in China destroyed the original cultural ecology of "Jumping Duan Gong" and forced the performers and inheritors to move away from their original living space. Therefore, it is necessary to rebuild a new cultural ecology for the dance so as it can be developed.

The development of Junzhuang Yangge has not broken through the original material space. The stable material space is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, stability brings the retention of the original performance content and performance space. On the other hand, stability represents the failure to use the cyberspace of modern society to enhance the development of Junzhuang Yangge, or the failure to form cultural industries, tourism industries and economic values. Liu Qingyi (2020, p8-22) investigated traditional dance in southern Xinjiang of China, and concluded that the modes of protection of traditional dance include the public space for folk dance in traditional villages and natural sites, the public space for educational dance in campuses and venues and the public space for viewing performances in theaters and performing arts areas. Combined with Junzhuang Yangge, the path of protection and construction of public space for benign development of Junzhuang Yangge are weaker.

3.The Openness of the Social Space

3.1 Junzhuang Yangge generated under the integration of regional cultures

The canal space in which Junzhuang Yangge is located creates the openness of its social space. The openness of the social space causes the integration of regional cultures. The canal is an open, flowing and dynamic space, so the production and development of dances along the route are influenced by multiple cultures, not a single closed regional space. The openness of the canal space produces a dance style that is the result of the collision and integration of regional cultures.

The formation of Junzhuang Yangge comes from the openness of the social space in which it is located. The local people generally believe that the Daokou Yangge is introduced from the area of Tianjin (Chinese Folk Dance Integration Editorial Department, 1998, p59). Why can the dance from the Tianjin region be introduced to the Junzhuang area? Because the canal along the village of Junzhuang provides convenient land and water transportation, which are superior physical conditions for the cross-regional and inter-regional spread of culture. The canal connects the original isolated and closed single cultures, forming an exchange between the regional cultures of the canal and bringing the regional and foreign cultures along the canal into contact with each other, from which the Junzhuang Yangge emerges.

In the thriving town of Daokou, Junzhuang, across the river, is a place where docked boatmen often land. According to Song Baoyu and Yang Hailin, the performers of Junzhuang Yangge (Chinese Folk Dance Integration Editorial Department, 1998, p58), most of these boatmen were from Tianjin. Due to the prevalence of folk songs and dances in the Daokou, the boatmen who could dance the Yangge stayed in Junzhuang for a rest period, and then taught the Yangge during the performance activities. Thus, the Yangge was rooted in Junzhuang, forming a distinctive military dress Yangge, which was passed down from teachers to apprentices later.

3.2 The further traceability of Junzhuang Yangge

All the current studies only focus on the fact that the Junzhuang Yangge was brought to Junzhuang by the boatmen of the Tianjin Canal, but whether this claim can be further confirmed has not been mentioned. From the book Chinese Ethnic Folk Dance Integration · Tianjin Volume and the related studies of Tianjin Yangge on CNKI, four kinds of Yangge in Tianjin area were collected, namely, double umbrella formation Yangge, single umbrella Yangge, dry boat Yangge, and west pier Baizhaojing Yangge. Combined with the performance form and content of Junzhuang Yangge, it was found that single umbrella Yangge is very similar to Junzhuang Yangge in terms of performance form and content.

Umbrella Yangge originated in Yaowa Village on the banks of the Sancha River in Tianjin. In the early years, it was near the dock and busy in canal transportation, and the stores were lined up and bustling. From the geographical location, the area where umbrella Yangge was produced belongs to the canal dock. There is also the famous Dabei Zen Temple here, and men and women worship Buddha in the temple every year. People compete to show their performances there. So the single umbrella Yangge is produced. The single umbrella Yangge and the Junzhuang Yangge are nearly 700 kilometers apart from each other in terms of geographical space, but they have very similar performance contents in terms of characters, contents and forms. In the study, the claim that the Junzhuang Yangge came from Tianjin is further explored and confirmed. The single umbrella Yangge of Tianjin is the source dance of Junzhuang Yangge.

The specific similarities are shown below.

