

Investigation on the Culture of Square Dance in China's Rural Areas*

XING Qian-li

Yancheng Institute of Technology, Jiangsu, China

In recent years, the living standard of the peasants has been improved continuously. As a result, they pay more attention to the quality of their life. They spontaneously jump square dance more and more, which also plays a more and more important role in the cultural life of the peasants. At present, the development of rural square dance have been well developed, but there are also some problems with it, such as: the lacking of government support, deficiency of dancing skills, etc. Grass roots government should increase support for rural square dance, strengthening lead dancer's training, encouraging social forces to support the rural square dance activities.

Keywords: investigation, rural area, square dance, China

With the continuous progress and development of the society, square culture has attracted more and more attention as a social and cultural phenomenon. As a combination of entertainment and performance, the square dance, with its special form of performance, has gradually entered the countryside from the city, and has become an important part of the cultural life of the farmers. In order to understand and grasp the cultural phenomenon of the rural square dance, the research group carried out an in-depth investigation on the villages and towns in Nanjing, Nantong, Haimen, Rugao and other villages and towns in Jiangsu province and some villages in Fujian Province. The object of investigation involves various classes of rural areas, such as the ordinary peasants, cadres of the village and the two committees, students, teachers, personal families, township cadres, retired personnel, native culture capable persons, old veterans, and so on.

A total of 620 questionnaires were distributed and 598 valid questionnaires were collected. The sex ratio of the respondents was 267 males, 44.5%, and 331 females, accounting for 55.5%. The age level of the interviewees is: 147 people aged 20 to 30, accounting for 24.6%; 223 of 31 to 49 years old, accounting for 37.3%, 126 at 50-60, 21.1%, and 102 people over 60 years, accounting for 17.1%. The identity and characteristic ratio of the subject was 144 farmers, 24.1%; the village cadres 46, 7.8%; the students 112, 18.7%; the teachers 48, 8%; the individuals 137, 22.9%; township cadres (including township institutions) 30, 5%; rural culture capable 27,

* **Acknowledgements:** This paper was sponsored by Jiangsu Province Social Science Foundation Project "Sage Culture and Cultivation of Rural Socialist Core Values" (15MLB010), Jiangsu Social Science Foundation Project "Study on the Role of Sage Culture in the Construction of Rural Spiritual Civilization in Northern Jiangsu" (16MLB010), Jiangsu Province Educational Science Planning Project "Research on the Way of Promoting Rural Civilization Education in Northern Jiangsu Province by Township Culture" (B-b/2016/01/20), Jiangsu Provincial Education Department Project "The Role of Sage Culture in Practicing the Core Value of Rural Socialism" (2016SJB710012), Research on Tao Xingzhi's Peasant Educational Thoughts (2017SJB1546), a project funded by Jiangsu University Philosophy and Social Science Research Fund.

XING Qian-li, Associate Research Fellow of Yancheng Institute Of Technology, China.

accounting for retirees. 12 soldiers were returned to the army, accounting for 2%.

The Role of Square Dance in the Rural Cultural Life

In recent years, with the continuous improvement of farmers' living standards, they are more concerned about their quality of life. After solving the problem of food and clothing, they have a growing demand for cultural life, and more and more farmers spontaneously dance square dancing. When asked about the question of "do you participate in the dance of the square", 29.2% of the people expressed "participation", 44.5% of them said "occasional participation", and "almost no participation" accounted for 13.6%, and "never dance" accounted for 12.7%. It can be seen that most of the farmers interviewed will often or occasionally dance square dancing. Square dancing has become an important recreational project in rural areas. This also shows that in the process of urban and rural integration, after solving the problem of food and clothing, the spiritual and cultural needs of farmers are growing, and their cultural life is gradually closer to the city.

What is the role of square dance in rural cultural life? The results of the investigation show that the role of square dance in the rural cultural life is mainly manifested in the cultivation of sentiment, physical fitness, making friends, sending time and shaping the shape of the body.