Single Umbrella Yangge Junzhuang Yangge

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>The similarities between performers The total number of performers is 17. The same performing characters are 10 people, with 1 umbrella head dancer, 2 stick dancers, 4 drum dancers, 1 green-clad dancer, 1 stinky woman and 2 playboys.</p> | <p>The total number of performers is 18. The same performing characters 10 people, with 1 umbrella head dancer, 2 stick dancers, 2 drum dancers, 2 green-clad dancers, 1 stinky woman and 2 playboys.</p> |
|---|---|

Performance form The performance procedures are the same. In the first scene, dancers enter the stage. The second performance is a martial arts and skill performance. And the third performance is based on opera and rap. In the first scene, dancers enter the stage. The second performance is a martial arts and skill performance. And the third performance is based on opera and rap.

Performance scheduling and formation

1. In the first scene, the formation of entering the stage is that the performers are marching through each other.

2. The second performance is in the traditional Chinese formation of "two dragons spitting beard", with dancers performing martial arts and skillful movements in front of each other.

3. The content of the third performance are opera and rap. The singer will perform in the middle and the other actors will dance in a counter-clockwise circle.

(All the above formation pictures are from Chinese Ethnic Folk Dance Integration · Tianjin Volume, 1990, p233, no specific information about the author because the book is a type book of collecting folk dance data deployed by the state consistently)

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(All the above formation pictures are from Chinese Ethnic Folk Dance Integration · Henan Volume, 1998, p67, no specific information about the author because the book is a type book of collecting folk dance data deployed by the state consistently)

Performance instruments Cymbals, big cymbals, small suona, big suona, bells, hand gongs, big gongs and big drums. Big drums, big gongs, cymbals, big cymbals and pointy trumpets.

4.The Sustenance of the Spiritual Space

4.1 The worship of Fire God

The spiritual space carries the immateriality of the dance. The most remarkable immateriality of Junzhuang Yangge is the Fire God belief ritual. Engels argued that in terms of the emancipatory effect of the world, the frictional fire still surpasses the steam engine. For the first time, the frictional fire allowed man to dominate a natural force, thus finally separating himself from the animal world. The veneration of fire is common. People anthropomorphize fire and worship it as a god, and there are different forms of Fire God all over the world. For example, in ancient Greek mythology, Hephaestus is known as Fire God, thus giving rise to the religion of fire and the practice of fire worship. Ancient Chinese legends have it that Suienshi invented drilling wood for fire in Henan Shangqiu, which is recognized as the origin of Chinese civilization.

Fire God beliefs are prevalent in Henan. In Hu Ning's (2013,p6) study of fire deity beliefs in the Central Plains, a total of 26 fire deity belief areas were counted between the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China. The Fire God rituals are concentrated in the first month of the Chinese New Year to complete the rituals. The time of the Fire God rituals is usually before the spring plowing

work, and the Fire God rituals are to remind the villagers to prepare for the beginning of the year's work, especially in the areas of Henan where farming is the main mode of production. Agriculture is the first of all things. The folkloric activities of the Fire God pray for the villagers to have a smooth year of farming work and a good harvest, and the most important feature of the folkloric rituals is to seek for one's own selfishness and spirituality (Zhang Zixuan and Wang Ming, 2021, p33).

Although the belief of Fire God is spread over many areas in Henan, the content and form of each Fire God's worship activities have many differences and cannot be generalized. The Fire God Fair performed by Junzhuang Yangge is the Daokou Fire Temple Fair, also known as the lantern shed assembly. Lantern shed assembly was a folk custom, which was a way for the people to ward off evil and pray for peace. The people spontaneously hung lamps at the door (to the river to put river lanterns) so as to pray for family peace. Prompted by shipping, the local trade thrived and merchants gathered. In order to prevent the lantern shed custom bringing hidden dangers for the people and prevent the intrusion of fire for merchants, they began to establish the Fire God Temple, sacrifice to the Fire God and pray to bless the safety of property.

The performance of Junzhuang Yangge was born out of the Fire God ritual activities. It can be said that the Fire God ritual activity is the spirit of the performance of the military dress Yangge, which is the desire of every performer's heart. It can even be argued that the lack of belief in the Fire God sacrifice is the destruction of the spirit of the performance of the military dress Yangge, which loses the connotation of performance and becomes a folklore activity at the level of entertainment only. The belief in the Fire God is the spiritual support for the villagers of Junzhuang village to aspire to a good life with good weather and good harvest.

4.2 The performance spirit of mutual respect, mutual love and mutual concession

Junzhuang Yangge has developed a performance spirit of mutual respect, mutual love and mutual concession in its long-term activities (Chinese Folk Dance Integration Editorial Department, 1990, p233). Behind the performance spirit is the way of dealing with the world that has been accumulated by Chinese villagers for thousands of years. Confucianism, which has influenced China for thousands of years, attaches great importance to the communal nature of human life and emphasizes that people should respect and love each other and live together in harmony. Confucius, the founder of Confucianism, once said, "The benevolent person loves people". The connotation of "benevolence" includes respect, tolerance, trust, agility, wisdom, bravery, loyalty, filial piety and other high spiritual pursuits. When a person has reached the spiritual state of "benevolence", he should "love others", which means to give all one's ability to help others and respect them, and helping others is the most praiseworthy behavior in Confucianism. The Moist school's way of dealing with the world is to "love each other", which means that people should love each other, regardless of distance and affinity, and love all people equally. The spiritual culture nourishes people silently, and people will take these spiritual pursuits that have influenced China for thousands of years in a lineage, reflect them in their own lives, and apply them to every single thing that people do with each other.

The mutual respect, mutual love and mutual concession of Junzhuang Yangge is reflected in the fact that if other performance teams come from the back during the performance, the performance team of Junzhuang Yangge will consciously stop the performance to let other performance teams perform. Without being arrogant, they do not think that other performance teams are not as skilled as others and that their own performance team is the most powerful. When walking on the street and encountering other dance teams, they will immediately give up and take the initiative to give way, and the good tradition has been carried on. These seemingly insignificant initiatives reflect the way of life of the villagers of Junzhuang Village, who not only enjoy themselves physically and mentally through their performances, but also enjoy themselves aesthetically by singing and dancing to their heart's content. In addition, they can also be educated in their behaviors. While enjoying the performance, they carry in their hearts the "benevolent heart" of respect, care and courtesy for others, which is the greatest way of dealing with the world in the hearts of the Chinese people and the most respected standard of behavior in China for thousands of years.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Through the study of the cultural space characteristics of Junzhuang Yangge, it is concluded that the material space has the nature of stability, the social space has the nature of openness, and the spiritual space has the nature of sustenance. In terms of the material space, Junzhuang Yangge is built along the river and the navigation of Henan Canal has been unfailing, so Junzhuang Yangge has a stable material space since it was produced until now. The performance space is mainly based on the Fire God ritual performance activities at the beginning of the New Year every year. Junzhuang Yangge has a stable living space from performers to organizers who live in Junzhuang village until now.

The social space of Junzhuang Yangge is influenced by the Henan Canal space, because the Henan Canal space is an open, integrated and interactive linear cultural space. The production and development of dances along the route are then influenced by cross-regional cultural transmission. Junzhuang Yangge is a dance produced under the integration of regional cultures, but not a single closed regional space. In the meanwhile, the origin of Junzhuang Yangge is further traced in this study. By comparison, the claim that Junzhuang Yangge came from Tianjin and Tianjin single umbrella Yangge was the introduced is reconfirmed, .

The spiritual space of Junzhuang Yangge is reflected in the belief of Fire God on the one hand, and the performance spirit formed for a long time on the other hand, that is, mutual respect, mutual love and mutual concession. The faith of Fire God is the spiritual embodiment of the performance of Junzhuang Yangge, which is the spiritual trust of every performer, praying for a good life with good weather and good harvest in the coming year. Secondly, the performance spirit of mutual respect, mutual love and mutual concession makes the best motivation for the development of Junzhuang Yangge inheritance.

After the spatial characteristics of the Junzhuang Yangge culture was investigated, the preservation of traditional dance should be considered. How to protect traditional dances? Is it better to protect only the inheritors of the dance, the dance movements, style and costumes? Or is it more effective to protect the cultural space in which traditional dance is located as a whole? From this study, it is concluded that the absence of any space of traditional dance will bring immeasurable loss to the inheritance and development of the dance. The cultural space of traditional dance is the space of production, development and inheritance on which it survives and continues to this day. The protection of its cultural space is the protection of traditional dance. Through this study, it is hoped that the cultural space in which traditional dance is located should be paid more attention.

6. Suggestions

It is the responsibility and duty of every modern person to pass on and develop traditional culture. We must know where we come from, understand traditional culture, promote traditional culture and protect traditional culture. The study of the cultural space of traditional dance is based on a perspective of analyzing dance, but also of preserving it. Calling for more scholars to pay attention to the cultural space in which traditional dance is located can not only enrich the realistic application of spatial theory, but also open up the concept of holistic conservation for traditional dance.

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