First, square dance can edify sentiment. 33.6% of peasants think that dancing square dance can cultivate their sentiment. Sentiment refers to the mental state that is not easily changed by the combination of feelings and thoughts. It is formed by complex psychological components such as emotions, feelings and ideas. The square dance can not only bring positive emotional experience to farmers, but also help farmers change their ideas.

Dancing in the square can relieve the negative emotions. Because most of the tunes in the square dance are warm and cheerful, the dancing farmers will be infected with them, making them fully satisfied with aesthetic pleasure while expressing and releasing their inner feelings with dance. The feeling of cheerful music can transfer the brain's thinking to the happy dance steps and graceful dance music, so the labor pressure of the farmer is relaxed, the tension is released and the negative emotion is relieved. Therefore, the peasants can get rid of fatigue and cultivate their sentiment.

Dancing in the square can cultivate the quality of will. Square dance does not need to be forced, it is the spontaneous activity of the masses. To participate or not is entirely dependent on the self consciousness of the dancer himself, the people who can insist on the square dance for a long time undoubtedly have good self-control ability. In the process of dancing, they gradually developed the spirit of never giving up and fighting hard.

Dancing in the square can cultivate elegance and elegance. Long-term square dance connections can effectively stimulate the brain to secrete high-energy substances beneficial to the body, enhancing the aesthetic experience. Square dance is rich in content, which includes dance, martial arts, gymnastics and other types of movements. The movement of head rising, chest out, stomach in, tushy-ups, shoulder sinking, is helpful to lengthen the muscles and ligaments, to shape the dignified and graceful lines, and to cultivate elegant temperament and dignified manners. Dancing often in front of people can also enhance self-confidence, exercise courage and make people more confident and fulfilling.

Second, square dance can strengthen the body. The survey results show that 31.1% of farmers think that square dance can exercise and keep people healthy. Square dance can play the role of physical fitness, mainly in the following aspects: one manifestation is that it can promote people's cardiorespiratory function. As an aerobic

exercise, long time square dance exercises can increase the amount of gas exchange at each breath, increase the depth and intensity of breathing, reduce the heart rate and maximum heart rate in quiet, improve heart rate preparation, maintain the balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood and tissue. Therefore, it can improve the cardiovascular system function and promote heart and lung function. Square dance can also improve the immune ability of people. Square dancing is also conducive to the improvement of the human endocrine system, promote human metabolism, strengthen and improve the function of the human immune system. Square dance can improve the flexibility of the body. Square dance has a good stimulating effect on the body's bones, muscles, joints, ligaments and other organs. To exercise every part of the body, perseverance can make the bone more strong and compact, constantly increase the strength of the muscles, improve the flexibility of the joints, and improve their elasticity. Square dance helps to improve the digestive system. Because of the frequent hips in the dance of the square dance, while exercising the pelvis and lumbar and abdominal muscles, it also promotes the peristalsis of the intestines, thus enhancing the body's digestive function and helping the absorption and utilization of nutrition. In short, square dance has some functions of physical fitness and health care.

Third, square dance helps farmers to make friends. After the implementation of the household contract responsibility system in the countryside, the change of the mode of operation has weakened the strength of collective activities, and the problems of decentralization and loosening in the countryside have gradually become prominent. With the weakening of collective production, many collective activities in rural areas have been gradually reduced. Farmers are busy farming or going out to work, and the communication between them gradually decreases. Square dance is a good opportunity for villagers to communicate and enhance their feelings. Farmers need square dance to recognize themselves as a social person. With more and more young and middle-aged rural migrants leaving their homes to work in cities, the elderly left behind in rural areas are becoming more and more lonely and helpless. Long-term poverty makes their spiritual world lonely and closed, and the distance from modern technology and society makes them almost isolated from the outside world. And the square dance not only makes them contact with the latest popular songs and various dance steps, enriches their spiritual and cultural life, but also promotes the exchange between them. Farmers go to the square at a fixed time to exercise, listen to others, express their opinions, discuss with each other, learn from each other, and make friends. When they encounter problems, they can solve them together and help each other in trouble. Here, they are not only partners but also intimate people. Square dance has brought them many like-minded friends and brought a lot of fun to their lives. Square dance also makes farmers feel the collective solicitude and warmth accepted by society. While promoting neighborhood relations, it has also cultivated the collective consciousness of farmers.

Fourth, the peasants whiled away the hours by the square dance. 9.3% of peasants think that dancing square dance can kill time. Since the reform and opening up, especially since the abolition of agricultural tax, the popularization of modern production methods, such as agricultural mechanization, has made the farmers have a lot of leisure time. For farmers, how to spend these leisure time is a big problem. At present, rural leisure life has deteriorated in some aspects. Gambling, vicious competition and even cults go from edge to center. These bad habits have a profound impact on farmers, long-term past, not only affected the stability of farmers' lives, but also affected the development of spiritual civilization in rural areas. And the square dance makes the farmers leave the TV set, put down the mobile phone, abandon the mahjong table, go to the crowd, go to the square, kill the time

and exercise the body, take a positive attitude to meet the new life, and promote the construction of the civilized life order and harmonious living environment in the rural areas.

Fifth, square dance can shape body shape. 6.7% of the peasants dance square dance to shape their physique and cultivate their temperament. The survey shows that the number of women dancing in square dance is more than that of men. Among them, the age of women dancing square dance is mostly 30-50 years old, while most of the men dance square dance are 50-60 years old. People in middle age, especially middle-aged and elderly women have a tendency to get fat. Because of the excessive fat deposition in the body, this age group is not only prone to body fat, but also causes high blood sugar, high blood pressure, high blood lipid and other diseases, which are very bad for the health of the human body. Dance is shaping and bodybuilding, and square dance is no exception. The middle-aged and old people who dance the square dance in the long run can not only relieve the pressure, keep the cheerful mood, but also "shake off" the fat, shape the good shape, shape the good curve, improve the coordination ability of the human body, reduce the danger of the "three high", and form a more perfect figure. It can be seen that the square dance is able to centralize the "hollow" remnants of the "hollow" village left behind by the heavy loss of the young people. After the busy work, they are liberated from the noisy mahjong table and released from the yearning for the migrant children. Every morning or evening, square dancing not only exercised their bodies, but also comforted their hearts, and enriched their spiritual and cultural life.

The Present Situation of Rural Square Dance

At present, the current situation of the rural square dance is mainly as follows: the square dance is mainly organized by the peasants, lacking the support of the grass-roots government; the leading dancers are enthusiastic about the public welfare, but lack the background of professional knowledge; the noise of the square dance is not obvious, the site needs to be regulated, the square dance performance is beneficial, and the square dance competition should be carried out.

First, the peasants spontaneously organize the square dance, lacking the support from the grass-roots government. Most of the square dances in the countryside are organized spontaneously by the peasants. Compared with the square dancers of hundreds of people in the city, the square dancers in the countryside are smaller, and their organization and expenditure are often shared by the collective of the dancers. Square dance has enriched the spiritual and cultural life of farmers. It is beneficial to the physical and mental health of farmers. Although the grass-roots government adopts a supportive attitude, it is far from enough. Compared with the city square dance team, the village square dance team is small in size, generally 10-30 people. According to the survey, 43.3% of the squares in the countryside consist of 10-20 people, 25.5% of the squares consist of 20-30 people, 24% of the squares consist of more than 30 people, and 7.2% of the squares consist of less than 10 people.

Most village square dance teams do not have uniform clothing. According to the survey, 83.3% of the ununified clothes were answered; only 16.7% of the uniform dress were answered, and most of these uniform garments were collectively funded by the dancers. Sometimes in order to select the square dance team to represent the local village to participate in the competition or literary and art activities, some village committees will also provide uniform clothing and props for the square dance team. According to the survey, 58.5% of the dancing peasants buy clothes collectively; 21.3% are provided by the dancers; and 20.3% are provided by the village committees.

Most of the electricity and other expenses needed for the square dance are collectively funded by dancers. According to the investigation, 53.2% of the expenses, such as the collective contribution of the dancers to the electricity fee, were accounted for by the dancers, and 17.2% of the dancers were burdened by the dancers; 16.7% of the people provided the ground and 10.3% of the village cadres.

The players and other equipment needed for dancing the square dance in rural areas are usually provided by people who are leading the dance. According to the survey, 47.3% of the music equipment were provided by the dancers; 22.9% of the dancers took turns; 18.1% were responsible for the site; only 11.7% were provided by the village cadres. Obviously, as a popular form of entertainment for the masses, square dancing has not been paid attention by village cadres, and has received little support from the grass-roots government.

Second, although the leading dancing staff are enthusiastic about public welfare, they lack professional knowledge background. Most of the leading dancers in rural square dancing are local cultural talents. They are enthusiastic about public welfare, do not receive any compensation, and actively organize and lead farmers to square dancing. In addition to dancing and teaching farmers, most of them are also responsible for providing sound and other equipment for square dance. Some also allocated uniform clothing and props to the dancing farmers at their own expense. But most of the leading dancers are self-taught and lack professional dance knowledge.

Most of the leading dancers in rural square dance are local culture and capable people. According to the survey, on the status of the dancers, 59.4% of the respondents indicated that they were capable of local culture; another 34.4% chose "ordinary farmers", 5% of which were village cadres, and 1.2% from township cadres. In some urban communities, retired dance instructor is the leader of square dance. This situation does not exist in rural areas.

Most of the leading dancers in rural square dance are public welfare and do not receive any remuneration. According to the survey, 98% do not pay; only 2% pay.

Most of the rural cultural talents or ordinary peasants in the countryside are self-taught through video and other means. According to the survey, among the dancers, there are 55.8% people who learn by watching video. Some of the rural square dancers were taught to dance in the countryside after learning in the city, which accounted for 36.9% of the self-study; and 7.2% of them learn from professional teachers. It can be seen that, although the ideological and moral qualities of the rural square dancers are excellent, because of the lack of professional dance accomplishment, they can only teach the movements and rhythm of the dancers in the teaching of the peasants and rarely touch the essence of the dance. Moreover, the movements of the dancers are basically fixed, and the daily fixed items and movements can not attract the peasants who are impatient and eager to know.

Third, the noise of square dance is not obvious, and the venue needs to be standardized. Because of the denseness of the urban population, the relatively narrow living space of the people, the unreasonable urban planning and the lack of public space, the noise of urban square dance is more serious. It can easily lead to neighbourhood disputes, complaints, alarms, and even lead to vicious conflicts. Complaints about noise from "square dance" are among the best in some noise pollution complaints. However, compared with the city, the rural residents' residence is relatively scattered, and the rural square dance can choose more places, so the noise phenomenon in the square dance is not so obvious in the countryside.

The place for dancing the square dance in the countryside is usually located in the community service center or the square. According to the survey, 42.1% in square dance in square, 38.8% in community service center, 13.7% at the supermarket gate, and another 5.5% of farmers dancing in their own yard. Moreover, most rural square dance takes a shorter time. According to the survey, the time for the farmers to dance the square is generally 0.5-1.5 hours: 37.9% of the dance square dance 0.5-1 hours, 41.4% for 1-1.5 hours, 12.8% for 1.5-2 hours, and 7.9% for 2 hours. Because of this, in the village, the vast majority of the farmers take the popular and supportive attitude towards the square dance, and think that there is not much noise in the square dance. Of course, this is also closely related to the scarcity of farmers' cultural life. However, because of the choice of the site of the rural square dance in the supermarket, community service center and other places, and these places are often more crowded places. Therefore, although the noise of the rural square dance is not very obvious, but there is a certain negative impact on the traffic.

Fourth, the square dance performance proceeds, the square dance competition to be launched. Plaza dancing teams in rural areas are not only a way of recreation and physical exercise, but also sometimes participate in some performances and get some financial returns. Some rural red-and-white festivals invite better squares to cheer them up, and some rural literary and artistic activities invite them to attend. According to the survey, the remuneration of the square dance team is about 1000-2000 yuan. Most of the remuneration received was evenly distributed among all the dancers involved, and in a small number of teams the leader was paid more than the other members.

Suggestions

The grass-roots government should increase its support for square dancing in rural areas, strengthen the training of square dancers and encourage social forces to support square dancing activities in rural areas.

First, strengthen the support for the square dance activities. As a way to reshape the countryside, square dance should be supported by the rural government. Rural grassroots governments should promote the popularization and development of square dance and strengthen rural cultural construction. We should build a public cultural service system that is suitable for the reality of the rural masses and has distinct characteristics of the times and is efficient and practical. We should identify the best combination of cultural supply and the needs of the masses, and actively build a platform for public cultural services. We should adopt the investment mechanism of "substitute subsidies with rewards" to strengthen the construction of sports facilities and places of activity in rural areas. We will vigorously promote the construction of cultural facilities such as villagers' activity centers and small cultural squares at the village level to provide necessary places for farmers' leisure activities. By equipping with square lighting and audio equipment, the rural literary and artistic team is trained to facilitate the square dance team to carry out regular cultural activities. We should vigorously publicize in the media, let farmers know the advantages of square dance, so as to attract more farmers to the square dance. It is necessary to organize the square dance competitions among the villages and towns, and set up the promotion competition so that more farmers will come to the square dance queue, and then the enthusiasm of the people who participate in the dance of the square dance will be mobilized.

Second, strengthen the training of the square dancers. In view of the lack of professional dance knowledge in the rural square dancers, the relevant cultural units should timely guide and train the current farmers' favorite

square dance in combination with the cultural characteristics of the new period. The leaders of the square dance team, who have practical experience, take part in the training and guidance of the square dance activities to improve their ability, so as to better adapt to the needs of the farmers' cultural life. The training of the square dancers can be carried out in two ways: one is to send professional staff to the training class, to study and to train a number of standard square dancers. The other is to invite the square dance experts to run the local class and train a number of standard square dancers, so as to popularize the standardized square health. Inviting square dance experts to participate in local training can not only focus on training a group of rural square dancers, but also carry out general square dance skills for the square dancers in the countryside, including the action skills of square dance, formation arrangement, stage performance and other training. We should train more grass-roots square dance teams, constantly improve the level of performance of grassroots artists and the quality of mass cultural activities. In addition, the cultural, sports and other administrative departments should adopt division guidance, pairing assistance, training guidance and other ways to strengthen the service and guidance of square dance activities. In order to provide convenience for the masses to learn to dance in the square, the free distribution of teaching CDs, public welfare training, exhibition display and collection and selection of original works should be carried out in accordance with the need. Civil, cultural, sports and other administrative departments should encourage and guide the establishment of cultural and sports associations such as the square dance association. These organizations play the role of self-management, self-education, self-service and self supervision.

Finally, the social forces are encouraged to support the square dance.

Grass-roots government's strong support and financial investment is an important way to solve the problem of insufficient funds and poor management of rural public cultural service system. In addition, we need to guide and encourage social forces to participate in it. The participation of social forces can appropriately supplement the material foundation of facilities construction and network construction in the rural public cultural service system. It can also effectively supervise the scientific and rational utilization and operation of special funds for the construction of rural public cultural services. It can also effectively increase public cultural service products and professionals in rural areas. Governments at all levels and relevant administrative departments provide funds and equipment support for square dance activities by guiding and encouraging social forces. It is necessary to absorb the team leaders and leaders of the square dance team with practical experience to participate in the training and guidance of square dance activities. It is necessary to encourage and support private non-profit cultural organizations and folk art organizations to carry out suitable cultural activities in rural areas. We should enhance social strength to meet the needs of farmers for colorful culture.